

**Planning & Zoning
Committee of the
MidCoast
Community Council**
PO Box 64, Moss Beach
CA 94038
Serving 12,000 residents

April 9, 2003

To: Sara Bortolussi

San Mateo County Planning and Building Division
Mail Drop PLN122, 455 County Center
Redwood City, CA 94063
650.363.1839 - FAX: 650.363.4849

**re: PLN1999-00333: After-the-Fact Grading and Coastal
Development Permits for grading and clearing of vegetation to
improve Howells Street west of Sunshine Valley Road in
Montara. APN 036-282-330 & 340.**

cc: Farhad Mortazavi, San Mateo County Planning, Design Review Officer
Terry Burnes, San Mateo County Planning Administrator
Karen Wilson, Coastsides Design Review Committee Chair

Sara:

The MidCoast Community Council Planning and Zoning Committee reviewed the above referenced application at our regular meeting of 04/02/03. We feel that the proposed plan is definitely a step in the right direction, and we appreciate that concern is being demonstrated for runoff and erosion issues. We had the following comments:

1. The committee felt strongly and agreed unanimously that no development of the parcels along this street should be approved by the Coastsides Design Review Committee or by County Planning until this violation is fully remedied and demonstrates a working and maintainable system. Even a conditional approval would present a loss of legally-guaranteed appeal and review of the project, as the appeal period for any residential project could long expire before an approved plan for the street is cleared, making any judgment on the cumulative effect of the development impossible. An existing approval, conditional or otherwise, as a defacto assumption that existing violations will be handled properly, would place undue pressure on the County to get the street improvement and grading violation approved, and deny the right to further review through appeal.

We feel that any residential development approval would be premature, and would obscure the need for the property owner to make corrections to existing violations. It is not clear to us exactly how well the proposed drainage system would function, and both Planning and Design Review criteria indicate that siting and construction of new development need to take into account runoff, erosion, and any subsequent impacts on resources it might have. We detail these potential problems and impacts in the items below.

2. Our initial observation on the presented plan is that it does not address any subsequent development along this street. There is another parcel (APN 036-282-033, under the same ownership) of approximately more than 10,000 s/f immediately adjacent to the proposed house. This parcel could potentially be split into two developable lots. No indication of how driveway access to these future

houses could be accomplished without serious disruption of the proposed bio-swales alongside the improved road. In fact, the plans as presented do not show how the currently proposed house would have driveway access. The potential for three driveways crossing the swale on one side of the street would seriously impact the effectiveness of the water retention system. The feasibility of the proposed fire-truck turnaround area should also be examined in light of subsequent development.

3. No analysis is available as to what the capacity of the proposed swales and retention pond is in regard to potential runoff directed down this street. Any excessive flow would run downhill into neighboring houses to the north and into the Caltrans Right-of-Way to the west and eventually into Montara Creek.. The ROW property is currently slated for parkland and trail development and should be protected from any runoff overflow from this project– currently erosion ruts from runoff of this area cross the property.

As much of the water coming down Sunshine Valley Road will flow onto this street, how much water can the system absorb? Can it handle a 10 or 50 or 100 year rain event? Did the analysis to develop the engineering take into account the proposed residential development and any extra runoff it might contribute? Did it take into account any subsequent development, particularly of a house at the end of the street which would effectively drain directly into just the retention pond? We felt that we could not make any recommendation on this project without some sort of analysis of this type.

4. The plans provided do not give any details, aside from general dimensions, of the construction of the bio swales and retention pond. In particular, how they are compacted, whether they utilize base drain rock, filter material, depth of soils, etc. We have received some preliminary suggestions on plantings for the swales, but nothing indicating a defined plan or any knowledge of how the plants suggested will affect water retention and absorption.

The plans show a detail for an overflow spillway from the detention area, but there is no indication of where this would be directed and what would be done to protect downhill residences and open space areas.

5. We would like to see a requirement for long-term maintenance of the drainage system, and explanation of the mechanism to enforce it. Our concern is that after the first winter or two the check dams and retention pond will be silted up, and eventually the bio swales would be overrun with weeds.
6. The project was referred to us as a “ ... After-the-Fact Grading and Coastal Development Permits for grading and clearing of vegetation ...” – no mention or remediation for the cleared vegetation is mentioned in any of the presented plans. We think this would be an essential part of any drainage plan for the area.
7. We agreed with the general assessment and recommendations of the supplied Geotechnical Investigation report, but not with it’s recommendation that runoff from the house be piped directly out into the street. Also, the site plan on Plate 2 of the report and the project plans show different orientations of the street to the parcels, as well as different indicated directions for north. One or the other should be defined as correct, as it would seem to affect the location of the proposed work area.

After review of the project and information provided, we can not support approval of the project as presented, and we would hope to see it resubmitted with the above issues addressed. Thank you for your help, and please keep us informed of any further developments, redesigns, hearings, approvals or appeals concerning this application.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chuck Kozak". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "C".

Chuck Kozak
Chair, MCC Planning & Zoning Committee
PO Box 370702
Montara, CA 94037
650.728.8237 (home) - 650.996.8998 (mobile) - cgk@montara.com