



Mike Schaller

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RE: PLN2000-00173: Lot Merger, Coastal Development Permit, Resource Management District Permit, Grading Permit, Coastside Design Review and conversion of an existing agricultural well to domestic use to build a 3-story, 4203 sf. single-family residence with attached 3-car

garage and a detached 2-story 2096 sf. garage/storage/personal office structure on a 35,142 sf. parcel on Alta Loma in the RM/CZ district in Montara. APN(s) 036-142-030, 020, & 110

Dear Mike:

The Planning and Zoning Committee of the MidCoast Community Council reviewed the above-referenced project on December 1, 2004. Messages were left for applicant, but he did not attend the meeting. We previously reviewed this project in January 2001 and sent a letter with our numerous concerns about this project at that time. We continue to have serious concerns with this project as delineated below.

First, this project is located in the RM-CZ zoning area, but the parcel is approximately 3/4 of an acre in size. This rural area is zoned for a five-acre minimum parcel size. In the rural area, you don't visualize groups of houses crowded together, and to allow such a large house on such a small lot makes a mockery of the rural zoning.

- We would like to have the ownership history of the parcels researched to ascertain whether a merger could not have occurred to bring this parcel nearer to the recommended 5 acre standard for the RM/CZ district, and that this is indeed a legal parcel. As you may know, this is already an issue with other proposed developments in this district, specifically in the Portola Heights subdivision and other areas around Montara.

Second, the applicant has claimed a "Septic Exemption." We do not support this exemption. The P&Z Committee and the MCC believes there should be no variances granted for septic systems and public health issues. Moreover, recently County staff has testified that no parcel less than an acre in size would be developed with a well and a septic system.

- We would like clarification & verification of the Septic Exemption claimed by the applicant. If the surrounding property owners have granted an exemption to the 50' property line setback requirement, and considering the configuration, topography, and size of the neighboring parcels, they may have given up future development possibilities with the granting of this exemption. This could result in at least two scenarios:
 - a. Pressure will be brought in the future to allow further exemptions on these properties to allow development.
 - b. With the loss of development potential, the surrounding parcels should

become quite affordable and we would suggest that the applicant for this parcel purchase the appropriate amount of these lands so that an exemption would not be necessary.

Third, regarding the issue of visibility, we request the use of story-poles with orange fencing material four foot or better to outline the full bulk and ridgelines for both structures to help assess the visual impact.

- We would like to know where the ridgeline is in this case and from what vantage point that is being determined. At the time of our review in 2001, the road to the parcel was not passable so it was not feasible to get to the project site to begin figuring any potential visual impact. However, it now appears that the house height may exceed the ridgeline.
- This project may not only be visible from the communities below, but it is also near the Post property and may be visible to the many people who hike there.

Fourth, we request that this project be carefully evaluated against the development criteria in Chapter 20A.2 of Zoning regulations, "Development Review Criteria" in particular: 6324.1 "Environmental Quality Criteria": subsections, a, c, g, h, i; 6324.2 "Site Design Criteria": subsections a, b, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k; 6324.3 "Utilities": subsection (d); and 6324.4 "Water Resources Criteria": subsections a, b, c, d, e, f, h.

Fifth, we are concerned that this project does not meet the development criteria in Chapter 20A.2. Although we did not complete our examination of the design or siting of the actual residence because of the outstanding issues, we do have these initial comments:

- The use of the retaining wall foundation as seen in the rear and left elevations of the presented plans does not conform to the design criteria which requires that development "fit its environment" and be "subordinate to the pre-existing character of the site..." Zoning Regulations Section 6324.2(a) "Site Design Criteria".
- The house does not conform to the topography as required by the Zoning Regulations Section 6324.2(a) "Site Design Criteria": "Development shall be located, sited and designed to carefully fit its environment so that its presence is subordinate to the pre-existing character of the site and its surrounding is maintained to the maximum extent practicable."
- All utilities need to be underground along entire road development.

Sixth, the committee felt a completed landscape plan would be necessary for further review of this project to proceed, especially considering the large size and potential visibility of the proposed house. Other projects in this area have come under intense criticism because of their visibility from the communities below and lack of any predetermined landscaping and visual shielding plans.

Seventh, the committee felt that a proper drainage retention and control system needs to be designed for the road that is proposed in this project. Otherwise this road will worsen an existing flooding problem on Cedar Street below and cause excessive erosion and environmental damage to the surrounding area (especially the public lands of the CalTrans Right-of-Way that it passes through) if a proper drainage retention and control system is not designed to handle the runoff from the road.

- We would like to know if the applicant has received any permits from CalTrans to improve the road on their property.

Eighth, the design as presented would seem to present an obvious opportunity for a second unit over the detached garage. We would like to see either an application for a second unit for this building or else some sort of modification of the design or inclusion of enforceable conditions to prohibit this use.

Ninth, in the supplied applications for the project, we found a number of errors and points of contention:

- a. For Grading in particular, and other areas in general, the work for the road should be clearly delineated from the work for the proposed structures.
- b. On the CDP application, the box indicating whether a permit had been previously applied for (#2 – Basic Information) is checked “No.” We believe there was an earlier application for this property four or five years ago, and that the box should be checked “Yes.”
- c. On the same form, (#4 – Project Information), items b, c, and t are checked “No.” – We believe that in the case of b & c (vicinity of wetlands and creeks), there needs to be a proper investigation into the area that the road passes through to verify that this is the case. Identified seasonal historic creeks originate up in this area, and their drainages may lie along the path of this road or at the project site.
- d. On the Environmental Information form, items c, d, e, f, h, & k are checked “No” – we feel that c through f should certainly be “Yes” and that issues raised above about location of the ridgeline and the effect on future development of surrounding properties should be fully investigated regarding h & k.

Tenth, the committee feels that additional reports are needed:

- A biologic report for this project especially where it crosses the creek. Also, identified seasonal historic creeks originate up in this area, and their drainages may lie along the path of this road or at the project site.
- A geotechnical report.
- New perc tests because new standards have been developed since the submittal of this project.
- Archeological reports should be considered.

Please let me know at your earliest convenience when further information might be available so that we can reschedule this application and not delay its processing any more than necessary.

Thank you for your help, and please keep us informed of any further redesigns, developments, approvals, or appeals concerning this application.

Sincerely,



Sara Bassler
Chair, MCC Planning and Zoning Committee