

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

A regular meeting held at the La Quinta City Hall
78-495 Calle Tampico, La Quinta, CA

March 25, 2008

7:00 P.M.

I. CALL TO ORDER

- A. This meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order at 7:03 p.m. by Vice Chairperson Barrows who asked Commissioner Engle to lead the flag salute.
- B. Present: Commissioners Jim Engle, Paul Quill, Robert Wilkinson, and Vice Chairperson Katie Barrows. Absent: Chairman Ed Alderson.
- C. Staff present: Planning Director Les Johnson, Assistant City Attorney Michael Houston, Principal Planner Andy Mogensen, Assistant Planner Yvonne Franco, Executive Secretary Carolyn Walker, Secretary Monika Radeva.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

III. PRESENTATION: None.

IV. CONFIRMATION OF THE AGENDA: Confirmed.

V. CONSENT ITEMS:

- A. Vice Chairperson Barrows asked if there were any changes to the Minutes of March 11, 2008. There being none, it was moved and seconded by Commissioners Quill/Engle to approve the minutes as submitted. Unanimously approved.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- A. Site Development Permit 2007-894; a request of The Quarry at La Quinta for consideration of Architectural and Landscaping Plans for Expansion of a Maintenance Yard Facility located on the south side of Cahuilla Park Drive, west of South Jefferson Street, north of Tom Fazio Lane.

Vice Chairperson Barrows opened the public hearing and asked for the staff report. Principal Planner Andrew Mogensen presented the information contained in the staff report, a copy of which is on file in the Planning Department.

Vice Chairperson Barrows asked if there were any questions of staff. Commissioner Quill asked about Cahuilla Park Road being a right-of-way and if the road is on Federal land. Staff said it was a Federal easement.

Commissioner Quill said Cahuilla Park is managed by the County and Lake Cahuilla is managed by the Coachella Valley Water District on Bureau Of Reclamation land. He asked staff if the Quarry had access rights to use this road. Staff said they researched this and the Quarry does have the right to use this road and explained the details of the access easement for the Quarry.

Commissioner Quill asked if the light fixtures were hooded. Staff said they would be hooded. Commissioner Quill asked if they would be low pressure sodium lights. Staff suggested the applicant answer this question.

Commissioner Quill said his biggest concern was parking for the maintenance workers. Staff presented a slide which pointed out the parking spaces available to the workers, and maintenance vehicles, showing more parking than currently available.

Commissioner Quill asked if the parking lot at the tennis court was available for maintenance workers. Staff suggested the applicant respond to this question.

Commissioner Quill asked why the City was involved with processing an application for a private facility. Staff said it was to be processed the same as any other application.

There being no further questions of staff, Vice Chairperson Barrows asked if the applicant would like to address the Commission.

Mr. Chuck Mc Bride, Architect, 77-980 Wildcat Drive #2, Palm Desert, introduced himself and said the applicant had not specified what type of light fixtures would be used. He added the auxiliary parking lot (for the spa area and tennis courts) would be available for employee parking.

He did have a comment on the recommendation to increase the height of the four-foot wall on Tom Fazio Lane. He said the four-foot wall currently exists and was originally built under old construction codes. It would not be feasible to just add height to it. They would have to tear down the wall and build a new one which would not be economically feasible. He requested they work with staff on a landscaping buffer to screen the buildings and retain the current wall.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked about the meetings with the residents and asked if they had spoken with the residents across the street from the wall. Mr. McBride said the existing building could be seen over the wall now. The new buildings would be equal in their exposure factor.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked what the landscaping solution was. Mr. McBride said the landscaping has always been a situation of working with staff to effectively use the existing palette for screening on Tom Fazio Lane and Cahuilla Park Road. Mr. McBride said they agreed to the landscaping proposed.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked if Public Works has said it was not feasible to add height to the wall. Mr. McBride said this wall was put up a long time ago and was never intended to withstand the extra load. The new wall would be approximately \$100,000.

Commissioner Quill said there is currently an unkempt Oleander hedge on Cahuilla Boulevard. He asked Mr. McBride what they were planning on doing there, bearing in mind water usage. Would they be amenable to pulling those out and using more desert, drought-tolerant plant materials. Mr. McBride said yes they were, as well as including boulders and various other desert-type plant materials. They would like to maintain the natural look and need to work with staff to achieve it.

Commissioner Quill said they need to make it look nice, but as a more natural, desert landscape and still provide the type of screening that has been suggested. He mentioned the use of Palo Verde trees Mr. McBride agreed and said there are some existing mesquite trees.

Commissioner Quill said there are always cars parked to the left of the main entrance on the extension of Jefferson Street. They look like they are maintenance-type workers. Since it is not a parking lot, how is the Quarry solving that issue. Mr. McBride said the question came up once before and it was not the maintenance crew and said it could be sub-contractors or private cars of other workers.

Commissioner Quill asked if they were employees of the Quarry. Mr. McBride said they were not.

Commissioner Quill said getting the staff of the golf course to pay attention to the exterior of their maintenance facility has always been a challenge in terms of maintaining the landscaping, especially along Cahuilla Parkway. The complaint is consistently they don't have time or staff to keep up the landscaping. However, this is a very visible area. He asked what the Quarry could do to ensure the outside landscaping was maintained. Mr. McBride said they have agreed to enhance the landscaping and it would normally be construed that the maintenance would be performed on a regular basis and suggested a Condition of Approval could be added to address that issue.

Vice Chairperson Barrows said there needed to be additional treatment along the slope and she didn't see any suggestions from the landscape architect addressing that. She was glad that staff suggested it. It is a difficult area to landscape and it doesn't look finished. She recommended the incorporation of more native landscape such as brittle bush or Palo Verde as a substitute for the Oleanders to blend in with the surroundings. She added there is the potential to put some sort of wells along the slopes, or add trees to make it look like a finished landscape instead of just a dirt slope.

Vice Chairperson Barrows asked staff which condition referenced the block wall. Staff replied Condition of Approval Number 42 on Page 18.

Commissioner Quill said, knowing the caliber of the people living within the community, if there's an issue with the wall being too low the individuals living there will contact the General Manager to repair it. He personally did not have any issues with the wall being left at four-feet. He said if they want to keep the wall, the Commission should include in the minutes that they suggested it be raised, the applicant chose not to follow the recommendation, and the City should not be responsible for any future issues relating to that wall. It should never again come back to the City for discussion. He added the General Manager was at the meeting, chose not to follow the suggestion, and any future issues should be directed to him. It's a private community and this should be handled by them.

Vice Chairperson Barrows suggested the additional landscape screening be added to the Conditions of Approval.

Vice Chairperson Barrows asked if there was any public comment.

There being no further public comment, Vice Chairperson Barrows closed the public participation portion of the meeting and opened the matter for Commission discussion.

Commissioner Engle agreed with Commissioner Quill regarding allowing the wall at its current height with appropriate landscape screening.

Vice Chairperson Barrows asked Commissioner Engle if he meant Condition of Approval No. 42 be changed to allow the wall and add more landscape screening. Commissioner Engle deferred to Commissioner Quill on his definition.

Commissioner Quill suggested the Condition should state the City suggested the wall be raised, but it is only a suggestion and discussed at the public hearing. He said he would also like to see a Condition added requesting hooded lights on all the buildings and definitely no projected light. He would like to add a condition on the landscaping of the slope and berm, the entire length of Cahuilla Park Road, which suggests the Oleanders be pulled out, and possibly the wall be painted and landscaping be done in a conducive manner to the area surrounding it using Palo Verde. He suggested the applicant use drip-irrigation, and using the definition of native versus drought-tolerant; the Commission would like this landscaping to be native.

Vice Chairperson Barrows asked if the suggestion was the second sentence of Condition No. 51 be changed to state: "The applicant shall replace all of the original Oleanders with an improved screening material which incorporates native species such as Palo Verde, Brittle Bush, and others." She said it will be challenging on the slope, but it can be made more natural looking without using Oleanders. The Commission will be looking at these changes when the revised landscaping plan comes back to them.

Commissioner Quill had a question about the wash racks. He asked if they were being designed to be environmentally-friendly. Mr. McBride said they were, explained the system being used, and said it was fully approved by the Coachella Valley Water District.

There being no further discussion, it was moved and seconded by Commissioners Quill/Engle adopt Resolution 2008-010 approving Site Development Permit 2007-894, as recommended and amended:

- a. Condition 42 be deleted in its entirety and replaced with the following: "The Planning Commission permits the applicant's request to maintain the existing block wall along Tom Fazio Lane at four feet in height, when measured from the street side. The Planning Commission discussed this item during their March 25, 2008 public hearing and suggested this wall be raised to a six foot height."
- b. Delete second sentence of Condition 51 and replace it with: "The applicant shall remove the Oleanders and replace them with native plant species compatible with the surrounding landscaping."
- c. Add a sentence to Condition 41 which states: "The perimeter wall along Cahuilla Park Road shall be repainted."

ROLL CALL: AYES: Commissioners Engle, Quill, Wilkinson, and Vice Chairperson Barrows. NOES: None. ABSENT: Chairman Alderson. ABSTAIN: None.

- B. Sign Program 2007-1165, Amendment No. 1; a request of Imperial Sign Company, Inc. for consideration of a Proposed Sign Program Amendment for Permanent Business Identification Signage for Applebee's Restaurant located at 45-305 Seeley Drive.

Commissioner Engle recused himself and left the meeting.

Vice Chairperson Barrows opened the public hearing and asked for the staff report. Assistant Planner Yvonne Franco presented the information contained in the staff report, a copy of which is on file in the Planning Department.

Vice Chairperson Barrows asked if there were questions of staff.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked for clarification of the various options. Staff explained what each option involved.

Commissioner Quill asked what staff was recommending. Staff replied Option Two.

Planning Manager David Sawyer said it would be similar to signs two and three in size and style. He then explained why Option Two was preferable.

Commissioner Quill asked if the size of the sign was larger than that previous approved. Planning Manager Sawyer said the size of the sign is bigger because of the inclusion of the cabinet. He explained there was some flexibility included in the condition to allow a more proportionate match up with the area of the stone.

Commissioner Quill asked what the difference was in size from the original sign. Staff replied the original sign was 47.35 square feet and this sign was 93.5 square feet.

Commissioner Quill asked if the proposed sign was compatible with the Municipal Code. Planning Manager Sawyer said if signs two and three were to equal 50 square feet it would be consistent.

Vice Chairperson Barrows asked if there was an example of Option Two but similar to what was shown on the screen with wraparounds. Staff said no.

There being no further questions of staff, Vice Chairperson Barrows asked if the applicant would like to address the Commission.

Applicant's representative, Abe Sackett, Chief Operating Officer, said he was available to answer any questions. He said they would like to have the sign the way they have proposed it. They would like to keep the wraparound sign. This is a more attractive and easier to maintain sign.

The second option would be similar to this. Mr. Sackett said this design represents the new Applebee's logo. La Quinta would be one of the first restaurants to have the new design.

Vice Chairperson Barrows asked if there were any questions of the applicant. There being no further questions of the applicant, Vice Chairperson Barrows asked if there was any other public comment.

There being no public comment, the public hearing was closed and the item was opened for Commission discussion.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked if the discussion was regarding the sign on the eastern elevation. Staff said yes.

Commissioner Quill said he wasn't that concerned about the sign as submitted since it is not as large as one of the big box signs.

Vice Chairperson Barrows asked staff if Option One is within the sign program, and without a size problem. Staff replied Option One would require approval of the adjustments to have the increase in the sign ordinance.

Commissioner Wilkinson asked what the size adjustment would be. Staff explained what the adjustments would need to be to receive approval to allow signage on the east elevation. Commissioner Wilkinson asked if a sign would be allowed on the east application under the current sign program. Staff said no.

Planning Manager Sawyer said the first sign adjustment would be to allow the applicant to locate on the east side of the building and the second adjustment would be to allow a wall sign of more than 50 square feet. He then went on to explain the appropriate sections of the Sign Code.

Applicant's representative, Mr. Sackett explained how the sign was measured explaining the dimensions included the cabinet.

Commissioner Wilkinson was concerned as to how much more square footage would have to be allowed.

Vice Chairperson Barrows asked about an exhibit for Option Two. Staff said they did not have an exhibit that showed the dimensions. Planning Manager Sawyer said the approved signage was included in the original sign program and would be similar to that which was shown on the overhead screen.

Commissioner Wilkinson said the wraparound would have a better finished look than Option Two, which would have exposed edges.

Commissioner Quill asked if there would be stone behind the sign. Mr. Sackett said yes.

Vice Chairperson Barrows said the sign was attractive and she did not have a problem with it.

There being no further discussion, it was moved and seconded by Commissioners Quill/Wilkinson to adopt Minute Motion 2008-010 approving Sign Application 2007-1165, Amendment No. 1 as recommended with the following amendment:

- a. Delete Recommendations 2 and 3 and accept all others.

Unanimously approved.

Commissioner Engle rejoined the meeting.

VII. BUSINESS ITEMS:

- A. Discussion of the upcoming Planners Institute Conference, March 26-28, 2008. A report will be given at the next meeting.
- B. Discussion of the April 1st City Council meeting which will include the Eden Rock project. Modifications were made to the project following the Planning Commission's recommendations. The reductions requested were included and a description of all the changes was given. A report will be given to the Commission at their April 8th meeting.
- C. Vice Chairperson Katie Barrows stated she will be unable to attend the April 8th meeting.

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE AND WRITTEN MATERIAL: None

IX. COMMISSIONER ITEMS: None

X. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business, it was moved and seconded by Commissioners Quill/Engle to adjourn this regular meeting of the Planning Commission to a regular meeting to be held on April 8, 2008. This regular meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m. on March 25, 2008.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Walker, Executive Secretary
City of La Quinta, California