

REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CULVER CITY
PLANNING COMMISSION
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

February 9, 2022
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Sayles called the regular meeting of the Culver City Planning Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. via Webex.

Present: Dana Sayles, Chair
Nancy Barba, Vice Chair
Jennifer Carter, Commissioner
Ed Ogosta, Commissioner
Andrew Reilman, Commissioner

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Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Sayles led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Public Comment - Items NOT on the Agenda

Chair Sayles invited public comment and discussed procedures for making public comment.

The following members of the public addressed the Commission:

Jeanne Black provided background on herself; urged the City to move forward with the process of updating the zoning code as soon as possible; discussed staff workload; industrial zoning; the project at 9925 Jefferson; the pace of change in the City; resident concern that developers are controlling the City; the need to increase housing; incentivized traffic congestion; current parking requirements; and she proposed starting with areas of consensus.

Stephen Jones echoed comments from the previous speaker; discussed redevelopment of industrial plots; losing the opportunity to create housing; the urgent need to change parking minimums; and rejection of Santa Monica's Housing Element by the state.

Linda T. questioned whether the Commission intended to explore a prior comment made by Commissioner Ogosta regarding allowing a use similar to Jackson Market in residential neighborhoods as zoning is reconsidered.

Chair Sayles encouraged the public to sign up for notifications to follow the efforts of the Planning Commission in prioritizing amendments to streamlining parking requirements.

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Consent Calendar

Item C-1

PC: Approval of Draft Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of November 10, 2021

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR BARBA, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER CARTER AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVE DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE NOVEMBER 10, 2021 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING.

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Item C-2

PC: Approval of Draft Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of January 6, 2022

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER OGOSTA, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER REILMAN AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVE DRAFT MINUTES FOR THE JANUARY 6, 2022 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING.

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Order of the Agenda

No changes were made.

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Public Hearing Item

Item PH-1

PC - PUBLIC HEARING: Consideration of a Site Plan Review to allow construction of a 51,178 square foot office building and a 70,739 square foot parking structure at 9925 Jefferson Boulevard

Jose Mendivil, Associate Planner, provided a summary of the material of record.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding solar panels on the garage; mitigating visual impacts to the neighbors; the process to add more solar panels; neighbor concerns about the 13 foot increase to building height with the solar panels; precluding solar that requires screening; landscaping conditions; administrative approval for minor changes; applicant study of what would be necessary to adequately screen the back of the parking structure for abutting residential; ensuring that the zoning code was not violated; and approval of substitutions.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER REILMAN, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OGOSTA AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING.

Mark Hershman, Shubin Donaldson Architects, provided a presentation on 9925 Jefferson; discussed existing conditions; surrounding buildings; scale; massing; landscaping; lighting; parking; traffic concerns; alternative ways of moving about the site; the micro-mobility zone; shower facilities; and the bus stop.

John Bowman, Elkins Kalt, expressed support for staff and the staff report as well as receptivity to the amendments; discussed conformance to requirements of the applicable Industrial Zoning classification; going beyond minimum requirements in response to comments from City staff; the minimum rear yard setback; and agreement to relocate and improve an existing bus stop.

Discussion ensued between project representatives, staff, and Commissioners regarding clarification that there has been no

pre-leasing; lack of access from the Ballona Creek Bike Path; and long-term bicycle parking.

Chair Sayles invited public comment.

The following members of the public addressed the Commission:

David Coles asked that the City pause new office development until the parking zone amendment has been finalized; expressed concern with going counter to the goals of the City; discussed car culture; the number of proposed parking spaces; induced demand; transforming Jefferson into a complete street; MOVE Culver City; and he felt that the project was wrong for the times.

Jordan Backer was called to speak but did not respond.

Karim Sahli discussed the climate crisis; outdated requirements; the need to remove parking minimums; and he asked the Commission to not allow any project to move forward until parking requirements are updated to reflect the updated General Plan recommendation.

Mary Daval discussed creating an alternative to the current system of parking minimums before more developments move forward; concern with adding parking spaces above what is required; increased traffic congestion; setting precedent for further development; staffing levels in the City; length of time to generate reports; viable alternatives to parking mandates; incentivizing employees not to drive to work; providing additional mobility options; the need for housing and putting a hold on non-housing projects; incentivizing projects that encourage active transportation; and she asked the Commission to wait for a parking zone amendment before moving forward.

Joseph Fuchs, Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters, provided background on himself; discussed environmental impacts of the project; numerous benefits to requiring the project to use local hire of a skilled and trained workforce; and the actions of other cities.

Deborah Gregory, Ballona Creek Renaissance, expressed appreciation for the presentation; discussed the lack of consideration for Ballona Creek; developments along the

Creek; parking structures abutting the Creek; the opportunity to make the project a deeper buffer zone; use of native plantings; solving environmental problems not just human problems; lighting issues on the top of the parking structure; and she supported waiting for a parking zoning amendment prior to approving the project.

Linda T. thanked the architects, Commission and staff for their efforts on the project; echoed previous comments about parking; discussed balancing the needs of tenants against the needs of the City; taking holistic changes in the City into consideration; mobility projects in the City; amending parking for the project; benefits of reducing driving to everyone; she wanted to see the project revisited after zoning changes are made; and she asked about noise from the HVAC system.

Meghan Sahli-Wells discussed the nexus between providing parking and driving; space in the project for cars vs. space for people; transportation as the number one source of greenhouse gas emissions in California; proximity of the project to mobility options in the City; concern with the parking footprint; embracing mobility; use of the project for housing; she expressed support for the local hire initiative and comments from other speakers; she felt that the project could embrace Ballona Creek; and she asked that the Commission wait for the reform of parking codes before the project and others like it are approved.

Jordan Backer was called to speak but was not present on Webex.

Bubba Fish discussed transportation as the single largest contributor to greenhouse gases in California; incentivizing car use; increased traffic; providing more parking than is required; the recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Housing and Homelessness; the need to reform parking requirements to address issues before any additional projects with large parking structures are approved; traffic; noise; proximity to mobility solutions; and concern that the project is stuck in the past.

Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director, discussed the Design Checklist and establishing objective standards.

Jose Mendivil, Associate Planner, discussed current parking requirements; excess parking proposed by the developers; the

sewer easement in the area between the office building and the parking structure; access to the Ballona Creek Bike Path; and involving other agencies that control what happens on Ballona Creek.

Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director, discussed building configuration on the lot; preserving the building frontage; and limitations relative to the easement.

John Bowman, Elkins Kalt, addressed comments regarding parking; policy considerations; the fact that the site is not in an identified Transit Priority Area or within one half mile of a major transit stop in a high quality transit corridor as defined by state law; preliminary discussions about improving bus service; the need to provide parking in accordance with the demand of the marketplace; parking ratios needed in order to lease the space; components to improve mobility and accessibility included in the current project; comments regarding requiring the use of a local skilled and trained workforce to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; the Class 32 exemption study; lack of authority of the Commission to delay taking action on the project pending potential amendments to the code; and taking a moratorium on development.

Mark Hershman, Shubin Donaldson Architects, clarified that no mechanical systems would be located on the parking structure; discussed position of the parking structure; natural ventilation; concern with noise pollution for residential neighbors; updated mechanical systems for the existing buildings and the new portion emitting reduced noise levels; air compressors; work to hide visual impacts; and confidence that sound impacts would not be heavy.

Discussion ensued between project representatives, staff and Commissioners regarding the parking garage design; the inability to use flat floor plates for adaptability; support for becoming less dependent on cars; the sewer easement; length of time the project has been in development; the entitlement process; City plans to improve transportation; the speed of change; being more friendly to alternative transportation; ways to achieve policy objectives; constraints of the site; and current market conditions.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER REILMAN, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OGOSTA AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding support for the thoughtful design; addressing site challenges; the fact that the project meets the code; the job of architects; addressing parking at a later date; number of new trips per day; concern with negative impacts to resident quality of life with increased traffic in the area; the housing crisis; a suggestion to pause the project and add housing units; empty office space in the City; concern that the project does not benefit the City; Commission purview; allowing more photovoltaic without additional review; appreciation for preservation of existing features; the easement; leasing pressure; controlling solar glare and heat gain; alternate wording to allow flexibility for additional photovoltaic panels; inducing parking demand by 31 spots; the actions of other cities to change policies around parking requirements; worsening the jobs/housing imbalance; how soon changes can take place; the entitlement process; the inability to retroactively require changes; the upcoming Commission calendar and the code amendment; length of time to draft the code amendment; time spent addressing Commissioner comments; getting to the point of unanimity with drafting code; linkage fees; Commission purview; the Permit Streamlining Act; legal risks to delaying the project for something that might change in the future; accommodations made by the developer in response to neighbor concerns; communication with the developer; current conditions; noise issues; issues that those who abut the Creek deal with every day; beautification efforts in the back; preservation of the building; the net new creation of 9,000 square feet of office space beyond what is there; clarification that there is a Site Plan Review application in front of the Commission rather than a policy review; finding a way to have a garage with flat floor plates; allowing for unused parking to be adapted to another use in the future; conditioning above grade parking; additional language regarding solar structure; and bringing back the garage for a conformance review if modification were proposed related to accommodating an adaptable building in the future.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding a proposed amendment to Condition 12e to indicate: "In the event the applicant chooses to increase the solar capacity of the project, it may be approved administratively provided it has been demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Director that it is not visible to the residential properties to the north."; development of a second condition to address the garage; visibility of the solar structure; line of sight;

the inability to maximize photovoltaic with the requirements to diminish visibility; landscaping; approval of minor changes to projects; clarification that there is no intent to slow the project down; the ability to make minor changes without additional wording; conditions of approval; major and minor change provisions of the zoning code; the TAP card subsidy; redesign of the garage to accommodate adaptability in the future; additional wording to indicate that future building modifications to convert the parking structure to residential use shall be subject to conformance review; a suggestion to expand the footprint of the garage now to accommodate a speed ramp; creating a fundamental change to the garage; the need for Commission review of substantive changes; factors in the zoning code that determine whether a change is major or minor; language in the findings that assume the project is as currently presented; compliance with code requirements; and allowing staff time to confer with the parking consultant and project representatives to understand the occupancy number in the office building.

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Recess/Reconvene

The Planning Commission called a brief recess from 9:21 p.m. to 9:29 p.m.

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Item PH-1
(Continued)

PC - PUBLIC HEARING: Consideration of a Site Plan Review to allow construction of a 51,178 square foot office building and a 70,739 square foot parking structure at 9925 Jefferson Boulevard

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding the employee obligation number; clarification on Condition 9 regarding number of employees; and the addition to Condition 12 regarding the solar structure.

MOVED BY CHAIR SAYLES AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER REILMAN THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION: ADOPT A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION, AND APPROVING SITE PLAN REVIEW P2021-0218-SPR, SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL INCLUDING CLARIFICATION TO CONDITION 9 TO INSERT THE LANGUAGE "204

EMPLOYEES" IN LIEU OF THE FILL IN NUMBER, AND THE ADDITION OF TEXT REGARDING THE SOLAR STRUCTURES IN CONDITION 12 AS WORDED BY STAFF.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: BARBA, OGOSTA, REILMAN, SAYLES
NOES: CARTER

Chair Sayles thanked everyone for their efforts in the process and she encouraged those interested in parking to watch upcoming agendas for continued discussion of parking items.

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Public Comment - Items NOT on the Agenda (Continued)

Chair Sayles invited public comment.

The following member of the public addressed the Commission:

Karim Sahli expressed disappointment that the Commission was not able to delay the project and he questioned when the Commission would be able to consider parking reform.

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Receipt of Correspondence

None.

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Items from Planning Commissioners/Staff

Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director, discussed items for consideration at upcoming meetings.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding Planning Commission consideration of remaining elements in the General Plan; staff agreement to provide the schedule moving forward to Commissioners; transmittal of the Housing Element to HCD; implementation measures; the timeframe for addressing any penalties; staffing recruitment efforts; and the large number of retirements.

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Adjournment

There being no further business, at 9:46 p.m., the Culver City Planning Commission adjourned to a meeting to be held on February 23, 2022.

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RUTH MARTIN DEL CAMPO
ADMINISTRATIVE CLERK of the CULVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED _____

DANA SAYLES
CHAIR of the CULVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Culver City, California

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that, on the date below written, these minutes were filed in the Office of the City Clerk, Culver City, California and constitute the Official Minutes of said meeting.

Jeremy Green
CITY CLERK

Date