



TOWN OF TIBURON  
Tiburon Town Hall  
1505 Tiburon Boulevard  
Tiburon, CA 94920

Action and Approved Minutes - Regular Meeting  
Design Review Board  
October 6, 2011  
7:00 P.M.

## ACTION MINUTES #15 TIBURON DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

### CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL At 7:00 PM

**Present:** Chairman Kricensky, Vice Chair Emberson and Boardmember Johnson

**Absent:** Boardmembers Chong and Tollini

**Ex-Officio:** Planning Manager Watrous and Minutes Clerk Rusting

### PUBLIC HEARINGS AND NEW BUSINESS

1. **460 RIDGE ROAD:** File No. 711085; Amalfi West, LLC, Owner; Site Plan and Architectural Review for construction of a new two-story single-family dwelling, with a Floor Area Exception. The applicants propose to demolish more than 50% of an existing two-story dwelling and construct a new dwelling. The house would have a total floor area of 4,840 square feet that would exceed the floor area ratio of 4,479 square feet for a lot of this size by 361 square feet. A series of retaining walls up to 6 feet in height would be constructed on either side of the relocated driveway, along with a series of retaining walls creating a terraced lawn area at the rear of the property. Assessor's Parcel No. 059-082-04. Continued to 11/3/11

### MINUTES

2. Regular Meeting of August 18, 2011 Approved 3-0

### ADJOURNMENT At 8:30 PM

### APPROVED MINUTES #15 TIBURON DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MEETING OF OCTOBER 6, 2011

The meeting was opened at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Kricensky.

#### A. ROLL CALL

**Present:** Chair Kricensky, Vice-Chair Emberson, Boardmember Johnson

**Absent:** Boardmembers Chong and Tollini

**Ex-Officio:** Planning Manager Watrous and Minutes Clerk Rusting

#### B. PUBLIC COMMENTS - None

## C. STAFF BRIEFING

Planning Manager Watrous welcomed Greg Johnson, the newest Boardmember, to the Design Review Board. He also announced that no items are currently scheduled for the October 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## D. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND NEW BUSINESS

1. **460 RIDGE ROAD:** File No. 711085; Amalfi West, LLC, Owner; Site Plan and Architectural Review for construction of a new two-story single-family dwelling. The applicants propose to demolish more than 50% of an existing two-story dwelling and construct a new dwelling. The house would have a total floor area of 4,340 square feet. A series of retaining walls up to 6 feet in height would be constructed on either side of the relocated driveway, along with a series of retaining walls creating a terraced lawn area at the rear of the property. Assessor's Parcel No. 059-082-04.

The applicant is requesting Design Review approval for the construction of a new two-story single-family dwelling on property located at 460 Ridge Road. The subject site is currently developed with an existing two-story dwelling. The project will demolish most (over 50%) of the floor area of the existing building. The upper floor of the house would include a master bedroom suite, along with four additional bedrooms and two more bathrooms. The lower floor would include a living room, dining room, kitchen, den and powder room. A "basement" level off the lower floor would include a storage room, laundry room, bathroom, and one additional "basement room" with closet. A two-car garage would be attached to the lower level. A terraced lawn area would be created to the rear of the house, supported by low retaining walls. A series of retaining walls up to 6 feet in height would be constructed on either side of the relocated driveway. A driveway gate would be installed closer to the new driveway apron at Ridge Road.

The house would cover a total of 3,670 square feet (14.8%) of the site, which would be less than the 15.0% maximum lot coverage permitted in the RO-2 zone. The floor area of the proposed house would be 4,840 square feet, with 700 square feet indicated as basement space. The total floor area requested of would exceed the floor area ratio of 4,340 square feet, which is less than the floor area ratio for a lot of this size.

Michael Rex, architect, said that his firm had been added to the team as a planning consultant. He explained the existing site is over one-half acre and includes a relatively small 2,600 square foot house. He said most people would knock down the house, but the owner would like to save portions of it and work with the existing footprint. He said that the new home would be sited in the center of the lot and expand to the east side. He pointed out a large amount of open space around the house and said that all of the neighbors look away from the site except for the homes across the street. He said that there are potential view issues from three homes and their goals for the project involved staying out of those views and honoring the Town's Hillside Guidelines. He described the side elevations showing the house stepping up the grade and noted that much of the house would be underground. They proposed to remove the fill from the original house construction and build in that area on the original grade. He said that there would be some terracing in the back of the property and they would like to stack up the rock on the site into some low retaining walls, each no more than three feet high.

Mr. Rex said that there have been some concerns from neighbors regarding the eastern expansion. He said that the proposed house would be well below the other homes and dug into the hill, which would allow the house to be lower into the hill than originally proposed. He shared photos taken from the neighboring property showing the existing home and explained that the chimney would be removed and the tallest part of the house would be in the middle, at the same height as the highest point of the current roof. He addressed the concerns about view blockage by the owner at 480 Ridge Road by sharing a photo taken from that location showing mature pines that block the story poles. He stated that after the story poles went up the owner at 480 Ridge Road went onto the subject property and trimmed those trees without permission. He stated that even that amount of view blockage would be very minor, and he did not know how the photo submitted by the neighbor of the story poles blocking a view of the Golden Gate Bridge

could have been taken. He said that they propose to install a 10-foot hedge to block the view from the lower neighboring property. He said that there are only two small windows at the back of that neighbor's home and all of his views are in the other direction.

Mr. Rex acknowledged that there had been some questions about light and glare. He said that there would be very little glass facing the home at 480 Ridge Road, and the garage and walk-in closet in the master bedroom would block a lot of the light. He also stated that the neighbor's Pine trees would only allow him to see the rooftop. He stated that some screening that is mostly Acacia exists between the property and 480 Ridge Road, but would be removed for the modified driveway. He said that they would replant this area and take the opportunity to bring in better plantings and screen the walls. He explained that the owner wants privacy and it is in everyone's mutual interest to put in the plantings and maintain them.

Mr. Rex said that the biggest concern raised by staff was the grading. He said that a fair amount of excavation will be needed to sink a house down on the site. He said that the plantings would soften views of the house and make it barely visible. He said that the grading would involve about 200 trucks driving down to remove the dirt from the site, but that amount of excavation would not be unusual and the house will be there for decades. He characterized the excavation as a reasonable request given the permanent solution the house will provide and said that they were willing to better develop the plans to clarify the landscaping plans.

Mr. Rex said that he had just finished another project in Sausalito with similar view issues and it went well. He believed the owner is very sincere and wants to protect privacy and views of neighbors, but in order to do this, they needed this amount of grading. He also said that the floor area exception was necessary so the house would not look out of place, stating that much of the floor area of the home would be below grade. He stated that the additional 360 feet they were requesting was similar to other projects recently approved with floor area exceptions. He compared the current project's lot to other recent examples in the vicinity and said that they were asking for 1.4% over what is allowed, while other projects had higher percentages.

Lowell Strauss, representing Amalfi West, LLC, presented photos of similar projects recently approved with retaining walls and graded driveways.

Vice-Chair Emberson requested clarification regarding the roofline. Mr. Rex explained that the plans show an eight foot ceiling height rising an additional four feet in the master bedroom. He said that it was higher originally and they brought it down after talking with neighbors. He said that the word "new" was added to distinguish the revision, and there should be a line at the top that says "proposed roofline."

The public hearing was opened.

James Bernhisel said that the project represents a critical change in the development pattern of the neighborhood. He said that this project would alter that pattern by moving the house all the way down to the south and east of the property. He said that this would reduce the value of his home and limit his ability to add onto his home. He pointed out that the existing structure is to the side of his property, and the new proposed structure would be in front of his home. He also said that the landscaping plan was inadequate. He was concerned about the lighting affecting his nighttime view and replacing the existing vegetation with large trees would block his views. He would like to see vegetation that does not need to be trimmed, screening of all the windows to the north that face his property and was concerned that cars entering the driveway would be visible.

Lark Halpern questioned the description of the project details. Planning Manager Watrous responded that the numbers listed in the agenda were incorrect, whereas the numbers in the staff report were correct. Ms. Halpern read a letter from Lynn Garay stating that the home would be interesting and attractive but the concerns of the neighbors have merit. She said that she would like to see them build a home which takes into account the concerns of the neighbors and requested the Board postpone the project to address those concerns. Ms. Halpern also read a letter signed by six other neighbors which said that they object to the floor area exception.

Vice-Chair Emberson asked who those neighbors are. Ms. Halpern listed some of the names. Planning Manager Watrous said that those names do not own properties within 300 feet and asked to be given a listing of the addresses, which Ms. Halpern provided.

Ms. Halpern stated that she was concerned about the location of the project so far down the hill. She was also concerned about light pollution and privacy did not see how planted screening would mitigate that.

Angela Danadjieva said that she has lived in her home to the west for over 35 years and knows the neighborhood well. She was pleasantly surprised when she saw the plan. She said that most of the building would be into the hill and she had the same situation in her location but has 25 foot high walls to keep the neighbor above from seeing the house. She thought that the upper neighbors would benefit because currently the house has a pitched roof.

Lisa Lowell, representing her mother Ingrid Freeman who lives across the street, said that they were concerned about a tree that has been a constant headache for decades, and she would like the applicant to state the types of trees that would be planted so they know what to expect. She said that the trees have grown very high and it is hard to see the roofline from across the street. She requested trees to be planted that would not grow above the roofline. She also said it would be great if there could be screening to block the light at night from the windows.

Steve Schwartz said that he had just completed a project on the street. He said that this would be a beautiful addition to the neighborhood. He said that none of the houses on that ridge should expect to have privacy because no one does now due to the open space. He said that he cannot see the existing house at all from his own home and can only see the top of the story poles, which was revealed when the trees were trimmed. He also said that when he looks out of his own house all he sees are lights from the houses below and felt that this is an interesting but not disturbing view.

Jerry Reynolds said that he sees lights of houses below but they are very far away. The concern his wife was discussing was the huge glass area from the dining room that would advance towards the property line that they share. He hoped that the Design Review Board would not see plantings as a solution to privacy issues. He understood that the Board can make a condition of approval for the upkeep of the plantings, but expressed concern about a future property owner who might change the landscaping.

Mr. Strauss addressed some of the neighbors' concerns and said that he was most concerned with affecting people's views and the values of neighboring properties. He said that the first thing he did was spend a lot of time walking around the neighborhood and he approached all of the neighbors to determine any concerns. He said that they would dig the house into the hillside to address concerns of neighbors about view blockage. He said that he had not received any of the letters from neighbors and said that the letter with six signatures was from neighbors that do not live anywhere near the property. He said that the project would improve the view for two of the neighboring properties by removing the chimney on the sloping roof and stated that it would be a tremendous expense to dig the house into the hillside.

Mr. Rex clarified the siting of the existing house relative to the proposed building. He said that they would move the garage to the east and move the driveway entry to get a longer run down to the garage. Otherwise, he said that the house would be in exactly the same place in the north-south direction and the bedroom wing would be in the same place. He said that the only part that would extend to the south was a one-story living room. He objected to the idea that plant material cannot be used to provide privacy and screening and said that this is a standard way of addressing such issues. He said that a condition of approval that landscaping must be cared for would run with the land and not change with ownership of the property. He acknowledged that they need an improved landscape plan and will work on this. He said that trees do not need to grow above the roofline and they would not object to a condition of approval stating that. He said that there are many opportunities to screen the windows. He said that because the house would be so far down he believed that the windows would not be seen, and the height and location of the windows would be similar to those of the existing house. He said that the four foot eaves mean that the story poles make the house look bigger than it would be, and he asked the Board to consider their efforts and support the design.

Chair Kricensky questioned and clarified with Mr. Rex that the areas around the driveway would all be planting area. Planning Manager Watrous pointed out that the landscape plan shows only two trees in that area, and Mr. Rex agreed with the need for a better landscape plan and agreed to provide one.

The public hearing was closed.

Vice-Chair Emberson said that using floor area exception data of other houses is not relevant because every project depends on the site, topography, and other factors. She said that this project involves a tremendous amount of grading. She liked the design of the house but felt that there was too much glass which would affect the neighbors. She said that the driveway would be very steep and seemed like a tunnel. She said that she spoke with the uphill neighbor and once the existing plantings are removed the house would have a large impact on his property. She said that she would like to see some reworking of the plan including a landscape plan that is more complete, and did not think that the amount of grading was sensitive to the site.

Boardmember Johnson asked if conditions of approval can be granted into the deed. Planning Manager Watrous said it is rarely done because it becomes difficult to enforce. He said it is reasonable to have some reliability on landscaping.

Mr. Johnson said that he liked some components of the design. He shared Emberson's sentiments regarding the amount of grading being done, thought that it would be close to being in balance with what the neighbors want and suggested bringing it up a few feet. He thought that did the amount of glazing on the house would create a lot of indirect lighting impacts. He pointed out that the south-facing windows would require coverings and agreed more work needs to be done on the landscape plan. He said that he would like to see a view showing the perspective of the house in relation to the downhill neighbor with screening ideas. He said that the project design was close, but needed more work.

Chair Kricensky said that he was also concerned about the amount of glass on the front of the building. He liked the house and the concept for its design, and felt that lowering the house an extra 2 to 3 feet would make a difference. He suggested that the proposed leveled landscape area would take away some of the naturalness of the site which serves as a buffer for the neighbors. He felt that it is important to look at the overall planning of the area, not just the house. He said that building the house out will limit the area in which the other houses can build.

Vice-Chair Emberson agreed with Chair Kricensky that there is a domino effect that limits the ability of houses below to develop their properties.

Chair Kricensky suggested that other portions of the site could be used and suggested that the house not go so far to the east. He also discussed the view blockage issue and said that even if the trees were not there, there would be very little view blockage from the existing house. He said that most of the grading did not bother him because it was proposed for a reason and he thought that the applicant made a good case for keeping the house down lower to protect views. He said that the hardscape in the lower garden felt unnatural to him. He was not as concerned about the driveway, but was concerned about its direction near the bedroom of the neighboring house.

Vice-Chair Emberson said she did not think that a small re-working of the design would be enough and said that it would help to try to push the addition closer to the center. Mr. Rex said that if the house was low enough they could slide back the upper floor and shift the lower floor more toward the center. Chair Kricensky said the design then becomes almost a two-story building on the first floor if that shift was made. Vice-Chair Emberson pointed out there is a large flat area that is not being used, and Chair Kricensky reiterated that he was concerned about the impact on future development patterns.

<p><b>ACTION:</b> It was M/S (Emberson/Johnson) to continue 460 Ridge Road to the November 3, 2011 meeting. Vote: 3-0.</p>
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**E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES #14 OF THE 8/18/11 DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MEETING**

ACTION: It was M/S (Emberson/Johnson) to approve the minutes of the August 18, 2011 meeting, as written. Vote: 3-0.

**F. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.