

**PLANNING COMMISSION  
APPROVED MINUTES**

**TOWN OF ATHERTON**

**June 23, 2021**

**6:00 pm**

*This meeting was held virtually.*

**1. ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT: Randy Lamb  
Eric Lane  
Perry Narancic  
Paul Tonelli**

Principal Planner Stephanie B. Davis, Associate Planner Jake Garcia, Assistant Planner Ralph Robinson, and Town Arborist Sally Bentz-Dalton were present.

**ABSENT: Nancy Lerner**

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comment made.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Commissioner Tonelli abstained from voting on the minutes from May 26, 2021 as he was absent from the previous meeting.

**MOTION to approve the minutes of the May 26, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting.**

**M/S Lamb/ Narancic      Ayes: 3    Noes:    0    Absent: 1    Abstain: 1**

**4. PUBLIC HEARING**

**a. 207 Atherton Avenue (APN 070-191-120) – *\*this item was continued at the April 28, 2021 Planning Commission meeting.* Request for a Special Structures Permit to allow the location of a detached accessory building to have the same front yard setback as the main dwelling. Atherton Municipal Code Chapters 17.15, 17.32, 17.40.**

Associate Planner Garcia presented the staff report.

Chair Lane asked a clarifying question on whether motion would need to include reference to an amendment regarding the planting of a tree at 211 Atherton.

Associate Planner Garcia confirmed the motion would need to include such amendment.

Open Public Hearing.

Project representative Raymond Gildea discussed steps taken since the April 28, 2021 meeting to coordinate with neighbor and property manager at the neighboring property (211 Atherton). Applicant and neighbor agreed on tree species to be planted on the neighbor's property and allocation of costs for additional planting.

Stephen Rossi, property manager for 211 Atherton, confirmed Project representative Gildea's comments regarding agreement between applicant and the neighboring property at 211 Atherton.

Closed public hearing.

Commissioner Lamb commented he is comfortable with the agreement that was made between applicant and neighbor.

Commissioner Tonelli stated his encouragement with the continued work on the item by the applicant and efforts to have a positive resolution for everyone involved.

Commissioner Narancic agreed with Commissioner Tonelli's comments.

Chair Lane agreed with Commissioner Tonelli's comments and stated satisfaction with the resolution that was reached between the neighbors.

**MOTION to approve a Special Structures Permit at 207 Atherton to allow the location of a detached accessory building to have the same front yard setback as the main dwelling with an amendment to the Special Structures Permit requiring that prior to project final by the Building Department, the applicant shall verify that an additional 24-inch box Tulip tree has been planted on the adjacent property at 211 Atherton Avenue, and submit verification from the property owner of 211 Atherton Avenue that they have authorized the planting of such a tree.**

**M/S Tonelli/ Lane Ayes: 4 Noes: 0 Absent: 1**

**b. Heritage Tree Removal Permit (HTR) – 1000 El Camino Real, Atherton (APN 070-360-100) – Request for a Heritage Tree Removal Permit to allow for the removal of one (1) heritage tree. Atherton Municipal Code Chapter 8.10.**

Principal Planner Davis presented the staff report.

Chair Lane asked what had caused root damage to the tree in question during excavation work.

Principal Planner Davis said she was unsure of the specific cause or equipment responsible and asked Town Arborist Bentz-Dalton for more detail.

Town Arborist Bentz-Dalton could not confirm the source of root damage.

Commissioner Tonelli asked a follow up question on how long the tree had been in decline and what caused that decline.

Town Arborist Bentz-Dalton noted there was existing decline prior to the project that was worsened by construction impacts.

Commissioner Tonelli raised concern with how the project proceeded outside of the tree protection guidelines of the town.

Town Arborist Bentz-Dalton noted building had been shifted at one point, but unsure when that took place. She noted that original plan check comments had included appropriate TPZ zones.

Chair Lane asked a clarifying question on how the permit could have been revised without additional checks.

Principal Planner Davis noted moving of building would not have gone through planning as it was still within required setbacks.

Chair Lane stated the need to follow up with the Building Department regarding changes to the project that resulted in degradation of the tree.

Commissioner Tonelli noted his concerns were not about the particular work done as part of the project but the processes that may not have been properly followed throughout it.

Open Public Hearing.

Project representative Bob Talbott stated the TPZ was in place for the tree in question and does not feel any precautions were sidestepped in previous phases of the project. He noted that there has been significant grading work done, but TPZs were not impacted.

Closed public hearing.

Chair Lane noted general dissatisfaction with the process regarding this project and mentioned his previous vote against related project because of concerns with density of development on the property.

**MOTION to approve Heritage Tree Removal Permit (HTR) for 1000 El Camino Real to allow for the removal of one (1) heritage Tree.**

**M/S Narancic / Lamb    Ayes:    3        Noes:        1        Absent: 1**

**c. School Master Plan – 50 Valparaiso Avenue (Menlo School), Atherton (APN 070-360-070) – Request for review of the 2021 Annual Master Plan Update. Atherton Municipal Code Section 17.32.050.**

Principal Planner Davis presented the staff report.

Principal Planner Davis read a public comment into the record from Edward Goodstein at 71 MacBain Ave. She noted that the public comment was shared with the applicant who stated they would answer questions in this meeting and contact Mr. Goodstein directly.

Open Public Hearing.

Project representative Loren Arms spoke to efforts in the past two decades to rebuild or renovate the entire school. He discussed excitement for new aquatic center and two additional ongoing efforts to improve athletic facilities and purchase additional housing for teachers. Mr. Arms noted that the school is discussing whether to build housing on campus but has not made final determination on the issue and anticipates being overenrolled for next academic year as applications yielded higher number of acceptances. He noted the school would work to bring enrollment back to the cap of 795 students as agreed to with the Town.

Project representative Than Healy discussed plans to bring enrollment back to 795 students in the next two years and that the current over-enrollment was unplanned and unanticipated.

Chair Lane mentioned potential issues with parking related to Menlo College and how residents may group those issues in with Menlo School. He noted it would benefit Menlo School to work with the College on mutual solutions and asked if the school had additional plans to address parking and traffic issues.

Project representative Than Healy noted the school has few parking issues and that students do not park on Park Lane and that streets around the campus are restricted to students. He mentioned concerns with traffic impacts that have been raised and that the school has increased the number of buses coming to campus, contracting with a new company recently that will provide an all-electric fleet. Mr. Healy also noted the issue of fewer students carpooling or using the bus as a result of the pandemic and that the school is working to increase rate of vaccination in students which will improve the number of students using the bus.

Chair Lane reiterated that the three schools in the area should work together, as they will all may face concern for parking and traffic issues even if they are not directly responsible for it.

Project representative Than Healy asked if there are additional parking issues to note beyond what was mentioned regarding Park Lane.

Chair Lane said the concerns he hears from residents are more general and that the Commissioners are often asked about it. He then spoke to the amount of traffic he observes when driving around the neighborhood.

Commissioner Tonelli asked a question regarding faculty housing and requested clarification on what is being considered in that conversation.

Project representative Than Healy discussed the issue of cost of living as an existential threat to the school and that aging staff are being replaced by younger teachers who are unable to afford homes locally. He noted that the school has bought six units to date and provides down payment assistance, though where teachers are buying homes is not near the school. Mr. Healy stated he hopes that in the future some of the space currently used for parking could be reduced as buses and other modes are more heavily used, and that this space could then be used for housing. Mr. Healy further noted that has also fielded questions related to faculty housing from city councilmembers concerned about the town's need to meet state requirements for affordable housing.

Project representative Loren Arms reiterated the school is likely to continue its current approach of purchasing off campus housing for staff.

Commissioner Narancic asked what the reception at public meetings hosted by the school has been.

Project representative Loren Arms stated comments from the public have been very positive.

Chair Lane stated satisfaction with school's public outreach efforts.

Closed public hearing.

Commissioner Tonelli discussed appreciation for partnership between the school, Town and neighbors. He stated his issue of concern regarding higher enrollment and disappointment that it could not be adjusted for this school year and that the TDM efforts by the school have been positive.

**MOTION to approve 2021 Annual School Master Plan update for 50 Valparaiso Avenue (Menlo School).**

**M/S Tonelli/ Lamb Ayes: 4 Noes: 0 Absent: 1**

**5. STAFF REPORTS**

Principal Planner Davis stated that this is Commissioner Tonelli's final meeting. Gabia Konce has been appointed by the City Council as the new Commissioner.

Chair Lane made remarks regarding his appreciation for Commissioner Tonelli's contributions to the Commission.

Commissioner Lamb added to Chair Lane's comments of appreciation.

Commissioner Tonelli thanked Chair Lane for his leadership during his time on the commission.

**6. COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS**

Nothing to report.

**7. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned 7:03 PM

Respectfully Submitted:

/s/Stephanie B.-Davis

Stephanie B. Davis, Principal Planner