

**TOWN OF MORAGA
DESIGN REVIEW BOARD MEETING
MINUTES**

April 14, 2014

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

A regular meeting of the Design Review Board (DRB) was called to order by Chair Helber at 7:00 P.M. in the Moraga Library Meeting Room, 1500 St. Mary's Road, Moraga, California.

Present: Boardmembers Escano-Thompson, Glover, Kirkpatrick, Zhu, Chair Helber

Absent: None

Staff: Shawna Brekke-Read, Planning Director
Ellen Clark, Senior Planner
Jill Keimach, Town Manager

A. Conflict of Interest

There was no reported conflict of interest.

B. Contact with Applicants

Boardmember Zhu reported that he had been contacted by staff to conduct a preview of Agenda Item IV, Design Review for 331 Rheem Boulevard.

Chair Helber reported that he had conversations with the Town Manager regarding the same item, 331 Rheem Boulevard, several months ago.

II. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no comments from the public.

III. ADOPTION OF THE CONSENT CALENDAR

A. March 10, 2014 Minutes

B. Adoption of Meeting Agenda

On motion by Boardmember Zhu, seconded by Boardmember Escano-Thompson to adopt the Consent Calendar, as shown. The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes: Escano-Thomson, Glover, Kirkpatrick, Zhu, Helber
Noes: None

Abstain: None
Absent: None

IV. DESIGN REVIEW

A. Town of Moraga, 331 Rheem Boulevard

Applicant: Town of Moraga, 329 Rheem Boulevard, Moraga, CA 94556

Proposed Application: Consider Design Review (DRB 05-14) to remodel the exterior of the existing building at 331 Rheem Boulevard including replacement/redesign of existing roof, new exterior windows and doors, and landscaping improvements including a new entry plaza, trellis, landscape planting, and signage.

Senior Planner Ellen Clark presented the staff report dated April 14, 2014, and identified changes to the plans that were not reflected in the building and landscape plans, and had been made in order to reduce costs. The changes included the installation of a wood trellis rather than a custom fabricated metal trellis, resurfacing the existing easterly driveway rather than replacing it entirely with new concrete, and retaining the existing curb cut for the main driveway rather than restoring the sidewalk and curb to match the adjacent sidewalk. She noted that the project had been value-oriented given limited Town funds and acknowledged that there could be additional design modifications to meet the project budget. Any additional changes would be reviewed by staff pursuant to conformance with the overall design as long as the changes were not substantial. Due to the project's consistency with the Zoning Ordinance, General Plan, and Design Guidelines and with minimal impact to surrounding properties, she recommended that the DRB approve the Draft Action Memorandum dated April 14, 2014 approving DRB 05-14 pursuant to Moraga Municipal Code (MMC) Section 8.88.280, and subject to the findings and conditions of approval.

In response to the DRB, Planning Director Shawna Brekke-Read identified the requirements for an encroachment permit versus an encroachment license. In this case, the Town Council approved the use of the right of way recognizing that the right of way was extremely wide. She acknowledged that Figure 3 of the plans had shown a fence which slightly encroached into the public right of way, and she affirmed that there would be safe access to the building.

Town Manager Jill Keimach also explained that both 331 Rheem Boulevard and the adjacent property (with a cleaning business) had right of way through both properties, an arrangement that had been approved by the County prior to the Town's incorporation.

Ms. Clark identified the location of on-site parking on the eastern side of the property including seven parking spaces behind the fence. She noted that there are a relatively large number of parking spaces on site, but that many are used to park Town Public Works vehicles.

Ms. Brekke-Read advised that the parking at the rear could only be used by government officials given the existing Town equipment stored in that area. She clarified that the handicap parking spaces may accommodate a handicap accessible van.

In the event that space was in use, Ms. Clark stated that other handicap parking was available at the Town Offices at 329 Rheem Boulevard, and she affirmed there were existing curb cuts that could accommodate a wheelchair.

Ms. Clark also noted that while there would not be a turnaround through the subject parking lot, but that type of circulation would be available through the Town Offices driveway at 329 Rheem Boulevard. General circulation would not be permitted in front of the building at 331 Rheem Boulevard and she acknowledged that parking and access, given the existing conditions of the site and building presented challenges.

Ms. Keimach reiterated that the adjacent building where a cleaning business was located may have parking spaces available during the evening when the business was closed, but that most of these spaces are used for overnight parking of company vehicles. There had been conversations with the businesses located across the street from 331 Rheem Boulevard with respect to the potential for parking and a crosswalk to connect the two sites. If parking was insufficient, there was that potential option in the future which would require Town Council action and approval. While diagonal parking along the length of the site had been considered, the Town Council had ultimately eliminated that option due to cost.

PUBLIC COMMENTS OPENED

Steve Forster, Architect, offered a PowerPoint presentation for solutions to the 331 Rheem Boulevard Town Council Chambers/Community Meeting Room; identified the existing Spanish architecture in the Town offering a sense of tradition, permanence, and place; identified Moraga's values as a small town with quality education, quality of life, and a community which valued beauty of natural surroundings; and explained that the goal of the project was to improve the building and plaza for Council and community meetings, offer a new entry sign, identity, and a statement and image evoking a new source of civic pride. He suggested that the goals could be achieved through institutional, not residential, high quality and durable construction and materials, depth of color, texture, and a unique design that was well thought out, respectful of the community and residents while also offering a sense of permanence.

Mr. Forster offered sketches of the site plan to reflect the proposed landscape and hardscape materials and explained that the floor plan changes would include the enlargement of the two existing thin columns at the front of the building, adding a third column to provide massing and a sense of permanence for the revised façade and entry, and new glazing doors and windows and clerestory glass to complement the deep recess of the columns and façade to provide soft light into the building and views of the hills beyond. The existing composition shingle mansard roof would be replaced with a lightweight clay tile 4:12 slope roof in context with the Spanish style, rich fascia

details with a half round gutter in proportion to the height of the building, wood corbels, overhang, round downspouts, and recessed columns.

Mr. Forster identified four wall-mounted lights consistent with the detail and Spanish tradition different from the staff report which had identified only two wall-mounted light fixtures. The center of the building would include an announcement of events board, the entry in the lobby on the east side would include a dedication plaque, and the left side of the building facing the street would include a recessed niche with arched top consistent with the Spanish style. Interior changes would include an accessible restroom in the lobby, a partition between the lobby and the current Public Works Department offices, carpeting, painting and furnishings in the community room. In addition, there would be a new audio visual system and other updates to the room itself. A colors and materials board was presented to the DRB for review.

Tara Bhuthimethee, Landscape Architect, described the goal to evoke Moraga's natural environment and style. She identified the proposed use of native drought tolerant grasses, particularly no-mow native grass, which would have to be maintained but which would offer a more natural appearance. She walked through the planting plan and described its major features including the use of partially buried natural boulders, planting of coastal live oak trees, and a ribbon of plants that would be green for most of the year but flower with a purple color at certain times.

A residential fence currently surrounding the building, would be replaced with a stucco wall to offer a more institutional appearance. The existing pavement would be complemented with some textural quality and depth of color. The front portion of the building would be opened up to be more approachable, with the wall to act as a backdrop to the existing trees and better capture the existing tree in the front. A set of bollards would flank the entry path, with the front of the building flanked on both sides by a trellis and Spanish style pots to offer a sense of enclosure.. A low seat wall with lighting would be provided.

A combination of colored concrete and brick pavers would be used on the front portion of the path, with the paving in the plaza area to offer texture and depth of color, to be cut together to show off the intricate workmanship. There would be a custom cast bronze Town seal in the center; doors would open to the plaza area to create a nice indoor/outdoor permeability. A Town of Moraga sign would be placed on a boulder itself with bronze lettering and down lighting. All plant material would be drought tolerant and low maintenance.

Ms. Bhuthimethee identified the light fixtures proposed at the entry with down lights on the bollards, down lights on the inside of the seat walls and on the trellis, and building lights on the three columns. She noted that all of the walls along the frontage would have some shrubs in front to soften the appearance of the wall, with one of the walls to have a walkway in the front. The light for the sign had originally been planned to be mounted on the ground and be up lit, although after discussions with staff, a down lit light fixture had been proposed at the top of the sign, with a cap on the sign to hide the light fixture.

Responding to the DRB, Ms. Bhuthimethee identified the existing bio-retention pond which would be moved farther to the east, with the area to be treated the same as it was currently treated but in a different configuration. She also clarified that the boulders would be natural to the area.

Mr. Forster added that the light concrete clay tile had been chosen for the roof due to cost, with an early assessment showing that material as the best solution. He identified the areas of the roof that would not require strengthening and those areas that would be strengthened to provide support.

Ms. Bhuthimethee clarified that while a metal trellis had originally been proposed since it would be low maintenance; due to the budget a wood material was now being considered. She agreed that wood would be difficult to maintain over time.

Ms. Brekke-Read introduced Project Manager Rob Kalkbrenner who was present in the audience.

PUBLIC COMMENTS CLOSED

Further responding to the DRB, Ms. Bhuthimethee clarified that the pavers would be more pervious than concrete but not permeable in that permeable pavers would have a lot of gap in between and not be easily walkable.

Boardmember Zhu reiterated that he had met with the applicants and staff to preview the design. He considered the proposal to be one of the more successful projects transforming an existing structure through the use of sensitive design details.

Boardmember Kirkpatrick expressed his hope the issue of the encroachment permit would not be an issue in the future. He found the architecture and landscaping to be beautiful; although he was uncertain the parking and accessibility had been adequately addressed given the anticipated attendance at Planning Commission and Town Council meetings. As such, he suggested the off-site issues could be a concern.

The Chair noted that the top capacity was expected to be approximately 60 people, and Project Manager Rob Kalkbrenner explained that the number of seats was code driven, with the top occupancy to be 49 or less which would prevent the need for cross direction exiting. Due to the configuration and other uses planned for the building, they had focused on a maximum capacity of 49 people. He noted that more people could be inside the building from time to time pursuant to a fire watch to ensure that the exits were open.

Ms. Keimach advised that the current capacity of the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium was approximately 120 people. She reported that the Town Clerk had kept records of Town Council meeting attendance for the past four years. Based on those attendance records, the maximum capacity for Town Council meetings had averaged 70 to 90 people when the meetings had been focused on topics such as the

Rancho Laguna Dog Park. On average, there were approximately 30 people present for Town Council meetings in addition to ten staff members.

Ms. Keimach explained that staff had discussed the issue with the Town Council and when a large crowd was expected for a Town Council meeting, the Town still had an agreement with the Moraga School District (MSD) for the use of the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium, or as another option the Rheem Theatre could be considered if the crowd was expected to be exceptionally large.

In response to the Chair, Mr. Forster acknowledged that Plan A-2 had shown a total of five, not four light fixtures, with three at the front entry columns and two on either side of the main entrance.

Chair Helber recommended that staff be granted the ability, if the applicant desired, to approve the addition of exterior light fixtures on the back door of the police storage area, the Public Works Department French door, or the kitchen locker room, as long as they were compatible with the existing light fixtures. He clarified with Ms. Bhuthimethee that the Town of Moraga monument sign would be illuminated and that the applicant now proposed to use a light fixture at the top of the sign, with a cap on the sign to hide the light fixture to be down lit.

Chair Helber emphasized that the DRB had supported Dark Sky Compliance Standards; however, in this case, he suggested that direction could be waived and he recommended up lights around the flag pole and potentially other areas to highlight the civic building location, which could be done in way to be unobtrusive and cost effective. He also recommended that the gutter design as proposed should be compared to a standard "ogee" edge seamed gutter in terms of cost. He was not opposed to the use of an ogee edge seam gutter in this case.

Speaking to the tile roof, Chair Helber suggested it looked nice although routine maintenance could result in the breakage of some tiles. He understood that maintenance on the mansard portion would be limited. As to the use of a pre-cast cap on the seating wall, he suggested the same look could be achieved with poured in place concrete and could be less expensive. He suggested another bench could be added in the same bench style that had been proposed given the civic nature of the building. He was pleased with the location and design of the bio-retention as a swale rather than as a sharply-defined edge, and he would be pleased with the removal of some of the rocks. He otherwise asked whether the salvia (sage) plant material that had been proposed would be deer resistant.

Ms. Bhuthimethee suggested the salvia would be deer resistant, and if not, she would consider another plant material.

Chair Helber expressed concern with the no-mow grass material at such time as it flowered in the spring since it produced material similar to fox tails that could impact pets.

Ms. Bhuthimethee explained that should not occur although it would depend on the frequency of the maintenance of the no-mow grass. She recommended that when the grasses began to flower they should be knocked down to something that appeared to be more maintained.

Ms. Bhuthimethee also clarified pursuant to the landscape plans that irrigation would not come up over the sides of the pots but be placed through the bottom of the pots; that the bio-retention area could not be eliminated completely but could be designed in such a way where it would disappear; that some of the boulders could be removed; and that the turf alternative would not be easy to walk on.

Chair Helber complimented the applicants on their efforts and looked forward to having meetings in the new space.

Boardmember Glover commented that he had dealt with wood trellises on his own property and they were expensive to replace, would change appearance over time, and would not last. He requested a reevaluation of that element of the design. He also clarified with the Town Manager the ongoing agreement with the MSD as to the use of the Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School Auditorium, which room would be available to the Town pursuant to the MSD rental rates, and which had been debated at length at the Town Council level. While he recognized the proposal did not include an option to accommodate future growth or expansion, he suggested it was a good project that was much needed.

Ms. Keimach advised that expansion behind the building had been considered although it had proven to be unfeasible. It may be possible to expand into the plaza area in the future. She reported that the Town Council would be setting aside monies for web streaming of Council meetings, which some cities had found resulted in fewer attendees at Council meetings. She explained that the Town Council meetings would not start out live at this time but be telecast the next day on cable television.

Boardmember Escano-Thompson clarified the area where the Public Works Department maintained and stored its equipment, and Ms. Keimach acknowledged that area could be an option for expansion although it was currently much needed by the Public Works Department.

Boardmember Escano-Thompson questioned whether the lighting that had been proposed would be sufficient during evening periods, and Ms. Bhuthimethee again identified the lights proposed on the trellises, seat walls, and the building.

Boardmember Escano-Thompson also questioned the adequacy of lights from the current Town Hall Offices to the building at 331 Rheem Boulevard and staff acknowledged that could be something to review further.

Boardmember Zhu suggested that while more expensive, the gutters that had been proposed would be more compatible with the building design than an OG edge seam gutter.

Mr. Forster agreed that an OG seam gutter would be more appropriate for a ranch or Craftsman style residence, whereas in this case the gutters that had been proposed would complement the corbels, round downspouts, and Spanish style architecture.

Ms. Keimach suggested there could be some flexibility with some of the design aspects depending upon the budget.

Chair Helber recommended that Condition 1 of the April 14, 2014 Draft Action Memorandum be modified to allow the Planning Director the flexibility, leniency, and the right to approve variances for value engineering beyond what was typically allowed.

Boardmember Glover identified the existing building between the Public Works Offices and the existing Town Hall Offices and clarified with the Town Manager that the building was privately owned, was currently on the market for sale, but could not be purchased by the Town due to cost. The Town Manager expressed the hope to be able to secure the property in the future since it was ideally situated between the Town's buildings and could be used for needed parking.

Ms. Brekke-Read recommended a modification to the last sentence of Condition 1 as shown on Page 3 of 4 of the Draft Action Memorandum, as follows:

Changes to the plans or proposed project elements may be permitted provided the changes comply with this approval including the potential value engineering alternatives, as determined by the Planning Director.

Ms. Brekke-Read also recommended the elimination of Condition 10, and a modification to the second bullet of Finding 4 as shown on Page 3 of 4, to read:

The project lighting, as proposed, would meet this criteria.

On motion by Boardmember Kirkpatrick, seconded by Boardmember Glover to adopt the Draft Action Memorandum dated April 14, 2014, approving DRB 05-14 for the Town of Moraga, 331 Rheem Boulevard, subject to the findings and conditions as shown, and as modified for Condition 1 and Finding 4, and with the elimination of Condition 10. The motion carried by the following vote:

Ayes:	Escano-Thompson, Glover, Kirkpatrick, Zhu, Helber
Noes:	None
Abstain:	None
Absent:	None

Chair Helber identified the 10-day appeal process of a decision of the DRB in writing to the Planning Department.

V. ROUTINE AND OTHER MATTERS

A. Planning Commission Liaison Report - Marnane

Planning Commissioner Marnane reported that the Planning Commission had met on March 17 and had held two meetings including a special meeting prior to the regularly scheduled meeting. The special meeting involved a public workshop for the Sign Ordinance; and the regular meeting a discussion of the Rancho Laguna II project.

Commissioner Marnane briefly detailed the discussions for both meetings and looked forward to the Special Meeting on April 15 between the Planning Commission and the DRB to discuss the Sign Ordinance.

VI. REPORTS

A. Design Review Board

Boardmember Glover reported that the next Ridgelines and Hillside Steering Subcommittee meeting had been scheduled for April 16, 2014 at 5:30 P.M.

Chair Helber reported that he had attended a recent Livable Moraga Road Project Workshop. He complimented staff on the well-run discussion, when a number of good ideas and opinions had been discussed, and reported that the workshop had been impressively attended. He looked forward to the incorporation of the feedback.

B. Staff

Ms. Brekke-Read reminded the DRB of the Joint Planning Commission and DRB meeting scheduled for Tuesday, April 15, 2014 to discuss the Sign Ordinance; affirmed there would be a quorum of DRB members present; reported a Hillside and Ridgelines Community Workshop had been scheduled for Wednesday, April 16, 2014 at De la Salle Hall at Saint Mary's College (SMC) at 7:00 P.M.; the conceptual designs for the Livable Moraga Road Project were available on the Town's website; and the Town Council had recently approved a contract for services for the preparation of a feasibility study for Rheem Boulevard and St. Mary's Road; and a contract with a consulting firm to update the Housing Element. She also reported that Ms. Clark would be running in the Boston Marathon on Monday April 21, 2014; and that the Planning Department had a new Intern.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Boardmember Glover, seconded by Boardmember Kirkpatrick and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at approximately 8:50 P.M.

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Secretary of the Planning Commission

