



PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

City Council Chamber
200 Old Bernal Avenue, Pleasanton, CA 94566

APPROVED

Wednesday, April 13, 2011

(Staff has reviewed the proposed changes against the recorded proceedings and confirms that these Minutes are accurate.)

CALL TO ORDER

The Planning Commission Regular Meeting of April 13, 2011, was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Kathy Narum.

1. ROLL CALL

Staff Members Present: Brian Dolan, Community Development Director; Janice Stern, Planning Manager; Julie Harryman, Assistant City Attorney; Steve Otto, Associate Planner; Natalie Amos, Assistant Planner; and Maria L. Hoey, Recording Secretary

Commissioners Present: Chair Kathy Narum, and Commissioners Greg O'Connor, Arne Olson, Jennifer Pearce, and Jerry Pentin

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Phil Blank

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. March 9, 2011

Commissioner Pentin requested that the first two sentences of the third paragraph on page 7 be modified to read as follows: "Mr. Dolan indicated that determining a building to be unsafe or dangerous does not happen very often, because even if the house is in bad shape, it is difficult to say it is unsafe or dangerous since sometimes there is a whole area in a building that is may be unoccupied. He noted that relocation is not a viable solution because there is no place to relocate...."

Commissioner Pearce noted that the second sentence of the third paragraph on page 19 does not adequately reflect that she was referring to historic processes. She requested that the sentence be modified as follows: "She noted that if the Commission has difficulty understanding ~~processes~~ all the documents provided on historic

preservation, she can only imagine what it is like for the average homeowner in a Downtown district to determine what to do.”

Commissioner Pearce moved to approve the Minutes of March 9, 2011 meeting, as amended.

Commissioner Olson seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Commissioners Narum, O’Connor, Olson, Pearce, and Pentin.

NOES: None.

ABSTAIN: None.

ABSENT: Commissioner Blank.

The Minutes of the March 9, 2011 meeting were approved, as amended.

3. **MEETING OPEN FOR ANY MEMBER OF THE AUDIENCE TO ADDRESS THE PLANNING COMMISSION ON ANY ITEM WHICH IS NOT ALREADY ON THE AGENDA**

There were no members of the audience wishing to address the Planning Commission.

4. **REVISIONS AND OMISSIONS TO THE AGENDA**

There were no revisions or omissions to the Agenda.

5. **CONSENT CALENDAR**

a. **PCUP-289, Maggie and Louis Liou/Summit Tutoring**

Application for a Conditional Use Permit to expand an existing academic tutoring facility located at 4430 Willow Road, Suite C into 4430 Willow Road, Suite B. Zoning for the property is PUD-I/C-O (Planned Unit Development – Industrial/Commercial-Office) District.

Commissioner Pentin moved to approve the Consent Calendar.

Commissioner Pearce seconded the motion.

Commissioner Olson stated that a point was raised regarding the level of traffic impact fees and inquired if this was within the Commission’s purview.

Ms. Stern replied that an assessment was prepared regarding the number of trips generated as compared to the current use, and the fees reflect the trip costs which are in excess of the existing use.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

AYES: Commissioners Narum, O'Connor, Pearce, and Pentin.
NOES: None.
ABSTAIN: None.
ABSENT: Commissioner Blank.

Resolution No. PC-2011-08 approving PCUP-289 was entered and approved as motioned.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND OTHER MATTERS

a. PREV-781, David and Francine Cunningham

Work session to review and receive comments on a Preliminary Review application to demolish the existing residence located at 205 Neal Street and to construct a new, approximately 1,862 square-foot, two-story residence. Zoning for the property is R-1-6,500 (One-Family Residential) District.

Commissioner O'Connor stated that he owned property in the area and recused himself due to a conflict of interest.

Natalie Amos presented the staff report and described the scope, layout, and key elements of the proposal. She noted that staff distributed a memo to the Commission adding a seventh discussion question to Exhibit A of the staff report.

Chair Narum inquired if a lot split is being proposed for the property.

Ms. Amos said no.

Chair Narum inquired what would be required if the Commission approved the proposal and then a lot split is applied for.

Ms. Amos replied that it would have to meet the minimum standard for R-1-6,500 zoning, which requires a minimum lot size of 6,500-square-foot lot for a one-family residential unit. She noted that the lot's dimensions would not meet this requirement.

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS OPENED.

Dave Cunningham, property owner, stated that he and his wife have operated their business on Main Street for nine years and plan on moving from their current residence to reside in this home. He indicated that he had reviewed the plans with businesses and residents in the area and noted that every neighbor on Second Street fully supports the project. He noted that they received over 60 letters of support, including one from 206 Neal Street and the corner home, the two most visually impacted by the proposed plan. He added that the Pleasanton Downtown Association (PDA) Design and Beautification Committee fully endorsed the plans as well.

Mr. Cunningham stated that he cannot identify anything historic about the house, which was initially a garage that was eventually converted into a living unit in the 1940's. He described the project which would blend in with the surrounding homes and adhere to the home's street alignment. He talked about the materials to be used for the project, its color scheme, front porch, balcony and window treatments, a lower pitched roof on the side, heritage style front and garage doors, pavers for the driveway and walkway up to the porch, and landscaping. He noted that the wall on the west hand side only has one bathroom window on the second floor which can be opaque for privacy.

Mr. Cunningham cited the reputation and respect of architect Charles Huff and expressed his commitment to the Pleasanton Downtown and its revitalization process.

Charles Huff, applicant and Project Architect, stated that the Cunninghams have done a good job at gathering over 60 letters of support and believes the two-story heritage style proposal fits in nicely and complements the historic Neal Street neighborhood; however, after reading the letter from Pleasanton Historic Association (PHA), one would think the proposal is for a high rise condominium project.

Mr. Huff stated that they met with staff and mitigated all but two variances needed to complete the project, the first being a front yard setback which is being handled through a method of averaging the front yard setbacks of properties along the street. He noted that in 1969, a 20-foot front yard setback was the law, and over the years it was changed to 23 feet. He stated that he has designed and used 20 feet for many historic homes on First and Second Streets. He noted that Peter MacDonald's letter correctly states that historic lots oftentimes require variances due to their undersized lots and existing neighborhood home setbacks. He pointed out that, for example, the lot adjoining 4512 Second Street needed two variances. He concluded that he believes the proposal meets many of the Downtown Design Guidelines aspects, especially those on design traits and meeting infill housing goals.

Commissioner Olson asked Mr. Huff if the average front yard setbacks of properties on Neal Street were used, and if so, which section of Neal Street was used.

Mr. Huff replied that he used a one-block section of Neal Street between Second and Third Streets.

Commissioner Olson inquired what the second variance was.

Mr. Huff stated that they met with staff regarding a concern relating to the distance to an adjoining garage at 4512 Second Street. He stated that staff believed the garage was over 15 feet in height; however, it is 10 to 11 feet, which can be addressed. He noted that a second issue is the fireplace being too close to the adjoining property at 215 Neal Street, and that would be addressed by narrowing the fireplace chimney down. He further noted an issue with the front porch setback, which will be mitigated by moving

one step back by one foot. Mr. Huff reiterated that there are many variances in the area and that the width of the lot itself is substandard.

Commissioner Pentin inquired whether any variances will be requested when the project application comes before the Commission.

Mr. Huff replied that more than likely they will need to request a variance for front yard tandem parking, and they may or may not require a variance for the second-story deck being too close to the front property line. He indicated that he will be gathering information on these items before the project is brought back to the Planning Commission and that he hopes to present other similar projects that have been approved.

Jim Morgenroth, Downtown property owner, expressed full support of the project, noting that he had previously worked on the house as a contractor. He indicated that any future work on the house will require either a tear down or a retrofit as the existing foundation will not be adequate for sheer walls and the home will not meet current codes.

Jerry Hodnefield, Downtown property owner, stated that he has walked the property, taken photographs, examined visual aspects, reviewed the proposed development plan, studied the required variances and recommendations of staff, and read comments submitted by the PHA. He indicated that he believes the concern about massing is strange since the property is already overwhelmed on both sides by two-story buildings. He noted that the property can hardly be seen from the street and, unless the building has some historic significance, he sees no need to require its retention. He pointed out that variances have been granted throughout the Downtown community, and he thinks the proposal will be a nice addition to the area as it will reflect the character of the neighborhood. He indicated that he supported renovation of older homes, and noting that the applicants will most likely spend about \$500,000 to build the home, he cited the employment and contribution to the City's tax base the project creates.

Linda Garbarino, PHA President and Downtown property owner, asked the Planning Commission to look at the big picture which includes an entire historic neighborhood. She stated that if homes are demolished and new structures are built that do not fit, the neighborhood would be changed forever. She indicated that she finds the proposed home design beautiful; however, she believed that this proposal might work only on a larger lot with an appropriate scale, bulk, and mass. She noted that the lot is tiny, the floor area ratio (FAR) is over 70 percent, and the height and wedged-in look will exacerbate the process of trying to make the house fit on the lot. She added that the house as proposed will overlook neighbors' yards, compromise privacy, and cast shadows, and suggested a cottage with a more appropriate mass and scale.

Brian Bourg, Downtown property owner, speaking as one of the residents most affected by this proposal, briefly described the variances for his home referred to by Mr. Huff and approved by staff when he remodeled their garage with bedrooms above. He

expressed concerns with the Cunninghams' proposal, which would demolish the quaint, existing 480-square-foot cottage that currently provides a much-needed unit of affordable housing and place a 25-foot tall, 1,862-square-foot home right next to the existing 1,778-square-foot home, which is the old Hall home, one of the most historic homes in the City of Pleasanton. He stated that Mr. Huff's plans contend that the land is non-conforming and is big enough, even with the two homes on it, to fall under the 40 percent FAR. He added that if the applicant is allowed to proceed as planned, the historic home at 215 Neal Street would have an even larger home squeezed in right next to it.

Mr. Bourg stated that technically, the two homes on one lot would have an FAR of less than 40 percent, but the real purpose of the FAR is to speak to how aesthetically a home looks as it sits on the land and how it blends in with surrounding homes. He noted that in this case, the two closest residences are two historic homes that were given plaques and recognized as heritage sites by the City of Pleasanton at the nation's bicentennial year of 1976 and listed in the Downtown Specific Plan as historic resources and in the General Plan as historic structures. Mr. Bourg added that in most cases, lots allow for room to spare around proposed additions or remodel; so the FAR is meant to address the mass and scale of a proposed home and how it fits among its surrounding. He noted that the FAR in this area is 40 percent, but the uniqueness of where the small cottage sits on the large lot means that the 1,862-square-foot new home must be squeezed onto a 2,825-square-foot portion of the lot between the two historic homes, giving it an effective FAR of at least 66 percent and puts it as close as 12 feet from the historic home at 215 Neal with one corner as close as eight feet to that home.

Mr. Bourg stated that aesthetically, the house does not fit there, is out of character with the historic neighborhood, and negatively affects the quality of life of at least four heritage homes in the beautiful historic neighborhood. He stated that at 25 feet high, the house would tower above their lot, create a large shadow until the afternoon, diminish light to the plants in yard, take away from their privacy in their home and yard, and limit their views of trees and the neighborhood from their home and their yard. He added that the setbacks are not in keeping with the code, and it has substandard tandem parking and very little street parking. He stated that the proposed home will not blend in with its surroundings and will detract from the character of the heritage neighborhood. He indicated that he opposed the proposal.

Christine Bourg, Downtown property owner, stated that she and her husband have lived in their home for 37 years and that she opposes the plan because of its size and massing for the smaller portion of the lot on which it sits. She provided a brief history of the property, stating that the house was moved from Tassajara in 1900, that a carriage house was built for the Halls' Clydesdale horses and buggy and was thereafter converted into a cottage to house soldiers. She indicated that Camp Parks was a WWII training site, and citizens were asked to house soldiers. She noted that after the war, the cottage became an affordable rental property.

Ms. Bourg stated that the Halls' daughter inherited the home and cottage and was told that the City Code prevented her from renting out two dwellings on the same lot, the reason she was forced her to sell the property. She added that Jon Harvey purchased the property and subdivided it into two lots, and then Dave and Fran Cunningham purchased the lot containing both of the homes. She indicated that she attended the hearing regarding the lot split and was relieved that the Cunninghams were to live at the larger landmark home. She noted, however, that the Cunninghams ended up renting the home and the cottage and never lived on the property. She added that both properties have been rented for the last seven years and that the Cunninghams have attempted to sell the property twice.

Ms. Bourg stated that in 2009, she was notified of the current proposal and noted staff's concerns. She indicated that subsequent changes were made to call for a 25-foot high, two-story, 1,800-square-foot home requiring six variances, which she noted staff continues to oppose. She echoed comments regarding the concerns brought forward by her husband. She stated that the house would sit on the dripline of their large oak tree, and she fears that the Cunninghams could request that the lot be split in the future.

Ms. Bourg stated that the loss of the cottage would be a loss of City history, and she implored the Cunninghams to save it and restore the old family home to live in. She indicated that she contacted at least 12 families who oppose the project and would be most affected by it. She then read into the record a letter from Debbie Ayres, a neighbor who could not be present at the meeting:

"The Victorian home looks lovely, but the postage sized lot is too small and the size of the home infringes upon the privacy of its neighbors. I recently bought an adjacent home on Second Street not knowing that already the home on another side of my property has expansion plans approved. These things will not only affect my privacy, but may impact my property value by being squished in the middle.

"My property is a rectangular lot in the center of the block. If the Cunningham high rise is built, my yard will be surrounded by five different neighbors instead of four. Although I am currently surrounded by four neighbors, none look directly into my backyard and bedroom window.

"The Cunningham plan positions a crows' nest deck on their second level that provides a birds' eye view of my backyard & bedroom. This is an invasion of my privacy. The two story building also blocks my view of the skyline (heritage trees and sky) that came with my recent purchase as a reminder of where I live.

"I moved to Pleasanton 15 years ago, because of the five antique stores on Main Street. I loved the old houses surrounding downtown that added to its charm.

"For 15 years, I only dreamed of living on Second Street with its historic homes and the wide tree lined street. I can't tell you how many times I walked, drove, or rode a

bike down Second Street longing to rent (including the property in question) or purchase in the area.

“Now that I live on Second Street, I see that I was not alone. I wake up Saturday mornings to sit near the window and watch ‘the parade’ of people, bikes, strollers, and dogs passing by and looking. On Halloween as a new landlord, I turned off the lights after the first 350 trick-or-treaters.

“Why do the people pass? Why the number of treat-or-treaters? Because this is ‘the most desirable street’ and neighborhood in Pleasanton! It is unique. 66,000 people live in Pleasanton. Only a small number of people are fortunate enough to live in the downtown area. Even fewer have the privilege to reside in historic properties and in doing so, have taken on the responsibility to preserve their heritage, to tell the story...who were the people who settled the area? What did they do? The people are gone. But the homes they built live on to tell a story.

“I am a northern California native. Yet I worked three years of the East Coast and north shore of Long Island. I lived near the village green where George Washington stood. I visited historic homes, some having been restored from old taverns or school houses. That is not to say that there was not any new construction. There was. But the people do not tear down historic homes, rather preserve and cherish them and the stories they tell.

“I often thought, why does California have a different mindset? If something gets a little old or styles change, we tear it down & build something new.

“I guess we do the same with the aged. In our society, when people get old, we put them in a rest home instead of caring for them in our own homes. Do other cultures follow the same practice? Or do they preserve their ancient buildings; so that, we can spend our vacation dollars touring ancient ruins and charming old towns of Europe? What is wrong with our thinking?

“Are we so selfish today in our world of instant gratification to think only of ourselves and not about future generations to whom the story could be passed? There is a story about a carriage house next to the family home, a doctor’s office behind his house, railroad housing. We won’t be here to tell, but what we leave behind will.

“Everyone has always wanted to live on Second Street. Will they continue to feel this way if we allow its uniqueness to slowly fade away?”

Mark Kearns, Downtown business and property owner, stated that he supports the project and feels that the architect did a nice job of maintaining architectural features. He noted that the garage next door would not have necessarily been approved today and is out of character where it sits. He added that he does not see the two-story building as impactful in relationship to the Victorian home next door. He supported preservation of historic buildings and felt that each has a little of its own history. He

supports Downtown growth and vitality, feels that the design follows the Victorian motif and that color will be important, and supports tandem parking.

Noel Anger, Pleasanton resident, stated that she opposes the project and feels there is a basic requirement for an independent historic evaluation. She expressed her opposition to tandem and front yard parking, inadequate setbacks, and the fact that the 40-percent FAR is being defied. She indicated that she thinks the proposal is contrary to the Downtown Specific Plan which states that excessive lot coverage should be avoided and appropriate separations between buildings be maintained.

Jon Harvey, Downtown property owner, cited the surge of activity in the Downtown with people wanting to remodel their homes. He stated that he thinks of the Downtown residential area as a neighborhood with a few historic buildings, rather than as a historic district. He indicated that he thinks the home's massing is lower than homes on either side of it and did not see scale and massing as a problem. He noted that FAR is a calculation and not about massing, and the applicant falls under the required ratio. He stated that the story poles are slightly above 215 Neal and slightly below the Bourgs' house. He acknowledged that tandem parking is always a problem on small lots but feels it is common in the Downtown area. With respect to the effective size of the lot which is about 3,000 square feet, he stated that there are other similar lots in the immediate area, and he feels the City should allow people to continue to improve their properties.

Michael O'Callaghan, Downtown business owner, 25-year builder of many homes in the Tri-Valley, and former member of the Downtown Association Design Committee for seven years, stated that he supports the proposal as well as the comments made by Mr. Harvey about the City not having a historic district. He indicated that the height, setbacks and mass of the house are in general conformance with the neighborhood. He suggested that the Commission determine what makes the most sense for the property and the neighborhood to arrive at a viable solution.

Mr. Cunningham referred to issues regarding shadowing and privacy and stated that because the sun is on the southern side of the house, it is physically impossible that the home would shadow the Bourgs' home. He noted that the story pole is deceiving and the height depends upon what angle it is seen from. He noted that the roof structure is only about 20 feet high, with the ridge line going down the center of the roof as the only area at 25 feet. Regarding new structures not fitting in with old structures, he stated that most major cities such as Los Gatos and Palo Alto have new homes scattered with historic homes in their Downtowns, and if built correctly, these new homes enhance the area and do not take away from the area's history. With respect to privacy issues, he noted that there is one bathroom window on the second floor which is above eye level, and they can opaque the window to provide privacy. As to parking, he indicated that the property currently has tandem parking which they are proposing to be maintained, and a garage which will add to the parking requirements. He stated that he wants to make the home into something the City is proud of and that he is not proposing a lot split.

Commissioner Pentin referred to massing and size and asked Mr. Cunningham whether 1,800 square feet will suit their needs.

Mr. Cunningham stated that the proposed house is a 1,862-square-foot, two-bedroom, two-bath home; the other house was at 1,200 square feet with one bedroom. He indicated that they have a son, and a daughter and grandson who will visit, and he wants to be able to use at least one bedroom and a pull out couch when they visit.

THE PUBLIC HEARING WAS CLOSED.

Commissioner Pearce referred to the points made about the purpose of the FAR and she asked Mr. Dolan to speak to the purpose of an FAR.

Mr. Dolan explained that FAR is a crude measurement of building intensity and mass, and there is a tendency to rely on it probably too much. He stated that it gives some indication of the mass of the building space relative to the land area, and it is also a reflection of the intensity of a use on a site. He noted that sometimes it has limited usefulness; for example, garage space is exempted from FAR which sometimes defeats its purpose. He noted that that one could have the same FAR on a piece of property designed one way and would have a completely different look in terms of mass if designed another way.

Commissioner Olson inquired how FAR relates to mass and whether it more truly relates to footprint.

Mr. Dolan replied that it relates to total floor area.

Commissioner Pentin noted that front yard setback was originally 23 feet and now it is 20 feet. He inquired where 23 feet came from and if it was established as such for many years or if this is something the City just wants to do in order to push the house farther back from the street.

Mr. Dolan replied that he did not know the evolution or history behind this change and he referred the question to Steve Otto.

Mr. Otto replied that the Municipal Code had a 20-foot front yard setback in the 1960's, and he understands that given cars were getting larger, the City bumped the setback an additional three feet in order to handle these larger vehicles.

Commissioner Pentin noted that side yard separations have also been reduced from ten feet to eight feet and asked Mr. Otto if this is something that was also set in the past.

Mr. Otto replied that he does not recall the actual evolution or thought behind setting 10 feet between two one-story homes and 17 feet between one-story and two-story homes.

Commissioner Pentin questioned the significance of a variance and inquired if three feet or two feet are really big variances or if a variance should not really be done for five inches.

Mr. Dolan explained that the findings for variances are difficult to make, and they are based upon some certain limitations such as some special circumstance of the property which is not necessarily man-made. He stated that the lot for this proposed project is big, and the limitations of what is left over on one side of the property is a man-made condition. He noted that some people refer to this property as two lots, and the applicants are trying to place a medium-sized house on a very small lot, when in reality, the applicants are expanding a second home to be a medium-sized home on an existing lot that already has another medium-sized home. He added that what is being considered a tiny width is actually a wide width, and the current home makes what is left on the one side look pretty narrow.

Commissioner Pentin referred to the letter from Peter MacDonald which talks of street-oriented design. He asked Mr. Dolan if that would put the house closer to the street with a porch in front, and if this is something that is not uncommon in the area.

Mr. Dolan replied that there is a trend in PUD developments where houses are creeping up closer to the street to increase walkability, and porches are being created to promote interaction with pedestrians along the way and to engage the occupants with their neighborhood.

Commissioner Pentin recalled that the idea of putting units closer to the street came up with respect to the Hacienda transit-oriented development discussions, except that it was closer than 23 feet.

Mr. Dolan stated that it did, but this is in a different environment, in a much lower density neighborhood.

The Commission then considered the questions on Exhibit A.

Commissioner Pentin suggested that Question No. 2 be considered before Question No. 1.

Commissioner Pearce suggested that Questions No. 2 and No. 7 be considered together.

2. *Does the Planning Commission find the historic evaluation, prepared by the applicant, acceptable?*
7. *Does the Planning Commission find it appropriate to have the applicant fund a qualified expert's objective opinion on whether the construction of the proposed house would affect the historic character of the home located at 215 Neal Street? The expert would be someone who meets the qualifications*

stated in the Secretary of the Interior's and the State Office of Historic Preservation's professional qualification standards.

Commissioner Pentin noted that comments were made that the house does not have much by way of historical significance. He inquired if the reference to soldiers staying in the cottage during WWII would bring the house to a level of historical status.

Commissioner Pearce agreed and added that she would prefer to have an objective opinion of a qualified expert to not only speak to whether or not important things happened there but also to the historic integrity of the house, the historic attributes of the architectural style, and other things of that nature. She indicated that her answers are "no" to Question No. 2 and "Yes" to No. 7.

Commissioner Pentin stated that the comments made by the PHA indicate that they are not really opposed to the demolition of the house but rather, to the size of the house being proposed. He inquired if this would then need to be taken to the next step on historical review.

Commissioner Pearce stated that if the structure is being demolished, it would be helpful to have more than less information in making the decision. She emphasized that this is an important decision that needs to be made with as much information as possible.

Chair Narum agreed. She recalled the Commission's vote to support the demolition of the house on Stanley Boulevard partly because of the integrity of the historic homes around it was gone. She noted that in this neighborhood, it is essential that the Commission understand the contribution of every house or garage if demolition is going to be considered. She indicated that she believes this should be done by an independent specialist.

Commissioner Pentin added that it could also be someone who meets the Secretary of the Interior's and the State Office of Historic Preservation's professional qualification standards.

Commissioner Olson agreed.

There was consensus among the Commissioners that it is necessary to have an independent historic evaluation to be done by a qualified expert.

Mr. Dolan stated that since Question No. 7 was brought before the Commission only this evening, he wanted to make sure that the Commission understood the question in its entirety. He advised the Commission that it has discretionary action here and CEQA will apply. He indicated that if the Commission wants an independent study done, the expert should be asked the second question which does not relate to house itself. He stated that there is another potential issue not addressed in the staff report, which is, if it is possible that what would be built there would have a significant adverse effect on a

historic resource that is not this building, such as notable homes on each side of the property.

Mr. Dolan stated that it would take an incredible amount of work to obtain an opinion on whether something of this size and location creates that impact, and the answer could very well be "No." He noted that staff cannot say definitively as they do not have that expertise. He added that the City would be in a better position to make that call if it gets professional advice.

Commissioner Olson inquired if staff has a sense of the cost for this which, presumably, will be borne by the applicant.

Mr. Dolan replied that the first part would require a minimum amount of research to be done. He stated that his impression when he first saw the building was that it does not look too architecturally special. He noted, however, that after hearing the historical stories of what may potentially have occurred in the building, it is difficult to make that call without a professional opinion. He indicated that answering the particular question does not add to the cost and suggested that it could cost at least \$2,000 or possibly twice that.

Referring to Question No. 7, Chair Narum noted that if the specialist returns and states that what is proposed does not fit in, the next question would be what could fit in: if it has to be only one story or if it can be structured so one could make sense of it.

Mr. Dolan replied that it is necessary to try and scope the study so the issues can be identified and, theoretically, be addressed, whether it is the scope or how far up on the site it sits, which is worth talking about.

Commissioner Pearce inquired whether the concept to be explored is less about the character of the development of the new home and more about what kind of impact a new home would have on the existing home and the integrity of the property as an whole entire historic resource.

Mr. Dolan said that was correct and that this was included under Question No. 7.

1. *Would the Planning Commission support the demolition of the house at 205 Neal Street?*

Commissioner Olson stated that he would support demolition.

Commissioner Pentin stated that he would also support demolition because he has not heard any opposition to the actual demolition of the house and given the type and quality of the structure. He indicated that outside of the size and mass of the proposed house, it seems to him that the applicant is doing everything he can to build the house that fits the neighborhood and the homes that exist there. He concluded that he does not have so much of a problem with the demolition as with what is going in place of it.

Chair Narum stated that one reason the Commission wants a historic evaluation is to find out whether the building is a contributing resource. She noted that if the expert returns and indicates that the house is a contributing resource, she will have a tough time with its demolition; however, if the expert says it is not a contributing resource, she would no problem with its demolition.

Commissioner Pentin stated that based on the presentations that have been made, he has heard no one say that the house has value and should not be demolished.

Commissioner Pearce stated that she would much prefer to see this house be retained and expanded in an architecturally and historically appropriate way. She indicated that she does not think she has enough information at this time to ascertain whether or not demolition is appropriate based on a historic evaluation or a structural integrity evaluation. She stated, however, that if she were asked if she preferred demolition or some kind of add-on, she would generally opt for an addition, if possible, as she always prefers to keep the existing structure in an older neighborhood if it has integrity and can be fit in within the grand scheme.

Commissioner Pentin noted that the Commission also heard comments that they do not want to have the front of the cottage remain the same with a big box at the back.

Commissioner Olson added that a contractor indicated it would need to be close to being torn down to improve on it, and that sounds like a demolition.

Commissioner Pearce agreed with the statement but indicated that she cannot rely on it as she has no facts to support the statement. She expressed appreciation for everyone's assessment; however, she prefers to have more information.

Commissioner Olson countered that the statements were made by someone who has built homes, a contractor who has done a lot of remodeling and construction work in this town.

Chair Narum commented that if the contractor's statement is to be relied upon, then there is no need to have the historic evaluation done. She noted that the expert may come back with additional information that indicates there were significant events that occurred at this cottage to make it a contributing resource.

Commissioner Olson replied that in that case, it would be different, but what exists on the property right now does not add a lot of value to the neighborhood.

Commissioner Pentin agreed that with information the Commission has tonight, he cannot say yes, but he cannot say no either because there is not sufficient information. He noted that this is a workshop, and based on what has been presented and the information at hand, he can say yes.

3. *Would it be appropriate to reduce the setbacks and separation requirements for the subject site?*

Commissioner Pentin stated that he hopes Mr. Huff can work out the variance issues with the City at the time the project comes back as an application. He indicated that he does not have enough information at this time and it is a matter of what the applicant will bring back to show that evidence and findings can be made for the variances for setbacks and separation requirements.

Commissioners Pearce and Olson agreed.

Chair Narum stated that potentially, she would rather see a variance, particularly on the front yard setback. She suggested that if the cottage was torn down and remodeled, there would be more space on the first floor, thereby decreasing the impact on the second floor. She indicated that she would support a variance that would allow the house to come closer to the street if it would achieve this.

Commissioner Pearce agreed with this point. She stated that massing and separation/setback issues should be discussed and recommended that a shadow study be done. She indicated support for the balcony and porch in the front and would be supportive of moving the house forward if the impact on the second story could be reduced.

Chair Narum indicated that this is similar to what was done on Spring Street regarding granting a parking variance in order to move the structure off of the back property line.

Commissioner Olson stated that he concurred with this. He noted that he had an initial concern about massing, but he is not as concerned at this time after hearing all the input. He indicated that he would also favor the footprint moving forward to enable reduction of space on the second floor.

Questions No. 4 and No. 6 were considered together.

4. *Should tandem parking in the front yard setback be allowed?*
6. *Is the attached garage located at the front of the house appropriate for the site?*

Commissioner Pentin stated that there is already tandem parking at the back. He indicated that for him, it is a matter of design and how the garage fits. He added that he needed more information about the opposition for a garage, and why it is required or important to be set back or be a stand-alone garage.

Mr. Dolan noted that the garage design is consistent with the neighborhood which is different from tract neighborhoods.

Commissioner Olson noted that there is an attached garage next door right on the street. He indicated that he supported the design of the placement of the garage as part of the front façade and thinks it is appropriate.

Chair Narum agreed.

Commissioner Pearce stated that she really likes a lot of what the house looks like: the balcony, the porch, and tandem parking, but not the attached garage. She indicated that she would prefer not to see it attached as it feels too modern for this area.

Commissioner Olson stated that he does not understand Commissioner Pearce's opposition to an attached garage and asked if she would support moving the garage next to the garage next door and out to the street.

Commissioner Pentin stated that he did not have a problem with the garage.

Chair Narum stated that she agreed with Commissioner Pearce's point that the garage is not typical of a 100-year-old house.

Commissioner Olson reiterated that the house would be new.

Commissioner Pearce stated that she is open to discussion and would simply ask that the garage be looked at.

Commissioner Pentin stated that said he does not see how the lot would still have parking without having the garage, unless it was a covered carport that did go through to the backyard.

5. *Is the building design appropriate for the site?*

Commissioner Olson voiced support for the visual design of the home, but he still had some concerns about the massing. He stated that in order to address the massing question, a shadow study is needed; however, he did not believe 1,800 square feet was excessive.

Commissioner Pentin stated that based on what he sees in the drawings and hears regarding how the applicant wants to fit the house in with the scheme, the architectural details, and the colors, he thinks the design is fine. He likewise indicated that he was still concerned with the massing and the size and agrees that a shadow study will also provide additional information.

Commissioner Pearce agreed and stated that she liked the line drawings and appreciates the Cunninghams' desire to integrate this into the neighborhood. She noted, however, that it is difficult to see how this is going to fit in with the neighborhood without some sort of streetscape. She asked the applicant to consider providing more detail as to how it will fit in when it comes back as an application.

Chair Narum stated that she generally like the design and would like to see the footprint of the first floor expanded a bit so the second floor could be stair-stepped in, particularly on the west side. She indicated that she would support extending things more out into the street if the second floor could be reduced.

Commissioner Pearce suggested that given the concerns about massing, actual story poles be erected on the property.

Mr. Cunningham stated that they can try and work with moving more of the house downstairs to reduce the second floor. He noted that pushing the garage back would affect the first floor and hinder reduction of the second-story massing. He stated that wants to address all the concerns and have a nice home there. He added that he has no intent of putting anything on the property that does not fit and would devalue the neighborhood.

Mr. Huff referred to setbacks and noted that vehicle sizes once affected setbacks. He stated that setbacks were predominantly 20 feet up until the 1960's when they were increased to 23 feet. He added that he knows through experiences with other projects in Downtown neighborhoods that they can average the setbacks of other homes to address setback concerns.

With respect to story poles, Mr. Huff noted that the 25-foot height occurs at the tip of the hip roof, which is 20 feet away from where the story ladder is located. He added that in this sense, the height is only 18 feet as it gets closer to the property line and not a massive wall as depicted by Mr. Bourg.

As regards the low inventory of homes in historic neighborhoods, Mr. Huff asked that others be allowed to share the same experience people in these neighborhoods are experiencing with their historic homes. He also questioned how the proposal would detract from all of the neighbors around the site when only one neighbor has spoken tonight.

Mr. Huff referred to the garage and stated that if it were located in the back, a driveway of about 12 feet would be needed, which will cut the width of the house down in the front to about 18 to 20 feet. He noted that the garage is in the front also because of site limitations.

Mr. Huff indicated they would be happy to install story poles. He noted that historic studies cost anywhere from \$4,000 to \$5,000, and while familiar with shadow studies, he is unsure of their cost. He voiced concern about adding costs and requiring studies and suggested that computer images be utilized instead. He indicated that he hoped he has proven himself with respect to attention to details based on his other projects in town. He concurred with the statement that the carriage home housed soldiers during WWII, indicating that the home is one of many homes in the City that provided rooms.

Francine Cunningham, owner, voiced concern about the cost of the historic study and inquired about the availability of historic research experts.

Mr. Dolan replied that there are a number of different sources; however, the study presented by Mr. Huff does not name any sources but simply answers the questions as “yes” or “no.” He indicated that the City knows of a number of very qualified people but was not familiar with anyone local. He added that staff would allow any individual as long as he or she is professionally qualified and can provide staff with an example of his or her work.

No action was taken.

7. MATTERS FOR COMMISSION'S REVIEW/ACTION

a. Future Planning Calendar

No discussion was held or action taken.

b. Actions of the City Council

Chair Narum noted that the City Council had continued appeal of Frederic and Yiping Leroudier regarding the installation of a second-story window at 5252 Meadowwood Court.

c. Actions of the Zoning Administrator

No discussion was held or action taken.

8. COMMUNICATIONS

No discussion was held or action taken.

9. REFERRALS

No discussion was held or action taken.

10. MATTERS FOR COMMISSION'S INFORMATION

No discussion was held or action taken.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Narum adjourned the Planning Commission meeting at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully,

JANICE STERN
Secretary