

**PLANNING COMMISSION
APPROVED MINUTES**

**TOWN OF ATHERTON
May 25, 2016
6:00pm
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
94 ASHFIELD ROAD**

1. ROLL CALL

**PRESENT: Eric Lane
Mary Beth Widmer
Randy Lamb
Joann Byrne-Sockolov
Paul Tonelli**

Town Planner Lisa Costa Sanders and Assistant City Attorney Jennifer Larson were present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS – none

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**MOTION to approve, with corrections, the minutes of the April 27, 2016 meeting.
M/S Widmer/Lamb Ayes: 5 Noes: 0**

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion on Atherton Municipal Code Sidewall and Endwall Regulations.

Lisa Costa Sanders presented the item and showed examples of the kinds of issues that the current municipal code presents for architects trying to design contemporary homes.

She noted that making changes to the endwall and sidewall regulations would not change the maximum floor area limit or the limitation of the second floor ratio.

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING

Jaclyn Greenmyer, architect, outlined the rules for sidewalls and endwalls as defined in other jurisdictions. She noted that the current Atherton regulations relate to traditional architecture.

Commissioner Tonelli asked what a number for sidewall height would be that most architects could work with.

Jaclyn Greenmyer answered that 24” is reasonable when combined with a setback.

Commissioner Widmer asked if the setback would allow for more height. Lisa Costa Sanders answered that currently the code requires the entire residence meet increased setbacks for increased sidewall height. One suggestion might be to only require the offending element with additional setback for the increase in the sidewall height.

Commissioner Lane noted that while the contemporary designs usually have more windows and glass to let more light in, the light goes both ways and can disturb neighbors. Jaclyn Greenmyer agreed and noted that privacy goes both ways.

Commissioner Lane asked Ms. Greenmyer what percentage of new home designs are contemporary. Jaclyn Greenmyer answered that roughly 20-25% of houses are contemporary and the number is increasing. Commissioner Lane asked if there is a size difference between traditional houses and contemporary designs. Jaclyn Greenmeyer noted that there is no significant size difference between contemporary and traditional projects.

Miya Miraki, architect with Swatt Miers addressed the Commission and explained the difficulties architects in her firm have encountered in modern designs with Atherton regulations.

Jude Kirik, PPG, echoed the comments made by Ms. Greenmyer and Ms. Miraki. The same problems arise over and over with the sidewall limitations. He sees qualified architects being extremely appreciative of a modification in the code. Mr. Kirik noted that he could give many examples of homes that have been built under the current code that could have been designed better.

Chair Lane asked how a change to the code might be misused. He wants to avoid a domino effect and knows some projects will push the limits of the code.

Lisa Costa Sanders noted that a purpose statement in the code from the Commission could help clarify the intent of the changes.

Commissioner Lamb noted that he too sees that there could be unintended consequences.

Mr. Kirik noted that there is no way to anticipate or prevent optimizing or “cheating.”

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

Commissioner Widmer brought out a three-dimensional model of a house and noted her concern with people creating long structures within the setbacks but out of character in Atherton. Chair Lane noted that this is where a purpose statement would come in to explain the parameters and thought behind the code changes.

Lisa Costa Sanders suggested that there might be an interim step with the Special Structures Permit and allowing just the offending element to step back instead of the entire structure.

Commissioner Widmer asked if there are restrictions on where windows can be placed. Lisa Costa Sanders answered that window height is restricted on accessory structures but not on the main building.

Commissioners discussed different options for offering designers and architects more flexibility.

Lisa Costa Sanders presented a few options to the Committee for moving forward including creating an ad hoc sub-committee or directing staff to work with designers and architects to present options to the Commission.

Jude Kirik commented that he doesn't want to dictate form. He would like to have as much flexibility as possible or designs start looking alike.

Chair Lane noted that without design review there must be a tradeoff. Rules will cause things to look similar.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING

The Commission agreed to have staff bring back examples and options for moving forward at a future meeting.

B. General Plan Consistency Determination for the Capital Improvement Program Fiscal Years 2016/2017 through 2020/2021.

Lisa Costa Sanders presented the item.

There was a brief discussion about neighborhood traffic management. The Commission then discussed the process for moving forward with the CIP. It was noted that the Commission must only find that the CIP is consistent with the General Plan.

MOTION to find that the Capital Improvement Program for Fiscal Years 2016/17 and 2020/2021 and the projects included in that program are consistent with the Atherton General Plan for the reasons noted in the Staff Report.

M/S Lamb/Tonelli Ayes: 5 Noes: 0

5. **COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS** – Commission Sockolov noted that she met with PG&E Liaison Bill Chiang about the outreach PG&E is doing in communities. She also noted that the tree that was removed that was discussed at the April 2016 Planning Commission meeting was found to be 70% hollow inside.

Chair Lane noted that Dale Sakai, Greenoaks Drive emailed about a code enforcement issue that has since been taken care of.

6. **STAFF REPORTS** – none

7. **ADJOURN** - The meeting adjourned at 7:03pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Lisa Costa Sanders, Town Planner