

Town of Los Altos Hills
Planning Commission Regular Meeting
May 4, 2023 Minutes

Zoom Meeting and Town Hall, 26379 Fremont Road, Los Altos Hills, California

1. ROLL CALL AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Waschura called the May 4, 2023 Planning Commission Regular meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Patel, Commissioner Couperus, Commissioner Indaco, Vice-Chair Bredo,
Chair Waschura

Absent: None

Staff: Senior Planner Ling, Associate Planner Loh, Administrative Clerk/Technician Brunner,
Interim Projects Manager Padovan

2. PRESENTATIONS FROM THE FLOOR

Chair Waschura opened PRESENTATIONS FROM THE FLOOR.

No presentations from the floor.

Chair Waschura closed PRESENTATIONS FROM THE FLOOR.

3. CONSENT CALENDAR

3.1 Approval of February 15, 2023 Special Meeting Minutes

Chair Waschura called for a unanimous vote for approval of the Consent Calendar.

The Planning Commission approved the Consent Calendar as presented with all “ayes.”

MOTION MADE AND SECONDED: Chair Waschura moved to approve Consent Calendar containing the April 25, 2023 Special Planning Commission meeting minutes as presented.

No second was required.

MOTION PASSED: 5-0-0-0-0

AYES: Commissioner Patel, Commissioner Couperus, Commissioner Indaco,
Vice-Chair Bredo, Chair Waschura

NOES: None

ABSTAIN: None

RECUSE: None

ABSENT: None

4. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Planning Commission Ex Parte

Commissioner Patel had communications with Barry Smith, neighbor to the applicant, on Item 4.2.

Commissioner Couperus had communications with Barry Smith, neighbor to the applicant, and **Commissioner Indaco** on Item 4.2.

Commissioner Indaco had communications with **Commissioner Couperus**, Barry and Julie Smith, neighbors to the applicant, and the applicants Branden and Taryn Merkley, and Carol Gottlieb from the Environmental Design and Protection Committee (EDPC) on Item 4.2.

Vice-Chair Bredo had communications with the neighbors to the applicants, the Smiths on Item 4.2.

Chair Waschura had communications with Barry Smith, neighbor to the applicant, and the applicant on Item 4.2.

- 4.1 [27790 Stirrup Way – File #SD22-0032 – Lands of Parikh](#)
Site Development Permit for a new 5,000 square-foot residence with 2,861 square-foot basement.
CEQA review: Categorical Exemption per Section 15303(a)
Continued from March 2, 2023 Planning Commission Hearing
Project Planner: Jeremy Loh

Chair Waschura noted that this agenda item was continued to a date uncertain.

- 4.2 [APN 336-35-044 \(water storage tanks near 24752 Olive Tree Lane\) – File #CUP22-0004 – Lands of California Water Service Company](#)
Planning Commission hearing for two new chemical storage sheds, one containing 40% concentration Ammonium Sulfate and one containing Sodium Hypochlorite; chemicals needed to prevent nitrification of water during purification process.
CEQA review: Categorical Exemption per Section 15301(b)g
Project Planner: Jeremy Loh

Associate Planner Loh presented the staff report and noted a correction on the file number to be VAR23-0001.

A question-and-answer session between the Commissioners and staff ensued.

Chair Waschura opened the PUBLIC HEARING.

The applicant, **Brendon Merkley**, introduced himself and his wife, Taryn, and spoke to the Commission about their proposed project and their design approach.

Chair Waschura asked the applicant about his architect, who was present at the hearing. He also inquired about the roof pitch choice.

The applicant introduced his architect, **Chris**, who was present at the hearing, and provided the Commission with an answer.

A question-and-answer session between the Commissioners and the applicant and his architect regarding roof pitch and potential solar installations ensued.

Public Comment

Barry Smith, a neighbor to the applicant, shared a presentation and spoke on behalf of him and his wife, **Julie**, against the proposed design as it pertained to the proposed roof design.

Brendon Merkley, the applicant, offered rebuttal comments to the concerns raised by public comment.

Commissioner Indaco asked the applicant a question about some of the existing trees on the property and the applicant's architect and staff responded. She noted her wish for T(ree) 18 to remain.

Chair Waschura asked about the cost of an architectural change at this time and the applicant declined to name a particular number, but noted that it would represent a significant expense and would require demolishing the existing home, instead of preserving most of the existing structure, as the current design represents.

Chair Waschura closed the PUBLIC HEARING.

Commissioner Discussion

Commissioner Couperus began the Commission discussion by sharing a presentation highlighting past development projects and how those were relevant to later re-development decisions.

Senior Planner Ling provided the Commission with clarifying comments specific to a variance application and how this project satisfied all of the requirements.

Chair Waschura asked **Commissioner Couperus** clarifying questions regarding his presentation and comments and **Commissioner Couperus** provided responses.

Interim Projects Manager Padovan offered further clarifying comments regarding projects requesting variances.

A question-and-answer session between the **Commission** and **Mr. Padovan** ensued.

Commissioner Indaco shared a presentation and offered comments, using an earlier commission item as an example to highlight her thought process. She then shared photos of the current project's proposed development and provided the following suggestions for changes:

- utilize the 40' front area outside of the setback area
- keep the hip roof less than or equal to 16'
- utilize the western side for expansion
- keep the trees on the eastern side that do not pose a threat to falling
- relocate the 2 nonconforming open parking spaces anywhere on the lot

Commissioner Patel offered comments regarding requesting applicants to provide uncovered on-site parking in the setback and noted his concerns regarding the roof structure.

Vice-Chair Bredo agreed with fellow commissioners' earlier statements regarding the visual impact of the proposed roof design and parking considerations.

Chair Waschura shared an image, provided comments, and noted his concerns regarding the proposed increased roof mass and its visual impact. He noted that he was disappointed that this project had progressed to its current state with this issue and suggested that planning staff may need further clarification to address this for future projects.

The applicant, **Brendon Merkley**, was invited to respond to Chair Waschura's comments.

Commission discussion ensued.

MOTION MADE AND SECONDED: Commissioner Waschura motioned to CONTINUE to a date uncertain, requesting the applicant to modify their design to address solutions to placement of additional parking and reducing the roof's height and mass along the eastern side, suggesting the leveraging the use of the 40' setback in the front and more of the western side of the property.

The motion was seconded by **Commissioner Patel**.

MOTION PASSED: 5-0-0-0-0

AYES:	Commissioner Patel, Commissioner Couperus, Commissioner Indaco, Vice-Chair Bredo, Chair Waschura
NOES:	None
ABSTAIN:	None
RECUSE:	None
ABSENT:	None

5. REPORTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS

5.1 Upcoming Meeting Assignments

- May 17, 2023 – Chair Waschura
- May 25, 2023, Special Joint – Vice-Chair Bredo
- June 15, 2023 – Commissioner Couperus

Chair Washura confirmed the upcoming meeting assignments and all affirmed.

6. REPORT ON PAST FAST TRACK/SITE DEVELOPMENT MEETINGS

6.1 MAY 2, 2023

25091 Tepa Way – File #SD22-0085 – Lands of Reddy and Ravula

New 3,744 square-foot two-story residence, 830 square-foot detached garage, 629 square-foot pool and spa, and 450 square-foot attached ADU. VERDICT

13867 Robleda Road – File #SD22-0086 – Lands of Kurmann

Site Development Permit for a new 4,948 square-foot residence, 837 square-foot pool and spa, and 850 square-foot detached ADU. VERDICT

Associate Planner Jeremy Loh provided updates on past Site Development/Fast Track meetings, noting they were both approved, noting SD22-0085 had no additional conditions and SD22-0086 had additional conditions.

A question-and-answer session between the Commission and staff ensued regarding the projects.

8. PLANNING DEPARTMENT REPORT

Senior Planner Ling provided the Commission with an update regarding an upcoming May 11, 2023 California Housing and Community Development (HCD) meeting.

Senior Planner Ling noted efforts on developing a new Reach Code proposal and has been working on potentially granting a contract with ID360 for remodeling the Reach Code updates, with additional work on providing a solar panel auto-permitting system.

Additionally, she noted continued efforts with CentralSquare to complete automating online submittal capabilities for all planning, building, and engineering submittals, which would eliminate the need for phone calls, emails, and in-person visits for application submittals.

A question-and-answer session between the Commission and staff ensued regarding Reach Codes.

Interim Projects Manager Padovan noted that the planning department conducted interviews for a new assistant planner but not sure if the selected candidate accepted the Town's offer.

Commissioner Indaco inquired about a backfilling the Planning Director position.

Interim Projects Manager Padovan noted that the planning department has engaged a head hunter but the timeline for hiring was not clear.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 8:36 PM by **Chair Waschura**.

Respectfully submitted,

Keren Brunner

Keren Brunner
Administrative Clerk/Technician