

FINAL

**TOWN OF SAN ANSELMO PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 7, 2011**

Commissioners Present: Commissioners Brasler, Krebs, Overberger, Schinner,
Commissioners Absent: Chair Sisich, Vice-Chair Zwick, Commissioner Brown

CALL TO ORDER

Overberger called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

OPEN TIME FOR PUBLIC EXPRESSION

No one spoke

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Interim Planning Director Diane Henderson reminded all present to vote on election day.

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of Planning Commission Meeting of October 17, 2011.

M/s, Krebs/Brasler, to approve the minutes of the meeting of October 17, 2011.

AYES: Overberger, Schinner

NOES: None

ABSENT: Brown, Sisich, Zwick

PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS

MPA-1101, ER-1102 San Francisco Theological Seminary, 2 Kensington Road, APN 007-292-03, 007-291-01: Application to amend the 1990 San Francisco Theological Seminary Master Plan. The Campus Plan 2010 Master Plan Amendment (MPA) for the San Francisco Theological Seminary (SFTS) proposes the demolition of five non-historic single family homes and a storage shed and the construction of 11 residential buildings (29 housing units), a new storage facility, landscaped traffic islands and landscape improvements throughout the lower campus located in an SPD Zoning District. (Staff person: Boyle).

Senior Planner Phil Boyle presented the staff report.

There are a number of residential properties owned by the Seminary and located off-campus and they would like to consolidate all housing on campus. This plan is in response to changes taking place in enrollment and current economic trends.

The proposal contains three main components: (1) the proposed student village consisting of four 2-story buildings totaling 17 units; (2) the proposed townhouse component located where the tennis courts are currently situated in the center of campus, which will consist of one duplex and one triplex for students and faculty; and (3) faculty row, a 7-unit project consisting of two duplexes and three single family homes.

There is also a proposal to remove a 1500 square foot storage building and replace it with a 2500 square foot storage building.

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The plan also proposes to remove five existing homes, none of which have been designated as historically significant, to be replaced with other residential units. Finally, the Seminary plans to sell all of its off-campus student housing apartments faculty homes. There are 39 multi-family units and 18 single-family homes that would be sold.

Bob Berman of Nichols-Berman, environmental consultant to the Town, prepared the Initial Study and draft Mitigated Negative Declaration in conformance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The applicant has agreed to all mitigation measures included in the draft Mitigated Negative Declaration and incorporated as draft conditions of approval.

Boyle noted the distribution of a late letter received from the Town of Ross addressing drainage concerns.

Staff recommends that the Commission recommend approval to the Town Council of the Mitigated Negative Declaration and the Master Plan Amendment.

Boyle introduced the Seminary's president, James McDonald, and noted that the applicant's consultants, Brian Swartz and Rob Hart, of Hart West, were present as well.

After questions about the status of the existing tennis courts, the applicant's relationship with the Town of Ross, and the extent of the involvement of the Town of Ross, if any, in the development of the applicant's plan, Commissioner Overberger invited President James McDonald to speak.

President McDonald indicated that he is excited about the master plan and believes it presents a win/win opportunity for the Seminary and the Town. He observed that there has been a longstanding mutually beneficial relationship between the Seminary and the Town of San Anselmo.

McDonald observed that the plan is for a consolidation and not an expansion, as the Seminary anticipates smaller enrollments. The plan is to move forward in a deliberate fashion and to make certain that no one is displaced in the process.

McDonald further observed that in addition to the cultural assets the Seminary brings to San Anselmo, economic benefits will accrue in the future, including the creation of a few jobs due to both the changes in the resident structure around the Seminary and the economic activity of the construction phase itself.

Finally, McDonald is excited about the prospect of preserving and enhancing the historic buildings on campus, is proud of the environmental aspects of the project, and looks forward to working with the Town. McDonald turned the discussion over to Rob Hart.

Hart reviewed the extensive community outreach that took place in the project's developmental stage and introduced Architect Tim Slattery.

Slattery presented a visual rendition of the plan for the Seminary community, which included 3-dimensional modeling of the campus buildings, topography, and trees. Great effort went into understanding the architectural traditions of the historic buildings and creating a California craftsman tie to those existing structures. Slattery noted that the Seminary has a long tradition of sensitive integration of trees and tree preservation.

Schinner asked for the net number of trees slated for removal.

Hart responded that with the exception of a few non-heritage trees behind 108 Bolinas Avenue, he knows of no plans for removal of any trees.

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Krebs asked for a summary of efforts made to address drainage issues and for a response to some of the issues raised in the letter received from the Town of Ross.

Kent Carothers of Firma Design Group responded that he and his colleagues spoke with engineers from the Ross Valley Flood Protection Program in looking at the entire drainage region to decide on an approach to the drainage and hydrology as it relates to the Seminary project. Based on those meetings and meetings with the Town Engineer, and in consideration of existing drainage, it was decided that the best approach was to mimic existing drainage and to not discharge any run-off at a higher rate or volume at any existing discharge point on to Bolinas Avenue or Mariposa Avenue.

Carothers further stated that care was taken to insure that calculations were based on Marin County guidelines when balancing the impervious cover. As a result, it was concluded that the intensities in discharge coming off the Seminary site would not further impact the Corte Madera Creek. Finally, he observed that the hydrologist consulted by the Town of Ross offered a different interpretation of what coefficient values should be used in considering existing conditions run-off.

Krebs asked for further clarification with respect to the consulting hydrologist for the Town of Ross and his comments regarding the need for mitigation measures.

Carothers clarified that the consultant is requesting restriction of the existing flow from the site. Carothers and the engineers representing the flood protection program do not wish to over-detain, release, or change the hydrograph as it goes into the Corte Madera Creek.

Krebs summarized his understanding of the issue, stating that it appears the consulting hydrologist to the Town of Ross is requesting a reduction of the current run-off from the Seminary site and further consideration and calculation as it relates to impervious cover.

Henderson clarified that the letter from the Town of Ross was transmitted to the Town at 4:00 pm today (November 7, 2011) and not on the October 12, 2011 date indicated on the letter. Further, Public Works Director Sean Condry would be the individual signing off on any drainage plan. Condry has been in conversation with the consulting hydrologist subsequent to the date on the letter.

Condry confirmed that he has been in discussion with Public Works Director Bob Hemati from the Town of Ross regarding the Bolinas drainage study. Further he has spoken with consulting Hydrologist Matt Smeltzer, who stated that his concerns were addressed adequately by Condry's requirements for the project. Condry advised the Commissioners to keep in mind that the project is only in the conceptual stages at this point in time and that the Towns of San Anselmo and Ross are working together very closely. He believes the letter came about because of a focus on the Bolinas Avenue drainage.

Discussion ensued with regard to exploring further permeability on the Seminary site through additional bioretention measures, rerouting water, and making drainage improvements in the public right-of-way, all of which will be considered at the appropriate time in the process.

Brasler asked if the Town of Ross has a storm water management ordinance with a greater level of scrutiny than that of San Anselmo.

Condry responded that he is not complete familiar with the Ross ordinance, clarifying that San Anselmo does have a net zero policy and is headed in the same direction with respect to policy as that of Ross. Further, San Anselmo, like Ross, wants to make sure that the impacts coming from any site are minimized or even result in a negative impact with respect to drainage.

As there were no further questions from the Commission, Overberger opened the public hearing.

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Corinne Geramoni, Ross Avenue distributed a neighborhood response letter to the proposed Master Plan Amendment. She read from the letter, concluding that the current plans for Mariposa Avenue are unacceptable for a number of reasons, all enumerated by subsequent speakers.

Steve Beal, Mariposa Avenue, is concerned with the noise the proposed storage facility might generate, the potential for congestion and lack of safety for the many children in the neighborhood, the uncertainty with regard to property values, and flooding.

Marsha Strahm, Ross Avenue, has commercial property that has been on the market for a year. She is concerned that the Seminary may vacate the apartment buildings in order to prepare them for sale and that the units will remain vacant for a considerable amount of time. Strahm has further concerns with regard to the proposed storage facility that would replace a currently unused facility, noting that the hillside behind the property is very steep and subject to considerable run-off. The buildings on Mariposa are not maintained and are unsightly. She hopes the project will not be passed without due consideration.

Helie Robertson, Austin Avenue, extended kudos to the applicant's architect for the plan and sees it as a vast improvement over prior proposals. She recognizes the neighborhood concerns and hopes they can be addressed appropriately.

Donna Monahan, Richmond Road, is concerned about an increase in neighborhood traffic, further staging of heavy construction equipment at the intersection of Richmond Road and Bolinas Avenue, and flooding in what is already an extremely vulnerable location that endures frequent flooding. She hopes Ross residents will not be demonized and that there will be a real effort involving San Anselmo and Ross to address flooding mitigation. She believes that although the Ross requirements with regard to drainage may be excessive, the current, relatively modest goal of not increasing flooding is not acceptable.

Jonathan Terry, Ross Avenue, has two small sons, and is concerned about the potential for the changing complexion of what is now a quiet, family-oriented neighborhood. The current Seminary apartment building residents do not generate a lot of traffic. He believes a different population of renters may generate more traffic. Terry is also concerned about the construction traffic and equipment staging.

Eileen Chavez lives across the street from Montgomery Chapel. Flooding and traffic are her concerns. Chavez noted that her home floods every year and she believes that decreasing the water flow is essential. She noted that the proposed triplex next to Montgomery Chapel will increase the number of vehicles attached to those homes to the detriment of what are already currently challenging traffic patterns. Chavez is unclear as to the need for more residential properties on the campus.

Joan Weiner, Ross Avenue, is concerned about flooding on Mariposa Avenue and believes the proposed storage facility and its associated road will increase run-off in an area already significantly impacted by flooding. Weiner noted that other large projects in the Town have been stalled by economic and drainage issues and urged the Commissioners to give this project its due consideration.

Peter Monahan, Richmond Road, is concerned about flooding while he acknowledges that the proposed design seems compatible with the area. Monahan expressed further concerns that the scale of the project seems incompatible with the Seminary's census and he would like to know the number of classes offered there as compared with the number of classes offered at U. C. Berkeley's Theological Union.

Connie Rodgers, San Anselmo Chamber of Commerce, noted that the Chamber has followed the project for a number of years and met with the applicant's team. The Marin Economic Forum conducted an economic impact report that yielded favorable results for the project. The Chamber supports the project for economic reasons and hopes the Seminary will address the legitimate concerns brought up by the neighbors.

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John Silvey, Mariposa Avenue, believes the concerns of Mariposa residents are not being adequately considered. Silvey would like to see the large unattractive apartment building next to the proposed storage facility mitigated and noted that the proposed storage facility will require unsightly security lighting to be installed.

Andy Pauley, Director of Finance and Operations for the Branson School, has met with the administration at the Seminary and has become familiar with the master plan. Branson is supportive of the master plan and Pauley notes that it was conceptually well done, professionally organized, and is architecturally attractive.

Joyce Brown, a San Anselmo business owner, supports the project, noting that the Town needs additional housing and income. The Seminary has been a good neighbor and hosts many touring groups. Brown believes improvements would only bring more visitors to Town and neighboring residents' issues could be resolved fairly easily.

Kevin Reher, Ross Avenue, agreed that the Seminary is beautiful but suggested that a different owner of the apartment buildings may bring improvements as the buildings are currently poorly maintained. Reher further expressed the wish that the Mariposa border would receive the same attention as the Bolinas border.

Overberger asked if the applicant or the applicant's representatives would like to respond to any of the comments presented.

Hart responded that an architectural historian had been consulted to determine which structures had architectural significance and that Oxtoby Hall, the imposing apartment complex Mr. Silvey suggested be mitigated, was found to be significant. The storage building is on the site of the original maintenance and storage building dating back to 1892. In replacing the current facility with a barn-like structure, the Seminary will be restoring the property to its original use. Hart concluded that the Seminary is limited in what it can address both architecturally and financially, as the organization is a non-profit dependant on donors for funding.

As there were no further comments, Overberger closed the public hearing and returned the discussion to the Planning Commission.

Brasler asked for the occupancy status of the apartment buildings slated for sale.

Hart responded that the units are currently full and that occasionally a unit is provided for a student from Berkeley. This is a rare occurrence and becoming more rare. The Seminary must allow a five percent cushion to allow for year-to-year fluctuations in enrollment. In total, the Seminary plans to sell 57 housing units and to build 29 units on campus so that the net effect is one of attrition as faculty and student populations decline.

Brasler speculated that when the properties are sold, they will probably be devoted to the highest and best use and will be more adequately maintained.

Hart noted that when the Seminary sold 77 Bolinas Avenue, the new owners improved the property considerably. The Seminary does not have an extensive operating budget with which to maintain the off-campus properties.

Brasler concluded that the concerns of the public seem to be related to the apartments, the proposed storage unit, and drainage issues. He understands that the Planning Commission's task is to consider the master plan and that issues specific to drainage will be addressed as specific construction projects come before the Commission. He is comfortable with the project at this time, believing the Seminary has done a good job with public outreach.

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Schinner understands the concerns of vacancy and the potentially changing complexion of the neighborhood but believes these off-site issues are not relevant as the Commission considers the master plan. The sale of the off-site units is a matter of a property owner selling property. Schinner is looking specifically at the impact of the project on the Town and believes there has been a very diligent attempt to integrate the neighbors' concerns with the design and implementation goals. The Seminary is a 25+ acre site and a net increase of 18 units is proposed, so the intensity is fairly minimal. There is a net benefit of the project to the Town in terms of housing stock, job creation and additional tax base. In conclusion, Schinner knows drainage issues will be addressed with the Public Works Director when the building phase begins. At this time, he would support the project.

Krebs generally agrees with Schinner's comments and although he has some sensitivity to the market and the potential impact of the sale of the properties at this time, he is not sure that it is the responsibility of the Seminary to consider that issue with regard to the plans for their campus. They certainly have the right to sell their off-campus properties and there is a reasonable likelihood that those properties will be improved when sold. Additionally, it is hoped that the market will improve over time to the benefit of everyone. With respect to drainage, Krebs is confident in Condry's consultation with experts and with the Town of Ross and understands that the concerns have been satisfactorily addressed. There will be additional efforts to try to limit any impact and Krebs assumes there will be no net increase in run-off. The Seminary is not obligated to solve the Town's problems with respect to Bolinas Avenue and Richmond Road flooding; this is something the Town must address.

Overberger observed that the Planning Commission cannot dictate the terms of the sale of Seminary property. With regard to flooding, the volume of water that comes off of Oak Avenue and flows around the Seminary is phenomenal and has nothing to do with the Seminary; rather it has to do entirely with the Town's resources to address drainage. Certainly, the run-off from the Seminary property itself will be examined with each and every project that comes before the Planning Commission. Additionally, traffic issues and related issues of administration—for example, the issue of staging construction equipment—will be addressed when the Planning Commission discusses building projects. Given the assigned task, Overberger is in support of the project.

M/s, Schinner/Brasler, to approve the staff report recommending that the Town Council approve the Mitigated Negative Declaration and the Amendment to the Master Plan for the San Francisco Theological Seminary.

Ayes: Brasler, Krebs, Overberger, Schinner
Noes: None
Absent: Brown, Sisich, Zwick

ITEMS FROM PLANNING COMMISSION

Henderson commended Senior Planner Phil Boyle and Consultant Bob Berman for their hard work over two years on the SFTS project and thanked the Planning Commission for doing a great job.

ADJOURN TO THE MEETING DATE OF December 5, 2011

Overberger adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Nancy Harris