

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING
Richmond Room, 450 Civic Center Plaza
Richmond CA 94804
February 3, 2025
5:30 P.M.

MINUTES

Roll Call

Chair Joann Pavlinec called the meeting to order at 5:28 P.M.

Present: Chair Joann Pavlinec, Vice Chair Caitlin Hibma; Commissioners Michael Hibma and Fatema Crane

Absent: None

Guests: None

Staff Avery Stark, Acting Planning Manager; Hector Lopez, Senior Planner; and Michele Morris, Senior Planner/HPC Staff Liaison

Approval of Minutes

October 2, 2024

ACTION: It was M/S/C (C. Hibma/Crane) to approve the minutes of the October 2, 2024 meeting, as shown; approved by the following Roll Call vote: 4-0 (Ayes: Pavlinec, Crane, C. Hibma, and M. Hibma; Noes: None; Abstain: None; Absent: None.
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Approval of Agenda:

There were no changes to the agenda.

Meeting Procedures

The meeting procedures were as shown on the agenda.

Public Forum

CORDELL HINDLER, Richmond, reported that there had been another appointment to the Historic Preservation Commission, Isabel Ziegler, and he would be talking with the Youth Council later in the month to fill the last vacancy on the HPC. He invited everyone to the Contra Costa Mayors Conference on February 13, 2025 at 6:30 P.M. at the Moraga Country Club, \$70/person.

Isabel Ziegler was present in the audience at this time.

Liaison Reports

There was no City Council Liaison at the meeting.

Consent Calendar: None

Appeal Date: Any action taken at the meeting must be appealed prior to 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, February 18, 2025.

Public Hearings

1.	PLN24-112	POWERS NEW SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING
	Description	REQUEST FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR A MAJOR ALTERATION PERMIT TO CONSTRUCT A 1,100-SQUARE FOOT TWO-STORY SINGLE-FAMILY DWELLING ON A VACANT PARCEL.
	Location	88 BUENA VISTA AVENUE
	APN	556-151-006
	Zoning	RL-1, SINGLE FAMILY VERY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL
	Owner	TOM POWERS
	Applicant	MICHAEL HANNAH (ARCHITECT)
	Staff Contact	HECTOR LOPEZ
		Recommendation: CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

Hector Lopez presented the staff report dated February 3, 2025, for a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for a Major Alteration Permit to construct a 1,100-square-foot two-story single-family dwelling on a vacant through-lot 9,780 square feet in size within the Point Richmond Historic District (PRHD). The lot sloped upward from Buena Vista Avenue to East Scenic Avenue with an average slope of 45 percent. He noted that the lower half of the lot closer to Buena Vista Avenue had been cleared of vegetation.

Mr. Lopez reported that in April 2019, the HPC had approved the construction of a 3,000 square foot single-family dwelling on the upslope portion of the property, and an 800 square-foot Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) on the lower portion of the site. The property had subsequently been sold to a new owner who had modified the development scheme for the property.

Mr. Lopez described the new proposal for a 1,100-square-foot two-story single-family dwelling as a reverse floor plan that would include two bedrooms and a bathroom on the first floor and a kitchen, dining room, and living room on the second floor, which would also include a roof deck facing the Bay and a barbecue area bisected by a projecting chimney, along with a two-car garage with a driveway.

The dwelling would feature a contemporary architectural style with elements of traditional architecture similar and approximately the same size as the previously approved ADU. Exterior materials of wood siding, wood windows and doors were in keeping with the surrounding rural and historic context. The second floor would be recessed at least 20 feet from the front property line helping to reduce the scale and mass of the structure and those elements were consistent with the previously approved project ADU.

Mr. Lopez recommended approval of the application based on findings and staff-recommended conditions. The project was in compliance and involved new construction on a vacant lot with a design compatible in size, scale, and color of other homes in the area.

MICHAEL HANNAH, the project architect, noted that the proposal for the property had originally involved two buildings with a much larger building off East Scenic Avenue. He had advised the new owner that proposal was barely viable, out of character for the neighborhood and would be more expensive given the 45 percent slope regardless of previous approvals, and he had recommended that the applicant not develop the upper portion of the property. The currently proposed project would be set back into the hill to limit the impact.

Mr. Hannah also advised that the immediate neighbor on the uphill side had suggested that the existing path for deer be maintained, which required some clearing and which had altered the

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plans somewhat. He added that the windows had originally been proposed to be aluminum but given the difficulty in meeting some of the sustainability requirements with aluminum, he had advised the client to make a change to wood windows using the best architectural wood windows such as Loewen windows or Thermory windows, both very durable and able to withstand the sea air. He explained that those windows could be painted (required every five years or so) or stained (30 years or so). The roofing would be a Tefute roofing system, an off-shingle product integrated with solar, or normal composition shingles as an alternate. He explained that none of that would be visible from the street and the design had maximized the ability for solar.

With respect to landscaping, Mr. Hannah characterized the landscaping as undisturbed wilderness and described what currently existed. He stated there were no large trees around the home.

Mr. Hannah added that the applicant had no intention of building the previously approved upper house. He responded to questions and explained that the proposed barbeque oven might be faced with brick but could not be strictly brick because of the earthquake zone. It could have a painted ceramic cover; a neutral non-wood, non-metal cover. While there were different shades to use, the cover would be dark, which was better from an energy perspective, and roof shingles would also be quite dark. If the windows were painted, that would also be done in dark colors. The railing would be painted steel. He commented that he would try to get blue steel or treated steel that did not need to be painted, if possible. There would be some landscaping in the front, a continuation of the concrete walls to manage runoff and the creation of a crawl space for the house along with a bit of terracing, with landscaping of lavender and small perennials.

PUBLIC HEARING OPENED

MATT COTTON, 50 East Scenic Avenue, Richmond, the uphill neighbor to the west, liked the proposed design but noted his biggest issue was that the scale of the drawings appeared to be off. As shown, he stated the proposed house would be close to his house and to the adjacent house given that the lots were very narrow.

Mr. Hannah explained that the plans were 100 percent to scale and a survey had been done along with full civil engineering drawings, and Mr. Cotton noted he did not have those drawings.

An unidentified neighbor asked about the depth of the lot, reported to be 175 feet on the longest side and 124 feet on the shortest side.

JAMISON SPITTLER, 50 East Scenic Avenue, Richmond, also liked the drawings and the lovely home. She too commented on the apparent closeness of the home to her property and agreed that the drawings appeared to be off. She had no concern with the design but objected to the way the plans had represented her property. She asked whether the deer setback would be six feet or 10 feet, and she was told that the setback would be six feet.

It was verified that the proposal met all of the City's requirements, including the setbacks.

Mr. Hannah clarified that some of the adjacent properties had been misrepresented in the plans since he could not survey those properties.

ELI BERLAND, 130 East Scenic Avenue, Richmond, the uphill neighbor from the subject parcel, explained that the roads were very narrow and winding.

Mr. Berland explained that he had not seen the plans for the project but he commented on the nature of the hillside and the impact of construction and access to get building materials into the

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property. He emphasized that the area was tricky and that both East Scenic and Buena Vista Avenues had challenges with respect to access. He pointed out that the hillside roads were quite narrow, small and difficult to access. He looked forward to seeing the drawings and to the development of the property.

Mr. Lopez stated that among the conditions of approval included the requirement for a construction staging plan to ensure continued emergency access.

KATE SPAULDING, 115 Buena Vista Avenue, Richmond, the adjacent homeowner on Buena Vista stated she had met with the applicant. She asked for a verification of the floor plan, particularly on the first floor and inquired about the odd description for a 1,100 square foot single-family dwelling to accommodate the applicant, his wife and his visiting daughters when there was so much more property available to be developed. She was concerned that there was a mother-in-law unit of size when there was so much property to be developed.

Mr. Lopez explained that no mother-in-law unit had been proposed. He clarified that only one person would occupy the home full-time and the daughters would visit from time to time.

Ms. Spaulding also expressed concern that the driveway was situated adjacent to a very busy and narrow street and there could be potential hazards.

Mr. Hannah clarified that the new owner had voluntarily decided not to build the previously approved large, unnecessary house at the top of the hill that would put pressure on such things as emergency fire and other access, the sewer and the like. The proposal was for a minimal development. There was no mother-in-law unit, the applicant was in his 80s, had lost his wife, was an active member of the community and the house was considered a bachelor pad because the owner did not plan to have a bigger family and there were two bedrooms because his daughters occasionally visited. The driveway was governed by the Planning Department and people were allowed the right to have a driveway connecting their house to the public highway system, and the unit had been set back as much as it could be, within reason. The house, as represented, was accurate on the property although the neighbors' houses were not accurate because those properties had not been surveyed and there was no requirement that they be surveyed.

PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED

Commissioner M. Hibma reported that he had visited the site and noticed that side of Buena Vista Avenue facing the project had several properties that were under 50 years old. He commented that this part of the Point Richmond Historic District did not have many contributing elements. It was an area that was in the PRHD but newer construction could occur within the district and no contributing elements would be removed. The issue of the scale aside, he suggested the proposal was in keeping with the area and with the intended use given the constraints of the site, and he stated there should be some variation in architecture and no need to replicate historical themes or architectural characteristics and materiality if it shouldn't be there. As far as traffic and speed, he did not think the road was long enough to get over 20 MPH since it was short and narrow.

Commissioner C. Hibma agreed and was pleased to see a very compact and efficient house instead of a McMansion, which would benefit the neighborhood in general, and because it was not a contributing resource to the PRHD it did not warrant the whole Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties standard analysis.

Commissioner C. Hibma stated therefore in that particular neighborhood, a neighborhood compatibility analysis was appropriate. She cited the wood and the material palette and gable

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roofline, the individual windows and the like representing a modern home that was compatible with what was around it, and homes immediately adjacent were not that historic.

Chair Pavlinec acknowledged that the massing had been broken up well and even though the home was a small square footage, it had been broken up into smaller blocks consistent with the historic scale of the neighborhood, using an interpreted gable roof as well.

Commissioner Crane concurred with the previous comments about the design and scale, was impressed that it was only two stories in height and noted it was unfortunate the drawings were somehow confusing to the neighbors. She was glad the architect had helped to explain the perspective drawings. With respect to the concerns for construction, she noted that staff had explained that there would be other reviews, such as by the fire department that would follow to ensure the appropriateness of the design. There were also other options to get that information.

ACTION: It was M/S/C (M. Hibma/C. Hibma) to approve the Major Alteration Permit (PLN 24-112) Powers New Single-Family Dwelling, subject to the Certificate of Appropriateness Finding and the staff recommended 16 conditions of approval; approved by the following Roll Call vote: 4-0 (Ayes: Pavlinec, Crane, C. Hibma, and M. Hibma; Noes: None; Abstain: None; Absent: None.

Commission Business

A. Update on Mills Act Contracts

Chair Pavlinec advised that Director of Community Development Velasco had responded about hiring people; however, PlaceWorks, the consultant for the Mills Act, was working on the effort and concerns and how to apply the Mills Act citywide. She added that she had recommended to Michele Morris that a subcommittee meeting (comprised of the Chair and Commissioner M. Hibma) be set up to start moving the Mills Act Contracts forward on the issue of equity and determine what PlaceWorks had done.

B. Update on Historic Plaques Program

There was no new information available on the Historic Plaques Program that the prior City Council Liaison had been working on. Mr. Stark stated that money had been set aside for the Historic Plaques Program but the program had not yet advanced to that level.

On another matter, Chair Pavlinec requested a grid or other method to help follow up on applicable HPC required conditions of approval by date for approved projects.

On the discussion, it was also recommended being more strategic and intentional about where the conditions were embedded in the process to avoid losing the incentive for the applicant to complete those conditions. Staff was directed to provide a list of approved projects of interest to the Commission to help in that regard, with the detail of what was required for approved projects such as the Library Renovation, Pullman, Ferry Point and the Brickyard.

Mr. Stark was also asked to report on the quorum issue at the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting adjournment at 6:32 P.M.