

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE LA PALMA PLANNING COMMISSION

February 1, 2011

CALL TO ORDER: Chairperson Rodriguez called the Regular Meeting of the La Palma Planning Commission to order at 7:59 p.m. in the Council Chambers of La Palma City Hall, 7822 Walker Street, La Palma, California, with all members present.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Commission Member Hwangbo

INVOCATION: Pastor Dave Lutes, La Palma Christian Center

ROLL CALL: Commission Members

Commission Members present: Vice Chairperson Charoen, Commission Member Hwangbo, Chairperson Rodriguez, Commission Member Shanahan, and Commission Member Waldman

Commission Members absent: None

City Officials present: Dominic Lazzaretto, City Manager
Joel Kuperberg, City Attorney
Michael Belknap, Recreation and Community Services Director
Douglas Dumhart, Community Development Director
Jeff Moneda, Public Works Director/City Engineer
Keith Neves, Finance Director
Eric Nunez, Police Chief
Laurie Murray, Administrative Services Manager/City Clerk
Kimberly Kenney, Minutes Clerk

CONSENT CALENDAR

PL-1. Approval of Planning Commission Minutes

Minutes of the January 18, 2011, Regular Meeting of the La Palma Planning Commission.

Commission Member Waldman made a motion to approve Consent Calendar Item PL-1.

The motion was seconded by Commission Member Shanahan and carried on the following vote:

AYES: Vice Chairperson Charoen, Commission Member Hwangbo, Chairperson Rodriguez, Council Member Shanahan, and Council Member Waldman

NOES: None

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PL-2. Ordinance Amending Chapters 17 and 26 of the City Code Pertaining to Fences, Walls, and Hedges to Permit Lattice Extensions

- a) Chairperson Rodriguez opened the Public Hearing at 8:00 p.m.
- b) Associate Planner Scott Hutter gave the Staff Report
- c) Public Input

Gary De Forest, 5162 Del Norte Circle, addressed the City Council regarding his opposition to having vegetation; stair stepping; and lattice extensions on block walls.

Alicia Porto, 4511 Cambury Drive, addressed the City Council regarding her support for extending block wall heights with either lattice or brick blocks.

Ismile Noorbaksh, 7541 Trabuco Lane, addressed the City Council regarding his opposition to lattice extensions on residential block walls.

Chairperson Rodriguez asked how many homes currently have lattice extensions along arterial block walls.

Community Development Director Dumhart responded that there are 17 residential homes that have lattice extensions along arterial streets and that there are approximately 313 residents whose block walls have been repainted.

Thomas Ho, 8002 Joan Circle, addressed the City Council regarding his residential wall not being uniform with other walls in the City, support for extending block wall heights with brick block, and opposition to lattice extensions.

Robert Carruth, 7201 Monterey Lane, addressed the City Council regarding his support for both block wall and lattice extensions and his opposition to having the City regulate resident choices for wall extensions. Jan Jensen, 7562 Trabuco Lane, addressed the City Council regarding potential safety issues if homeowners extend the wall height on their own and not by a licensed contractor and her opposition to lattice extensions.

Dave Padilla, 4501 Cambury Drive, addressed the City Council regarding his opposition to lattice extensions and safety concerns of current block walls.

- d) Chairperson Rodriguez closed the Public Hearing at 8:30 p.m.
- e) Commission Comments and Questions

Discussion ensued regarding whether the Planning Commission could discuss lattice extensions and the Houston Avenue block wall extensions as one item and that Commission Members who live within the buffer zone of the Houston Avenue Block Wall extension agenda item would have to recuse themselves; that some Commission Members were unaware of lattice extensions; that residents desire lattice extensions for sound barrier reasons or privacy; that block wall extensions could be too costly; that eight feet is the maximum height for block walls; and if residents could decrease the height of their block wall.

City Attorney Kuperberg responded that a decrease to the original height of a block wall would take an amendment to the Precise Plan.

Further discussion ensued regarding resident safety being a priority; that the City should not regulate block wall extensions; that the City should not have a standard for uniform walls; and that the original Ordinance, which did not allow lattice or stepping was not enforced properly.

Chairperson Rodriguez reopened the Public Hearing at 8:40 p.m.

Jim Johnson, 7511 Mark Circle, addressed the City Council regarding his opposition to the City regulating block wall height and his support for block and lattice extensions. He asked that the City enforce lattice extension maintenance.

Further discussion ensued regarding how the City would regulate the extensions to ensure they are installed properly and residents being required to undergo a plan check to ensure building and safety codes are being adhered to.

Robert Carruth, 7201 Monterey Lane, asked about the safety history of lattice extensions.

Further discussion ensued regarding a wall failure along the Southern California Edison (SCE) Right-of-Way; that most residents who currently have lattice are unaware it is against City Code; that the Planning Commission generally supports a universal look; that not every resident can afford block wall extensions; that there are ways to enforce the safety of current block walls; that lattice weighs much less than brick blocks; that the residents own the block walls; that block walls were not originally constructed to today's code requirements; and that Staff will look at specifications for wall extensions that the Building Inspector can monitor.

City Attorney Kuperberg clarified that the proposal is to allow the Planning Commission to change the Zoning code to allow both lattice and block wall extensions.

City Manager Lazzaretto noted that the La Palma Municipal Code states that a resident cannot raise a block wall with lattice and another section states that to raise a block wall, it must be done in concurrence with neighbors, a complete section at a time. He added that this proposal addresses both of these issues.

Further discussion ensued regarding the combination of both lattice and brick block extensions in one Ordinance; the number of varying block wall heights due to lack of code enforcement; and that City Staff supports uniformity on complete sections of block walls; that the City Council gave Staff direction to enforce block wall extensions but to not enforce lattice extensions; and that Staff has requested residents to remove their block wall extensions in the past year.

Chairperson Rodriguez closed the Public Hearing at 9:02 p.m.

- f) Adopt a Resolution recommending adoption of a Lattice Ordinance amending Chapters 17 and 26 of the City Code pertaining to fences, walls, and hedges to permit lattice extensions.

Resolution No. PC 2011-01 recommending adoption of a Lattice Ordinance amending Chapters 17 and 26 of the City Code pertaining to fences, walls, and hedges to permit lattice extensions.

Commission Member Shanahan made a motion to adopt Resolution No. PC 2011-01 recommending adoption of a Lattice Ordinance amending Chapters 17 and 26 of the City Code pertaining to fences, walls, and hedges to permit lattice extensions as recommended by Staff.

Discussion ensued regarding the extension of the height of block walls should encompass both blocks and lattice, and that the Planning Commission could remove Section (d) (1) and (2) from the proposed Ordinance to allow both types of extensions.

Commission Member Waldman requested an amendment to the motion to adopt Resolution No. PC 2011-01, striking Section (d) (1) and (2) of the Ordinance, permitting lattice and block wall extensions.

Commission Member Shanahan accepted the amendment.

Commission Member Waldman seconded the motion.

Discussion ensued regarding there being no need to discuss block wall extensions if the item is approved; that there is height limit of 8 feet for a block wall, including the extension; that a lattice extension cannot be any higher than two feet in height; that the City allowing wall heights of no more than 8 feet high since 1984; that previous Councils would allow a higher block wall if the residence backed a commercial site; and tabling the item until the language of the proposed Ordinance is changed.

Commission Member Waldman requested an amendment to the amended motion to reword Section (3) to read "A lattice extension of a wall shall be no higher than the lesser of two feet in height, or a total height for the wall plus lattice extension of eight feet."

Commission Member Shanahan accepted the motion.

Further discussion ensued regarding Commission Members having dealt with the issue for decades; and that Commission Members support for letting residents make their own choices for their property as long as it is constructed safely.

The amended motion carried on the following vote:

AYES: Commission Member Hwangbo, Chairperson
Rodriguez, Commission Member Shanahan,
and Commission Member Waldman

NOES: Vice Chairperson Charoen

REGULAR ITEMS

PL-3. Consideration of Block Wall Height Extensions on Houston Avenue

Chairperson Rodriguez requested to have the Item PL-3 tabled in consideration of the vote on the previous Agenda Item.

Chairperson Rodriguez requested to take a short recess at 9:18 p.m.

Chairperson Rodriguez reconvened the Planning Commission at 9:27 p.m. with all members present.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Rodriguez adjourned the Regular Meeting of the La Palma Planning Commission at 9:28 p.m.

Ralph D. Rodriguez
Chairperson

Attest:

Laurie A. Murray, CMC
City Clerk