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Local News

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Council Approves Historic Lodge Realignment Plan

by *Rebecca Motlagh*

Coronado City Council approved a special use permit and parking plan for the 1906 Lodge at Coronado Beach, the former Trant Manor and a new guest room building, which will allow the historic property to be run as a boarding house at its meeting Tuesday, Oct. 18.

The plan will also realign A Avenue, narrowing its width where it ends at Ynez Place, and create two pocket parks on either side of the street. The council agreed with the planning commission to eliminate two staff recommendations which would have limited underground use of the city right-of-way for parking, mechanical and elevator equipment and would have required specific trees as part of the landscaping.

The 13,000-square-foot site is located in the R-3 zone which would allow eight dwelling units and the operation of a boarding house with an approved special use permit. According to the staff report, “the proposed use differs from the operation of a motel or hotel (which are not permitted in the R-3 zones) because there are ‘common spaces’ where guests are provided with ‘common’ meals ... in a group setting ...” The Lodge will house transient occupants, “anyone staying 25 consecutive calendar days or less,” according to the report. It will be subject to transient occupancy tax. The report also noted the applicants could have asked to operate as a hotel since the building is designated a historic resource and the historic resource ordinance allows for land use flexibility for designated properties.

According to Susan Gillingham, one of the principals, the cluster of two-story bungalows around the main building will provide 11 additional guest rooms and make the project “financially viable.” The 1906 Lodge will have a total of 17 rooms in the “upscale, quiet lodging” with a live-in, on-site manager. Breakfast and afternoon refreshments will be served only to guests, she said. An exercise room, media room and guest storage rooms will be located in the basement. The new bungalows will have the same Mission decor as the historic building, an early representation of the collaboration of renowned architects William Hebbard and Irving Gill.

Project Architect Chris Ackerman, of The Ackerman Group, told the council the two pocket parks were “essentially a gift to the city.” Created by narrowing the A Avenue termination to a standard 48-foot width, they will be maintained by the Lodge on the east side and the Lorden Manor property owners on the west side.

According to the staff report, the realignment will “improve driver visibility of the intersection, simplify negotiation of what is now an irregular intersection and improve

safety for pedestrians crossing A Avenue.” The realignment will also allow for angled parking consistent with the rest of the block which will result in three additional public parking spaces.

The ramp to the Lodge's underground parking will be a single lane enclosed in what appears to be a standard garage door entry. A total of 18 spaces will be located underground; according to the staff report, only 12 spaces would be required by the city.

“Parking, parking, parking,” was the concern they heard from nearby residents, Gillingham told the council, “ ‘Please don't let anyone else park on the street,' we were asked.”

Planning Director Tony Pena told the council that parking in the area was considered the most impacted in Coronado.

Ackerman said locating the mechanic room and shop under the new public park area allows the facility's exhaust fan to be “located as far away as possible from any residential use.”

The architecture of the new bungalows will take “a cue from the architecture of the lodge and repeat it in a miniature way,” Ackerman said. The grounds will be “courtyard-like and quiet. All the bungalows will feature porches or balconies,” he added. However, the new bungalows will be “smaller in scale and respect the larger lodge,” he added. In the addition, an arched loggia will be added on A Avenue “which picks up the Mission style and ties it into the neighborhood,” noting that the Mission de Coronado apartment building to the north has a similar arched entryway.

During public comment, Arthur Jones, president of Coronado MainStreet Ltd., said it was good to “see private capital removing a blight and putting beauty in its place.” He added that with private capital to maintain the park “makes it hard to see how the city has anything to lose.”

Speaking as a private citizen, Gerry MacCartee, the Historic Resource Commission vice chair, said, “Historic restoration is and can be a nightmare ... I have to applaud this group. They've done a fabulous job. This can be a turning point. We can do historic preservation and make it economically feasible.” She said that the project is “going to be a boon to this city” noting it sits on Adella Avenue which founding father Hampton Story named after his wife.

Adjacent landowner J.R. Sweet, said that parking remains an issue and that another three or four parking spaces could be created by eliminating the pocket park in front of the Lorden Manor, property which he described as “not an architect's dream.” He urged the council to consider doing so.

Debbie Riddle, representing Lee Mather, owner of Lorden Manor apartments, said they supported the SUP application and urged the council to approve it.

Pamela Wilke, a single-family home resident told the council, “Speaking as a mom, it would be irresponsible not to do what is drawn here. It's like a game of chicken; you take your life in your hands when you cross the road.”

Councilmember Frank Tierney said he didn't have any problem with the project but wanted to know who was responsible for moving the utilities in the right-of-way. Pena said anytime anyone works in the public right-of-way they have to pay and get all the “legal coverages the city requires.”

This is the “kind of project where I'm willing to allow an exemption,” Councilmember Carrie Downey said. “It's small enough, we're not opening up to a massive commercial use of the right-of-way.”

The project “honors the spirit of the law, rather than the letter of the law,” Councilmember Casey Tanaka said, complementing the architect. “They're trying to provide more parking than the law requires. I won't be the councilman who votes against adding more parking.” He added that it was nice to see community members “taking care of their community.”

Councilman Monroe said he supported the project and “the vision these people have.” He said the venting was “in the right place” and moved to support the SUP and parking plan as outlined by the applicants. Tierney seconded the motion.