

Planning Commission reapproves development project for single-family home

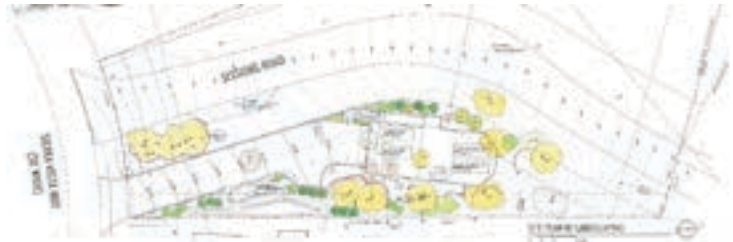


Image courtesy City of Lafayette

By Jennifer Wake

The approval for the construction of a 2,265 sq. ft. single-family residence on an undeveloped parcel in the Hillside Overlay District, located at the intersection of Sierra Vista Way and Sessions Road in Lafayette, returned to the Planning Commission Dec. 5, after nine hearings had already been held regarding the property, with the last approval vote taken in 2021.

According to a staff report by Senior Planner Renata Robles, approvals for the Phase I and Phase II Hillside Development Permits for the project expired on Jan. 27, 2022. "Section 6-250 of the Lafayette Municipal Code allows the Planning Director to extend the approval period for up to one additional year at the request of an applicant," Robles noted in the report. "However, the applicant was unable to submit a request for an extension prior to the approvals expiring."

Owner Robin Holt explained in a letter that they were not able to move forward with the project within the timeframe of the original approval since her son, in mid-2020, was diagnosed with a deadly brain tumor and after

treatments and surgeries, had passed away at the end of 2021. Not long after, her husband Dick was diagnosed with a recurrence of cancer and passed away on Aug. 12. "Needless to say, it has been very difficult to lose both my son and husband in less than a year," she wrote. "I now am able to revisit this project and am requesting a re-approval with no change of conditions."

The city received multiple letters from neighbors who continue to object to the development, with a number of them citing that it violates several easements, creates unsafe ingress and egress, is too large for the development, and would be built on a natural drainage swale. During the commission's discussion, several commissioners objected to the insinuation in several letters that there was any conflict of interest, noting they never knew Mr. Holt and never had any interaction with him.

After an extended discussion regarding whether this was a valid legal lot and whether there had been any changes since the original approval, the Planning Commission voted 4-2 (with Sturm and Mason voting no) to reapprove the project. There is a 14-day window to appeal.

Lafayette welcomes new mayor and vice mayor

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Anduri said the council from these challenges had adopted four priorities: Wildfire prevention and utility safety; improved traffic and pedestrian safety; creating a downtown core and Mount Diablo Boulevard Specific Plan; and developing short- and long-term fiscal stability plans. He asked for public input as those priorities are reviewed and updated in January 2023.

Offering "only a few of his individual goals as mayor," Anduri emphasized strengthening city-school partnerships, working closely with the recently formed DEI committee, expanding collaborations with the Chamber of Commerce, supporting the Park Theater Trust in its efforts to renovate the Park Theater, continuing to support the library and other city entities, obtaining approval of the final Housing Element, implementing Vision Zero, and seeking to add more green space and downtown parks.

He proposed reviving an initiative in partnership with Chamber of Commerce leadership to visit local businesses to gather ideas to best support the business community as it recovers from the pandemic and deals with a struggling economy. He said a celebration of the city's 175-year history would include "plus" years by acknowledging the history of indigenous people on whose land the city was established

and the Spaniards and Rancheros who were here before founder Elam Brown arrived.

Additionally, ordinances for EV charging and other initiatives to address climate change will be pursued and reinvigorated through a collaborative relationship between the city and Sustainable Contra Costa. He issued a challenge to Moraga and Orinda to see which Lamorinda community will conserve the most water and avoid more carbon emissions during 2023. In light of the competition and for safety reasons, Anduri encouraged all residents to drive at or below the speed limit. New technology used for targeting speed violators through monitoring will be discussed by the council in January.

Vice Mayor Dawson kept her comments brief, thanking staff, commissioners, volunteers, contractors and partners, fellow council members and her family. She encouraged residents to stay engaged.

In a public comment from former mayor Don Tatzin, who said he was representing Sen. Steve Glazer, he congratulated the council for the peaceful transition of leadership: "We've learned in various countries and in communities that's not always the way it works." He reminded the council to reach out to the state in the next year because it "can do things for you and not just do things to you."

Share your thoughts, insights and opinions with your community. Send a letter to the editor: letters@lamorindaweekly.com



Lafayette Public Meetings

City Council

Regular Meeting
Monday, Jan. 9, 7 p.m.
Teleconference via City of Lafayette's YouTube Channel:
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Planning Commission Meeting

TBA
Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
<http://bit.ly/LoveLafayetteYouTube>

Design Review

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Teleconference Meeting via Love Lafayette YouTube
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