

**Planning & Zoning
Committee of the
MidCoast
Community Council**
PO Box 64, Moss Beach
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Serving 12,000 residents

September 12, 2005

FAX/Email

San Mateo County Planning Commission
County Government Center
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RE: PLN2000-00812: Agenda item 9 for 9/14/05: PAD Permit and CDP for a minor subdivision, certification of Negative Declaration, conversion of three agricultural wells, new 6,456 s/f single-family residence, and temporary legalization of existing mobile home at 300 San Juan Ave. in El Granada. APN 047-320-060

Dear Members of the Planning Commission:

The Planning and Zoning Committee of the MidCoast Community Council reviewed the submitted revisions of above-referenced project on September 7, 2005. Neither the applicant nor owner could attend the meeting, but members of our committee had discussed the project revisions by phone with the applicant and visited the site with the owner.

As a summary of our recommendation, we find (1) the new proposed housing site to be workable once its development parameters are fully established and respected, and that (2) the subdivision is still problematic and we cannot recommend its approval. We (3) support conversion of only the Ag wells necessary for any development that is finally approved, and (4) legalization of the existing residence with strong conditions that it not be retained later as second unit housing.

Regarding the new proposed House Site:

In general, we believe this latest proposal to be a much better site for the house, as it eliminates many of the noted problems with the previous one, specifically the environmental and geotechnical impacts from access roads and the visibility from the highway and other public vantage points.

Our understanding is that fire protection can be provided by hydrant access within the urban boundary. The location would seem to be a reasonable extension of the existing neighborhood. If the required permits for the water pipeline extension across the reservoir dam can be acquired, we agree that this can be a workable house site.

With the specific plans presented, we do have some issues which we feel should be addressed before any final approval:

- No septic system placement, with the required setbacks, is shown on the plans – our understanding is that this house would require two lines plus space for an expansion field. The verbal description we received from the applicant was for a single line along the hillside and under the fire-turnaround. Adequacy of any plans for the placement in regards to this house design and siting should be verified with Environmental Health.
- The Master Land Division Plan, Agricultural Land Management Plan, and the Geotechnical, Hydrology, Soils, Biology, and Archeology reports provided do not directly address the issues of residential development on this site, and should be completed before any approval is given.
- The setbacks from the creek indicated on the plans is "30 ft. from approximate top of bank". The staff report and the USGS maps identify this as a perennial stream. LCP policy requires 50 ft. from the edge of riparian vegetation, and 50' from the high water mark of a perennial stream without riparian vegetation. The house setbacks need to be adjusted and the extent of existing riparian habitat on both sides of the creek (as required) should be mapped in relation to this proposed site.
- The submitted house plans need to show complete grading and excavation plans for driveway and house, proposed tree removals, updated site and elevation drawing for house in this location, landscape plans, drainage plans, etc. for proper analysis of the project site and design relative to the policies of the Development Review Criteria for new development in the PAD zoning.

We have concerns regarding the legality and structural integrity of the existing reservoir dam and the possible hazard of new construction below this structure. For general safety's sake and to avoid problems with the project later on, the condition and legality of this structure should be verified.

Regarding the Proposed Subdivision:

Overall, we feel this is a major precedence being decided on very slim and subjective margins. We understand that completed density analysis tables will be available at the hearing, and we look forward to seeing how the current and earlier analysis numbers were derived. Arguments on the validity of the density analysis will be presented by others with a more detailed knowledge of the history and issues involved. We are concerned when any significant development is dependent on tight numeric margins like this, especially when the parcel itself is below the base size of 160 acres for a single residence, even though the PAD subdivision regulations make adjustments and allowance for development constraints.

As has been thoroughly discussed in the course of this project's review, issues for the location of a new residential PAD parcel concern::

- visual constraints
- biological constraints & sensitive habitat protection
- slope constraints
- required clustering of development
- "logical extension of neighborhood"
- remoteness from existing facilities
- protection of prime soils
- property access and neighborhood impacts
- drainage and erosion control issues
- adjacency to "public" land
- existing wells and identified septic areas
- loss of usable agricultural land per LCP policies 1.8 and 5.10.A & B
- protection of, and impacts on, existing and adjacent agricultural operations

Beyond these, members of our committee expressed concerns that this application would be in conflict with recent Coastal Commission decisions banning further subdivisions within the Coastal Zone until infrastructure problems (i.e., traffic) are resolved.

In looking at the property, it is difficult to find any location that would fully conform with all of the requirements, which is we feel is further argument for not allowing a subdivision with such a marginal density analysis. We feel that the proposed location of parcel B is incompatible with the PAD subdivision regulations concerning visual constraints, required clustering of development, "logical extension of neighborhood", property access and neighborhood impacts, and loss of usable agricultural land per LCP policies 1.8 and 5.10.A & B, and protection of and impacts on existing and adjacent agricultural operations

Other possibilities for the location of Parcel B might be:

- the western corner of the parcel at Ferdinand and San Juan
- proposed new location of new SFR east of the creek.
- area southeast of proposed parcel B
- adjacent to the existing PAD property at San Juan and Carmel.

All of these do not conform to some aspect of the regulations – the new SFR location lacks onsite water, other areas are potentially disruptive and not buffered to existing adjacent agriculture or have severe geological, hydrological, or biological restraints or access issues. If a subdivision is to be allowed, it would need to be directed to an area that is most in conformance with the regulations as directed under LCP and Coastal Act Policy to make these decisions in a manner that is "**most protective**" of coastal resources.

With this in mind, we feel that a parcel located on the western corner of the property would be the "most protective". This location was in our original recommendations when we first commented on this project.

- The visual impacts from the highway and other public viewing areas are comparable to the proposed Parcel B location, and conditions and restrictions as already proposed would need to be applied. The conditions for existing wells, septic potential, slope constraints, biological constraints, prime soils protection, and most other issues are identical to the proposed Parcel B.
- The access to the parcel would be much less disruptive to the neighborhood, through an established driveway at the intersection of Ferdinand and San Juan. Earlier staff analysis of driveway profiles showed this route to have the least slope and required grading and excavation. Ferdinand is a two way street and its use would improve resident and emergency ingress and egress and avoid the disruption of bringing a driveway in off the substandard-width, one-way San Juan. As such, it provides a better extension of the existing neighborhood and transition from urban to rural.
- This site keeps the entire remaining Parcel A as a contiguous area for future grazing or other agricultural use and does not impact the neighboring PAD property.
- Neither the proposed parcel site or this one meet the requirement for clustering of new development with the house on Parcel A located on the east side of the creek.

It could still be argued that a better overall plan for location of the new house on Parcel A and the location of Parcel B could be configured that would conform more completely to the PAD requirements, but we feel that the owner, the applicant, planning staff and your Commission probably don't want to go through that time and expense, although these issues may well be cause for future appeals on this case.

In consideration of all these factors, we cannot recommend approval of the subdivision as proposed.

Regarding the Well Conversion

Our committee and the MidCoast Community Council has always been opposed to the drilling of agricultural wells with the sole purpose of later conversion to residential use. Our original recommendation was for denial of this project and for all wells to be decommissioned. At this time, to facilitate the solution for the use of the property, we recommend that whatever well(s) might be needed (if any) for approved development be converted to residential use, and the others left as Ag wells to facilitate potential continued agricultural uses on the property.

Regarding the Legalization of the Existing House

We recommend the legalization of the existing residence during the duration of the construction of the new residence on Parcel A, with strong conditions that it be demolished afterwards and not be retained later as second unit housing.

Conclusion

As stated above, we think the new house location is a workable site but cannot recommend approval of the subdivision. Thank you for your diligence and patience with this project. We request that you keep us informed of any further developments, redesigns, hearings, approvals or appeals concerning this application.

For the MidCoast Community Council Planning & Zoning Committee,



Sara Bassler
Chair, MCC Planning and Zoning Committee

cc: Dave Holbrook, Project Planner
MidCoast Community Council
Committee for Green Foothills
Interested Parties