



Town of Paradise Valley

6401 E Lincoln Dr
Paradise Valley, AZ 85253

Minutes – Final

Planning Commission

Chair Karen Liepmann
Commissioner Charles Covington
Commissioner Timothy Dickman
Commissioner Pamela Georgelos
Commissioner Kristina Locke
Commissioner William Nassikas
Commissioner James Rose

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

6:00 PM

PD Auditorium

1. CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Chair Liepmann called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

Present 7 – Chair Karen Liepmann
Commissioner Charles Covington
Commissioner Timothy Dickman
Commissioner Pamela Georgelos
Commissioner Kristina Locke
Commissioner William Nassikas
Commissioner James Rose

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

Senior Planner George Burton
Community Development Director Lisa Collins
Planning Manager Paul Michaud
Administrative Assistant Cherise Fullbright

2. EXECUTIVE SESSION

3. APPROVAL OR AMENDMENT OF MINUTES

A. 23-150 Approval of April 18, 2023 Planning Commission Minutes

A motion was made by Commissioner Nassikas, seconded by Commissioner Georgelos, to approve the minutes. The motion carried with the following vote:

Aye: 7 – Chair Liepmann, Commissioner Dickman, Commissioner Georgelos, Commissioner Locke, Commissioner Nassikas, Commissioner Rose

Commissioner Covington joined the meeting via Zoom.

4. PRESENTATIONS

A. 23-178 Presentation by Smoke Tree Resort Representatives & Discussion with Planning Commission on Smoke Tree Resort Major Special Use Permit, 7101 E. Lincoln Drive

Commissioner Georgelos stated that she had a conflict of interest in this matter and recused herself.

Commissioner Locke also stated that she had a conflict of interest on this matter since her company provided civil engineering services to the applicant and recused herself.

Commissioners Georgelos and Locke exited the meeting.

Benjamin Tate, an applicant representative, discussed the proposed major special use permit amendment for the Smoke Tree Resort. He mentioned that the project incorporates feedback from previous applications and aims to be a better fit for the area. The site is described as having a unique location surrounded by commercial uses on three sides. The history of the property, dating back to 1954, was acknowledged, and plans were discussed for a historical exhibit on the site. The proposed project includes an 82-guest room luxury resort, a culinary-centric concept, event spaces, a resort spa, a fine dining restaurant, a market and bar, and underground parking. The presentation also included a fly-through simulation of the project and details on the design and density considerations.

Commissioner Nassikas had a design question regarding the three-story building and whether all the guest rooms are equipped with balconies or patios.

Mr. Tate replied yes.

Chair Liepmann questioned why the entrance to the resort is situated on the only residential street surrounding it.

Mr. Tate explained that the decision to locate the entrance on Lincoln Drive was based on the previous Smoke Tree submittal, traffic engineering advice, and discussions with the town. He mentioned that placing the entrance on N Quail Run, versus Lincoln Drive where the entrance would be shared with the medical plaza, would create fewer traffic issues compared to other options.

Commissioner Nassikas followed up on Chair Liepmann's question about the entry and asked if a signal would be installed at Quail Run and Lincoln, serving as the resort's entrance.

Mr. Tate confirmed that a signal would be installed at that location. He provided further clarification that a traffic impact analysis (TIA) was being conducted and is currently under review and revision.

Commissioner Rose inquired about the traffic study.

Mr. Tate confirmed that a traffic study was being conducted and that they received comments on the initial TIA, which was being reviewed and revised by CivTech.

Commissioner Rose mentioned the concerns related to traffic, particularly for events and banquets, considering the estimated number of people attending and the potential parking needs. He requested a traffic study that would address access and traffic flow, especially in relation to the medical plaza.

Mr. Tate explained that the two properties have a shared driveway, allowing traffic to move between the resort and the medical plaza without having to ever access Lincoln. He stated that event traffic circulation and logistics were considered in the TIA and would be further addressed based on the guidance received from their traffic engineer.

Commissioner Rose raised concerns about access from Quail Run and asked about the road south of the resort leading to the Medical Center.

Mr. Tate clarified that the road south of the resort was for fire access and not intended for general circulation. The main circulation pattern would involve entering through the arrival park.

Commissioner Rose sought clarification on the route from the arrival park to the Medical Center, mentioning the curve and the parallel road to Lincoln.

Mr. Tate explained that the development proposal for the medical plaza involved access from Scottsdale Road and Rose Lane, not intersecting with the resort's entrance.

Ms. Collins added that the development proposal for the medical plaza encompassed five acres on the east side of Quail Run, with access primarily from Scottsdale Road.

Commissioner Rose asked if the proposed developments near the property line would impact the traffic.

Mr. Tate responded that those developments were south of the property and not relevant to the current discussion.

Commissioner Rose inquired about the location of the back dock, and it was confirmed to be south of the property.

Commissioner Rose realized the ramp down was the entrance to the subterranean part of the property and sought confirmation, including whether it would serve as both an entrance and exit for vehicles.

Mr. Tate confirmed that it would serve as both.

Commissioner Covington had questions regarding the right-of-way access to homes on Quail Run, the number of seats in the French Cowboy, and the height of the back wall.

Mr. Tate stated that there would be a full improvement made to Quail Run and mentioned that additional details would be provided later.

Chair Liepmann expressed a desire to see a rendition of the property and inquired about the current number of rooms.

Mr. Tate mentioned that there were currently 28 rooms.

Commissioner Dickman sought clarification on the main entrance to the Ritz and whether there was a traffic light.

Mr. Tate explained that the same intersection served as the entrance to the Ritz and was already signaled.

Commissioner Rose asked about the western side of Quail Run Road and whether there was a deceleration lane.

Mr. Michaud mentioned that it would be addressed as part of the project, but there is not currently one there.

Commissioner Covington noticed a construction fence on Quail Run and asked if it was on the right-of-way or the property itself.

Mr. Tate explained that it was primarily for security, and the exact location relative to the property line was not specified.

Commissioner Nassikas asked for confirmation on an agreement with the medical center for using their parking spaces during events.

Mr. Tate confirmed that it was part of the plan, but an agreement has not been executed.

Commissioner Covington asked about the retention of the sidewalk on Lincoln Drive.

Mr. Tate mentioned that there would be a sidewalk and detached landscape, possibly with a low wall.

Commissioner Nassikas asked about the wall on the property's southern border and whether it would remain or be improved.

Mr. Tate explained that the wall would remain; however, any improvements would require collaboration due to its placement across property lines.

5. STUDY SESSION ITEMS

A. 23-172 Discussion of Smoke Tree Resort Major Special Use Permit

Mr. Michaud discussed the scope and compliance with special guidelines. He mentioned the existing work and the approved number of rooms. The site size was explained, including gross and net acres, as well as road dedications. Differentiating between principal and accessory structures, Mr. Michaud identified the main buildings and their classifications. The height and setback requirements were discussed, with specific measurements provided for the arrival building. The setbacks varied based on the directions, neighboring properties, and floors of the buildings. The applicant aimed to meet the guidelines, but some areas fell slightly short. The elevation and design of the structures were shown to mitigate the visual impact. The underground garage and style were also mentioned. The presentation touched upon the open space criteria and how it affected the height distribution, especially on the third floor. The encroachment of guest rooms into the open space was depicted, with a focus on specific areas. Overall, the presentation provided an overview of the project, addressing various aspects such as scope, compliance, structure classification, setbacks, and open space criteria.

Commissioner Rose inquired about the encroachment on setbacks.

Mr. Michaud explained that the building did not meet the 100 ft guideline due to the site's small size. He mentioned that the open space criteria pushed the height of the building further east. The arrival building, technically considered a principal structure, did not meet the 36 ft height guideline, acting more like an accessory structure. The French Cowboy building, the largest accessory structure, had discrepancies in its plans regarding setbacks and height. The event lawn and pool bar restroom building were also discussed as smaller structures. The setbacks and size of the resort pool were brought up, and the available amenities for guests were explained. Mr. Michaud mentioned that the design comments would be addressed and required additional views and analysis. The statement of direction was introduced as a general guideline for the project, focusing on the visible, audible, and operational effects on neighbors. The use of the proposed project was analyzed, confirming compliance with the specified uses.

Commissioner Dickman inquired about any instructive lessons learned from the rejection of the previous proposal and whether there were key issues related to the scale and size of the buildings.

Commissioner Rose confirmed that the original application was denied by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Michaud clarified that this was a new application and should be treated as such. The previous application had different traditional uses,

making it challenging to compare directly. The statement of direction was then discussed, focusing on various aspects such as noise impact, density, lot coverage, floor area ratio, height and view sheds, landscaping, lighting, grading, drainage, utilities, traffic and parking access, signage, walls, and fences. The guidelines and analysis for each category were presented, including setbacks, height, and other requirements. The staff mentioned the need for additional information and evaluations. The presentation concluded with the mention of the next meeting and the availability of the summer for further review.

Chair Liepmann raised a question regarding the use of the term "shall comply with guidelines" in the statement of direction, asking if it leaves no room for interpretation.

Mr. Michaud clarified that the guidelines are just guidelines, and the statement of direction provides guidance for evaluation.

Ms. Collins added that the Council is seeking feedback and that the phrase "shall comply with guidelines" means that they should adhere to the guidelines and not deviate from them.

Chair Liepmann noted a specific instance where compliance with the guidelines was required. She expressed the intention to review the requirements more thoroughly before the next meeting.

Commissioner Rose expressed excitement about the project and requested more information about parking and traffic, particularly in scenarios with high volumes of cars and events. He asked if there had been any citizen feedback on the project.

Commissioner Nassikas also raised concerns about parking and staff needs.

Mr. Tate confirmed there would be no room for sports courts after being asked by Commissioner Dickman.

Commissioner Dickman expressed appreciation for the efforts to mitigate noise and lighting impacts on residential areas.

Mr. Tate and Mr. Michaud mentioned there have been ongoing discussions and outreach with surrounding neighbors and stakeholders.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS – LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS

7. ACTION ITEMS

8. STAFF REPORTS

Ms. Collins announced that she would be leaving the organization and thanked the Planning Commission for their support.

Commissioner Nassikas and Chair Liepmann expressed their appreciation for Ms. Collins' work and guidance.

Commissioner Rose wished Ms. Collins good luck in her new position.

9. PUBLIC BODY REPORTS

10. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Mr. Michaud provided information about the upcoming agenda, stating that there are no items scheduled for the June 6th meeting and only one item for the June 20th meeting. He also mentioned the upcoming Council meetings on May 25 and June 8, which include various Planning Commission items for review and action.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion for Adjournment was made at 7:41 PM.

A motion was made by Commissioner Dickman, seconded by Commissioner Nassikas, to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried with the following vote:

Aye: 5 – Chair Liepmann, Commissioner Covington, Commissioner Dickman, Commissioner Nassikas, Commissioner Rose

Paradise Valley Planning Commission

By: 
Cherise Fullbright, Secretary