TOWN OF MORAGA
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MEETING
MINUTES

June 11, 2012

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

A regular meeting of the Design Review Board (DRB) was called to order by Chair Helber at 7:07 P.M. in the Moraga Library Meeting Room, 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga, California.

A. Present: Boardmembers Escano-Thompson, Helber, Kirkpatrick, Sayles
Absent: Boardmember Zhu
Staff: Shawna Brekke-Read, Planning Director
Kelly Suronen, Assistant Planner

B. Conflict of Interest: There were no reported conflicts of interest.

C. Contact with Applicants: There were no reported contacts with applicants.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no comments from the public.

III. ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of Minutes for May 29, 2012

Boardmember Kirkpatrick requested an amendment to item b under condition #10 on page 3, as follows:

> *b. the copy of the removable plate shall be limited to service day(s) and time(s)*

On motion by Boardmember Sayles, seconded by Boardmember Escano-Thompson and carried unanimously to adopt the consent agenda, as amended.

IV. PLANNING COMMISSION LIAISON REPORT - Commissioner Socolich

Commissioner Socolich reported that the Planning Commission was working hard with staff on the Hetfield Estates project. They had reviewed the Final EIR and were considering allowable lot numbers. There were many comments and opposition from neighbors on Sanders Drive.

V. ADOPTION OF MEETING AGENDA

On motion by Boardmember Sayles, seconded by Boardmember Kirkpatrick and carried unanimously to adopt the meeting agenda, as presented.

VI. DESIGN REVIEW

A. DRB 13-11 – Jim Evans, P.E., PMP, PG&E Project Manager - Gas Distribution, Bay Area Region (Applicant), Town of Moraga (Owner), St. Mary's Road Public Right-of-Way Adjacent to East Bay Regional Park District Trail Parking Lot: Design Review to screen the recently installed PG&E dual run gas district regulating stations with landscaping. (Zone: OS-M)

Assistant Planner Kelly Suronen reported that landscaping was needed to screen the above ground PG&E utility equipment that was located in the St. Mary's Road public right-of-way scenic corridor. The applicant had submitted two landscape plans and staff recommended approval of conceptual design 1.

Ms. Suronen gave a brief background on the project. On October 24, 2011, the DRB recommended approval to the Town Council for the relocation of the existing PG&E equipment from Rheem Boulevard to St. Mary's Road. The DRB required the vents to be located closer to the existing redwoods trees for screening purposes. The project initially required Council approval because the new location was outside of the franchise area. The final location, however, ended up being in the franchise area so Council approval was not needed. During installation of the equipment, PG&E came across groundwater causing the vaults to be elevated higher above ground than what was originally approved.

Jim Evans, PG&E Project Manager, continued affirming that they had encountered unexpected groundwater during excavation of the vaults. As a result, more drainage rock was added and the vaults were raised about 20 inches above the existing grade. A French drain was installed to direct water around the vaults and into the natural swale that existed by the redwood trees. In changing the elevation, they lost the ability to laterally run the vent stack pipe towards the redwood trees so the vent stacks were placed at the edge of the vaults. Their standards did not allow lateral run greater than 10 feet; otherwise they would have had to upsize the pipe which would have been more visible. Thus, the vent stacks were placed at the side of the vaults and they were unable to take advantage of the existing tree screening. In order to satisfy the requirement for visual mitigation, they hired a landscape architect who drafted two landscaping plans.

Boardmember Escano-Thompson asked if the current location of the utility equipment was the location the DRB had originally approved.

Planning Director Shawna Brekke-Read said that there seemed to be some fluidity about the location of the vaults when Rich Chamberlain initially processed the application. It appeared the vent stacks were to be located behind the existing trees on Town property and thus required Town Council approval. When staff was preparing the report for Council, PG&E changed the location of the equipment to the franchise area and Council approval was no longer required. PG&E did not follow the conditions of approval on the project. The change of location and re-design of the project was done in the field without staff approval.

Once the project was completed, she went out to the site and learned about the field changes from the on-site operator.

Mr. Evans stated that extensive surveying had been done to determine where the public right-of-way ended and Town property began. This allowed them to proceed with the encroachment permit. They believed the franchise area was the best location for the equipment and never intended to run around the Town. They understood the need for visual mitigation and wanted to comply with the Town's condition.

Boardmember Sayles asked if staff had considered the code's policy on sight obstructions. The policy called for an approximate 15-foot triangular area where vegetation could not be over 3 feet in height. Drivers exiting from the parking lot driveway had difficulty seeing oncoming traffic on St. Mary's Road.

Ms. Brekke-Read informed the DRB that Sight Obstructions was found in Chapter 8.80 in the Moraga Municipal Code. The intersection of a street and a driveway meant a triangular area between the property line and the side of the driveway and a diagonal line joining points on the property and driveway lines 15 feet from the point of their intersection. The intersection of streets meant a triangular area between the property lines and a diagonal line joining points on the property lines 25 feet from the point of their intersection. For rounded corners, the triangular area was the area bounded by lines tangent to the curve of the property line or driveway line and a diagonal line joining points on the tangent. The code section did not apply to utility poles or traffic signs; it applied to signs, fences, structures, or vegetation over 3 feet in height excluding tree trunks.

Boardmember Sayles thought the trail head parking lot driveway was more of a street than a driveway and that the triangular area should be greater.

Christian Deshaies, Vallier Design Associates, described the two different landscaping plans. The first plan consisted of five redwood trees which blended with the existing redwoods and appeared natural. The placement of the trees would help hide the pipes. The second plan consisted of several oak trees and native plants which provided better screening for the pipes. Both plans proposed a decomposed granite access path for maintenance personnel. They also proposed to paint the equipment and brought color samples to show the DRB.

Boardmember Kirkpatrick asked how PG&E maintenance personnel were going to access the equipment with their equipment.

Mr. Evans responded stating that maintenance personnel would walk and drive to the equipment depending on the extent of the work. They would not be able to screen all the way around the equipment because of the access path. They had purposely left the side of the vaults open for accessibility purposes.
Boardmember Kirkpatrick recognized that maintenance on the equipment would be infrequent. However, he thought the 2-foot wide walking path needed vehicle

access from the driveway. Grass was not all-weather and would not handle the service vehicles, especially in bad weather conditions. He recommended a 12-inch compacted pathway for the maintenance vehicles.

Mr. Evans concurred saying that a lot of base rock had been left on site for that purpose. The Town told him that the rock did not look natural and needed to be removed.

Boardmember Escano-Thompson wanted to know how far the vaults were located from the edge of asphalt and where the redwoods were to be planted. She shared Boardmember Sayles' concern for sight obstruction.

Ms. Suronen called the DRB's attention to condition #6-c on page 2 of the draft action memorandum. The condition required the redwood tree closet to the parking lot driveway to be planted closer to the maintenance access path in order to screen the vent pipes from the west and to create better visibility for drivers.

Mr. Evans reminded the DRB that they needed to keep the redwoods a certain distance from the equipment. They wanted to access the equipment without damaging the trees.

Ms. Brekke-Read clarified that staff had addressed the issue of site distance without calling out that section of the code in the report but acknowledged that it was an issue and that there might be another way to address it.

Boardmember Kirkpatrick suggested keeping the proposed redwoods behind the equipment but planting shrubs in front of the vent pipes as shown in the second landscape plan. That way there would be no problems with site distance or hanging tree limbs. He thought lower landscaping in front of the equipment provided better screening and easier access for PG&E maintenance personnel.

Chair Helber asked about irrigation for the trees and how the applicant was going to ensure the health of the trees as they established themselves.

Mr. Evans said they planned to hire a contractor who would go out to the site for a period not exceeding two years or two summers. The contractor would install a deep watering system and place a hose into a sand pipe that went down to the roots and watered each tree. They had not yet addressed watering the shrubs. The redwoods would eventually establish themselves like the other redwoods on site. He had to put a time limit on the project because it was a finished product and needed to close. The best time to install the landscaping would be late fall when natural rainfall aided in germination.

Chair Helber asked if the Town could issue a warranty bond for the landscaping.

Ms. Brekke-Read said a condition could be added that required maintenance of the trees for a specified period of time.

PUBLIC COMMENT OPENED

There was no public comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED

Boardmember Sayles believed a hard surface path should be installed for maintenance vehicle access. During the wet season, trucks carrying heavy equipment would be backed in; a decent base would withstand the loads and prevent mud from being tracked out on the street. He thought the two rear redwood trees adequately screened the equipment from the trail. The pads bothered him more than the pipes. Planting shrubs with a maximum height of 3 feet would screen the pads. The best solution was to plant low shrubs in front and two redwood trees in back.

Boardmember Escano-Thompson preferred to see shrubs that grew up to 8 to 10 feet in height so the pads and pipes were effectively screened.

Boardmember Kirkpatrick agreed with Boardmember Sayles in that redwoods should be planted at the rear and lower landscaping should be planted at the front. He recommended selecting a drought tolerant shrub that withstood winter rains. Even though he hardly noticed the pipes when driving by, he thought it would be a good idea to paint the pipes tan to match the summer season or a dark color to match the trees. He was fine with any neural, matte paint color.

Commissioner Socolich recommended painting the pipes green to blend in with the trees and shrubs.

Chair Helber liked Commissioner Socolich's recommendation. He added that staff could approve the final green color. The applicant should pick a shrub from the Town's plant list.

Ms. Brekke-Read requested that the project require a grading permit from the County. The Town was in a state of transition and did not have a Public Works Director. She wanted an inspector to check the compacted base. The project should have had a grading permit to begin with.

Boardmember Sayles disagreed. The maintenance path was for the applicant's benefit, not the Town's. He did not see why they needed the County to oversee the project when it was essentially done. There was no need to require a grading permit when the site was already graded.

Mr. Evans stated that the project was built to PG&E standards and not the County's. There was no need for a grading permit.

Ms. Brekke-Read was concerned about compliance with storm water regulations. The Town was subject to follow certain regulations but there was no one on staff to check the grade to see if it was appropriate for that location.

Chair Helber questioned the dimensions of the utility path. He calculated the area and determined that a grading permit was needed after all.

Mr. Evans said that he would need to consult with his legal counsel about the grading permit requirement.

On motion by Boardmember Sayles, seconded by Boardmember Kirkpatrick, and carried unanimously to adopt the Draft Action Memorandum dated June 11, 2012 approving DRB 13-11 to screen the PG&E utility equipment on St. Mary's Road with the conceptual design 1 landscape plan, subject to the findings and conditions as shown and as modified below:

- *Condition #5. The maintenance access path shall be constructed of compact base rock 12 inches deep and 12 feet wide for PG&E maintenance personnel and shall be hydro-seeded to in a natural appearance over time. The maintenance access path shall be subject to a grading permit and is subject to approval by the Town's Planning and Public Works Departments.*

- *Condition #6. The final landscape plan shall include the following:*
  a. *the swale shall be re-graded to connect to existing the drainage swale system;*
  b. *all disturbed areas shall be hydro seeded with a grass-seed mix to match the site's existing grasses;*
  c. *a mixture of 1, 3 and 5 gallon drought tolerant shrubs from the Town's planting palette shall be planted south of the PG&E utility equipment along St. Mary's Road in the footprint conceptual plan 1 shows as Sequoia sempervirens (redwoods). Shrubs shall be installed to create an irregular carpet of vegetation and shall not exceed 3 feet in height;*
  d. *two (2) 15 gallon Sequoia sempervirens (redwoods) shall be planted north of the PG&E utility equipment.*

- *Condition #11. The vent pipes and pressure recorder box shall be painted and maintained dark green to match the redwood trees subject to Planning Department approval.*

- *Condition #12. The landscaping shall be maintained in a healthy condition for a period of 24 months from the date of Planning Department acceptance of landscaping. Any dead trees or shrubs shall be replaced.*

Chair Helber identified the ten day right of appeal to the Planning Commission.

VII. REPORTS

A. Boardmembers: There were no Boardmember reports.

B. Staff: Ms. Brekke-Read reported that an appeal was filed on the Valero signage at 1410 Moraga Road. Also, the restaurant located at 581 Moraga Road changed ownership and erected new signage without Town approval. Staff asked them to remove the signage and submit an application for DRB review and approval.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Boardmember Kirkpatrick, seconded by Boardmember Escano-Thompson, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:32 P.M. to a regular meeting of the DRB.

A Certified Correct Minutes Copy

Secretary of the Planning Commission