



City of Santa Barbara

PLANNING COMMISSION

MINUTES

MARCH 18, 2021

1:00 P.M.

This Meeting was Conducted Electronically
SantaBarbaraCA.gov

COMMISSION MEMBERS:

Deborah L. Schwartz, Chair
Gabriel Escobedo, Vice Chair
Roxana Bonderson
Jay D. Higgins
Sheila Lodge
Barrett Reed
Lesley Wiscomb

STAFF:

Tava Ostrenger, Assistant City Attorney
Allison DeBusk, Senior Planner
Gillian Fennessy, Commission Secretary

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schwartz called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

I. ROLL CALL

Chair Deborah L. Schwartz, Vice Chair Gabriel Escobedo, Commissioners Roxana Bonderson, Jay D. Higgins, Sheila Lodge, Barrett Reed, and Lesley Wiscomb

Absent: Commissioner Reed

STAFF PRESENT

Tava Ostrenger, Assistant City Attorney
Allison DeBusk, Senior Planner
Brad Hess, Principal Project Manager
Marylinda Arroyo, Police Captain
Sara Iza, Senior Planner
Kathleen Kennedy, Project Planner
Deanna Zachrisson, Airport Business Development Manager
Leif Reynolds, Supervising Engineer
Tony Ruggieri, City TV Production Supervisor
Timmy Bolton, Associate Planner
Heidi Reidel, Planning Technician I
Gillian Fennessy, Commission Secretary

II. PRELIMINARY MATTERS

A. Requests for continuances, withdrawals, postponements, or addition of ex-agenda items:

No requests.

B. Announcements and appeals:

No announcements.

C. Review, consideration, and action on the following draft Planning Commission minutes and resolutions:

1. Planning Commission February 18, 2021 Minutes

MOTION: Wiscomb / Lodge

Approve the minutes as presented.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 6 Noes: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 1 (Reed)

D. Comments from members of the public pertaining to items not on this agenda:

Public comment opened at 1:08 p.m.

Written correspondence from Guy Dolev was acknowledged.

Public comment closed at 1:10 p.m.

III. NEW ITEMS

A. ACTUAL TIME: 1:11 P.M.

LAND USE DETERMINATION – AIRPORT INDUSTRIAL ZONE (PER SBMC §29.21.030)

The Planning Commission is being asked to determine if a gym/ health club is an appropriate use in the A-I-2 (Airport Industrial) Zone. In accordance with Santa Barbara Municipal Code Section 29.21.030.B.20, the Planning Commission may identify uses other than those specifically identified as permitted, if the proposed use is deemed appropriate by the Planning Commission.

Deanna Zachrisson, Airport Business Development Manager, gave the Staff presentation. Allison DeBusk, Senior Planner; Leif Reynolds, Supervising Engineer; and John Berger, Applicant, were available to answer questions.

Public comment opened at 1:18 p.m., and as no one wished to speak, it closed.

MOTION: Wiscomb / Higgins

Approve the use of a boutique gym as described in the applicant's letter as an appropriate use in the A-I-2 (Airport Industrial) Zone as it is consistent with the intent of the Airport Industrial Zone and provides commercial services to the entire area.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 6 Noes: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 1 (Reed)

B. ACTUAL TIME: 2:01 P.M.

APPLICATION OF BRAD HESS, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT/ CITY OF SANTA BARBARA, OWNER OF 119 E. COTA STREET (TO BE CHANGED TO 601 SANTA BARBARA STREET); APN: 031-151-018; ZONE: M-C (MANUFACTURING COMMERCIAL); LAND USE DESIGNATION: COMMERCIAL INDUSTRIAL/ MEDIUM HIGH RESIDENTIAL (15-27 DU/AC); PRT2019-00601

Proposal for a new three-story, approximately 53 feet in height, ±65,000 sf Police Station, and associated 37.5 feet in height, ±85,000 sf parking structure to accommodate 250 parking spaces, at the existing 1.61-acre Cota Commuter Parking Lot. Each structure would also have a subterranean level. Eight surface level visitor parking spaces would also be provided. Existing Police operations, currently located at four separate sites, would be consolidated at the new project site. Grading includes 22,000 cubic yards of export. A total of 24 Tipuana tipu trees and 6 oak trees would be removed. The project includes a request for an exception to the 45-foot height limit identified in the M-C, Manufacturing Commercial Zone, pursuant to Santa Barbara Municipal Code Section 30.140.100.B. Projects with a Community Benefit or Community Benefit Housing designation may request an exception to the 45-foot height limitation, and propose buildings up to 60 feet in height.

This hearing is for the Planning Commission to consider the request for an exception to the height limitation, and Concept Review for the proposed Police Station project.

RECUSALS: To avoid any actual or perceived conflict of interest, Chair Schwartz recused herself from hearing this item due to her mayoral political campaign.

Kathleen Kennedy, Project Planner, gave the Staff presentation.

Brad Hess, Principal Project Manager, gave the Applicant presentation, and was joined by Sara Iza, Senior Planner; James McClaren, Senior Principal Architect, MWL Architects; Brian Cearnal, Architect, The Cearnal Collective; Jeff Hornbuckle, Architect, The Cearnal Collective; Marylinda Arroyo, Captain, City of Santa Barbara Police Department; and Courtney Miller, Landscape Architect, CJM::LA.

Public comment opened at 2:52 p.m., and the following individuals spoke:

1. Richard Six, Architectural Board of Review Vice Chair
2. Sam Edelman, Santa Barbara Certified Farmer's Market

Written correspondence from Lanny Ebenstein, Daniel Fleury, Richard Closson, and Patricia Saley were acknowledged.

Public comment closed at 3:05 p.m.

*** THE COMMISSION RECESSED FROM 3:05 P.M. TO 3:15 P.M. ***

Commissioner comments:

Commissioner Wiscomb:

- Believes this is a community benefit project and is much needed.
- Pleased with how far the project has come.
- Supports the height increase to 60 feet and can make the findings. Wants to provide some latitude to architect on maximum height, but doesn't expect the whole building to go up to 60 feet.
- Has confidence in the Architectural Board of Review (ABR) and the design team to work together to make the project exemplary in terms of architecture and design.
- Thinks that the ABR has recognized the building's function and diverse program and has provided the flexibility for it.
- Appreciates the walkabout visuals in lieu of the story poles.
- Given the potential impacts to the Farmer's Market, believes that the walkabout visuals and the City's ability to have gotten them out to the public was greatly appreciated and doesn't think there is a need for story poles.
- Would appreciate identifying specific sites of where the replacement trees will go. Specifically the sites for the Tipuana tipu and the coast live oaks because of the mitigation for removal.
- Agrees with comments from the ABR that the Cota Street elevations deserve more inviting treatment and thinks that it will evolve as it goes through the process of review.
- Supports the ABR wanting to convert on-street parking on Santa Barbara St. to additional parkway and that there could be an opportunity for canopy trees there.
- Supports the additional parkway for safety and to soften the elevation.
- Likes the open grid design and the flexibility it will provide.
- Believes the palm court entry is a nice feature.
- Appreciates Commissioner Higgins's comments about public art.
- Appreciates Commissioner Escobedo's comments about the Cota St. experience.

Commissioner Lodge:

- Has no doubt that this is a community benefit project.
- Concerned with the design and is not ready to make the finding that the design is exemplary.
- Since it is a major civic building, she believes that the building needs to say "Santa Barbara" And it doesn't currently
- Believes that the industrial style windows need to be broken up.
- Disagrees with Commissioner Wiscomb about the palm court.
- Would like to see more canopy trees in the palm court area.
- Believes that palm trees don't go with the Spanish style architecture of Santa Barbara.
- Suggested olive trees instead of palm trees.
- Thinks it is going in the right direction and looks forward to seeing it when it comes back for development review.

Commissioner Bonderson:

- Understands the building has to be adaptable.
- Agrees that the proposed design is flexible and that it shows that the structural system allows for program changes overtime.
- Believes there is a clear and obvious demonstrated need for the additional height.
- Appreciates applicant's ability to gracefully meet the California state regulations and the FEMA regulations which require essential buildings, like the Police Station, be raised out of the flood plain.
- Believes that the building is not ready to be declared as exemplary, but it is on the right track.
- Would like to see more traditional features and aesthetic elements that were discussed previously.
- Believes that it is important to hold the design to the expectation that we expect to see in Santa Barbara.
- Believes that there will be opportunities to improve on exterior elements since the project is returning to ABR, and looks forward to seeing those changes.
- Excited to see how the design of the tower will be modified to be more unique and special.
- Curious to see if there are other design options to allow the second floor corner trellis to feel lighter and more open.
- Particularity interested in knowing what other landscaping options are available because the City is a water sensitive community.
- Pleased to see solar panels, opportunity for battery storage, and the goal of being a zero net carbon building.

Commissioner Higgins:

- Agrees with Commissioners Lodge and Bonderson about the exemplary design finding. He's not enthused yet, but the finding is that the building "will be exemplary," which leaves opportunity to improve.
- Believes the design of the building should be more special.
- Supports the Height Exemption but wants a better design.
- Believes that the design team is doing an excellent job at matching form and function, maybe a little too well. Give more thought to design over function.
- Trusts the ABR with the design.
- Would love to see room for public art but doesn't want it to slow down this process.
- Hopes the project moves quickly; it is headed in the right direction.

Commissioner Escobedo:

- Believes that it has been well explained and documented that there is a demonstrated need for a Height Exemption, given site constraints, flood requirements, lining up plate heights, etc.
- Believes that the Architecture and Design Finding makes it hard to move project along, especially if it is early process before the design is completed.
- Finds that this is exemplary design at this point and it can only get better.
- Trusts that the ABR will continue to work with the applicant to refine the design elements and address many of the concerns that we've heard from Commissioners and ABR members.

- Believes that the aerial view, the computer generation, and the walk-by provided a good sense of what the context would be in the neighborhood.
- Believes that the project does fit in especially with the future development of the surrounding areas.
- Believes that having the computer generated images with a picture of the site now and having it from different angles is more contextual than story poles.
- Thinks that the project is off to a great start.
- Appreciates the flexibility and adaptability of the building.
- Believes that the design is innovative; supports having a common locker room because it is inclusive.
- Supports making this project as sustainable as possible.
- Would like the applicant team to consider battery storage as the initial backup and then having the backup generators as a secondary backup.
- Supports not having parking in front of the building on Santa Barbara St. and using it to create a better pedestrian experience by extending the curb.
- Supports keeping the terrace roof and likes the fact that it is a green roof and will help with storm water management.
- Glad that they were able to find a place for the solar panels that were removed from the Cota St. side.
- Believes having staff entrances or having the main entrances on the Cota St. side attracts attention to the fact that the building is a Police Department and it may induce anxiety for some people in the community.
- Would like to use Cota St. to create a welcoming pedestrian experience and interactions with the architecture but not necessarily drawing attention to police activities.
- Believes that the height is acceptable.

MOTION: Wiscomb / Bonderson

Approve the exception to the 45-foot height limit in the M-C zone to 60 feet, making the applicable Height Exception Findings for Demonstrated Need, Architecture and Design, and Sensitivity to Context as outlined in the Staff Report dated March 11, 2021.

The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 5 Noes: 0 Abstain: 0 Absent: 2 (Schwartz and Reed)

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE AGENDA**ACTUAL TIME: 4:56 P.M.****A. Committee and Liaison Reports:****1. Staff Hearing Officer Liaison Report**

Commissioner Higgins reported on an appeal of a Staff Hearing Officer Item (2 S. Quarantina St.).

2. Other Committee and Liaison Reports

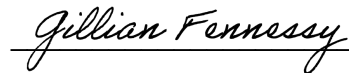
a. Commissioner Higgins reported on the March 17, 2021 Highway 101 Improvements Design Working Group meeting.

b. Commissioner Lodge reported on the March 8, 2021 Sustainability Council Committee meeting.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Escobedo adjourned the meeting at 4:59 p.m.

Submitted by,

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Gillian Fennessy, Commission Secretary