

**CITY OF FIRCREST PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

April 7, 2015
6:00 PM

Fircrest City Hall
115 Ramsdell Street

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Karen Patjens called the regular meeting of the Fircrest Planning Commission to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Kathy L. McVay, Jerry Foss, Karen Patjens, Kenneth Halgren, and Jim Otness were present. Absent: None. Excused: None. Staff present: Principal Planner Jeff Boers, Permit Coordinator/Code Compliance Officer Angelie Stahlnecker, City Attorney Mike Smith, Public Works Director Jerry Wakefield, and City Manager Rick Rosenblatt.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting of March 3, 2015 were presented for approval.

Moved by Otness and seconded by Foss to approve the minutes. Ayes: Kathy L. McVay, Jerry Foss, Karen Patjens, Kenneth Halgren, and Jim Otness. Noes: None. Absent: None. Excused: Motion carried.

CONTINUING BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

Proposed Conditional Use Permit to construct a new Wainwright intermediate public school grades 4-8; major variance to exceed the 30-foot maximum allowable building height; and major variance to reduce building wall modulation.

At 6:03 p.m. Chair Karen Patjens opened the public hearing and outlined the format. She asked if there were any issues or objections based on the appearance of fairness. No comments or objections were raised.

Principal Planner Boers summarized the information that had been provided in the staff report and noted the addition to the record of exhibit No. 31, environmental assessment of the site provided by EHS-International, Inc.

Responding to Halgren, Boers stated the purpose of modulation was aesthetic in purpose to prevent long stretches of blank wall especially along streets.

Rob Sawatzky, Tacoma Public Schools Director of Planning and Construction, stated the District was excited about the teaching and learning opportunities provided by the site's environment.

Paul Popovich, Tacoma Public Schools, summarized the District's community outreach efforts that began with discussions with Whittier School leaders and parents who desired a configuration that would split pre-k-3 and 4-8 into two schools, allowing a continuous flow in Fircrest. Community meetings were advertised by full citywide mailings. The main issues that came out from those meetings were the need to address traffic, busses, and maintaining existing trees, all of which were addressed in the proposed layout.

Noah Greenberg, DLR Group, stated decisions for the project were influenced by input from community meetings. Due to the 4th-8th configuration, the site is treated like a middle school campus, which usually has larger amenities. The site is 75% smaller than a standard elementary school site and 50% smaller than a standard middle school site, so the layout needs to be compact. Three criteria drove design: traffic, retaining existing trees, and the requirements of a modern educational program, which is the mission of the school district. The first two drove pushing the building to the back of the site, which allowed stacking of 40 cars onsite instead of on the street. He stated there will be some congestion but it is the longest parent drop-off loop they have ever been able to develop. They brought the community amenities to the front of site: field, play area, basketball court, and community gym, which the District plans to make available for the community to use. These focuses have made the building leaner and more vertical than normal buildings in a residential zone.

Greenberg stated the school is intended to be a community building including library and meeting spaces. To provide these amenities and keep the trees, the tradeoff is to make the building footprint as compact as possible.

Exhibit A was displayed to demonstrate places where the height variances were needed. The design keeps the gym roof slope as shallow as feasible to minimize height and still achieve a regulation gym. A three story classroom wing was intended to keep the overall building footprint smaller.

Exhibit B was displayed to demonstrate that the distance from the adjoining residential buildings would be about twice the height of the proposed structure.

Exhibit E was displayed to demonstrate that the existing school building does not meet the current modulation requirements.

A three minute video was shown to give a pedestrian view of the property.

Greenberg stated the proposed school is not a typical building for an R-6 zone and it cannot look like a house, but referred to exhibit 8, which responds to all of the design criteria in FMC 22.64.

Responding to Halgren, Greenberg responded they will hand excavate around trees proposed to be retained. They are working with a professional arborist and the current plan saves 82% of trees on site, but up to 10% may not survive due to construction. The two existing trees along the

proposed driveway are already surrounded by pavement, so the hope is they will tolerate nearby driveway improvements.

Responding to Foss, Greenberg identified the fire lane runs around the back (west side) of the building from the teachers' parking lot. The fire department did not require one on the south side of the building. He also noted the District hired an acoustical engineer to demonstrate that the noise at the property line will be at or below current levels and meet code requirements.

Responding to Halgren, Greenberg stated there were no specific drawings showing the perspective of the school building from adjacent properties, but there were elevations provided.

Responding to Otness, Greenberg stated various site plan designs were developed but not building designs.

Popovich explained they had created a design advisory committee with district personnel for curriculum and how the school would function. Most of the comments influenced the placement of the facility on the site and what would happen on the inside of the building.

Responding to Otness, Greenberg displayed the building façade from the video showing the metal siding was on the middle portion that held the library. 75% of the building will be painted siding for cost consideration and the main entrance will have masonry and metal siding. He stated it is not historic looking but expresses what is in the interior of that section, which is a robotic lab and a video tech lab.

Responding to a concern raised by Otness that the architectural design was too modern and didn't fit into the character of the surrounding neighborhoods, Greenberg responded that buildings in the area have a progressive background identifying the modern look of the United Methodist Church to the north and the abstract influence of the 1950s in the Redeemer Lutheran Church. He also noted there are not a lot of large public buildings in Fircrest to compare to.

Responding to Halgren, Greenberg stated public engagement started with Donna Basil, Whittier Elementary Principal, and some Fircrest residents. The attendance at early public meetings was large, but has dwindled.

Otness noted he knew Donna Basil and her husband.

Responding to McVay, Greenberg confirmed early review groups were more concerned with curriculum and the interior of the building.

Popovich added that most of the concerns they heard were how the building was laid out on the property and interacted with the gym, library, trees, etc. versus how it looked vertically.

Sawatzky concluded that school district desired partnerships with the community.

Patjens invited public comment.

Scott Brannon, 1029 Princeton Street, stated concerns related to the detention pond, noise, light and how the height affected his neighbors. He acknowledged the school district had moved the pond back an additional five feet and demonstrated there would be little standing water.

Al Creten, 1130 Garden Circle, stated concerns related to the height impacts on privacy and requested construction review consider noise and light pollution

John Tollefson, 1101 Garden Circle, stated he was the closest neighbor and had concerns about height.

Responding to McVay, Greenberg stated the stair deck was a required egress exit and will be secured.

Responding to Foss, Greenberg confirmed the detention pond will be fenced and landscaped.

Responding to Otness, Greenberg stated using an underground detention vault was considered but cost was a concern.

Responding to Otness and Foss, Greenberg stated windows were placed high or frosted to protect privacy. In addition, there should not be interior lights at night as classes are not held at night and lights will be on motion sensors to automatically turn off.

Responding to Otness, Sawatzky stated the district will not be able to determine the exact number of Fircrest students or number of busses needed until the school opens.

Popovich stated the school will alleviate some of Whittier's overflow and Fircrest residents who are currently sent elsewhere would have first priority.

Responding to Otness, Popovich explained the school district pursued, but was unable to purchase property along Columbia Avenue/19th Street and that the United Methodist church was only willing to maintain their previous arrangement, which allowed busses and staff vehicles only to cross their site to gain access to the school. Popovich stated the prohibition of parent traffic off of 19th was due to the agreements with the United Methodist Church and not because of requirements by the City of Tacoma.

Responding to Foss, Greg Heath, Heath and Associates, Inc., stated since the study couldn't be based on existing conditions since the school is currently vacant, the traffic study was based on acceptable database based on similar schools. The traffic counts for the intersection will not exceed LOS C, which is acceptable by City standards. Trends and studies show more parents drop their students off in the a.m. and have them walk home in the p.m., which is reflected in the difference of a.m. and p.m. vehicle trips noted in the study. Staff observations will be focused at the beginning of the school year to identify any adjustments that may need to be made.

Karen O'Brien, 1037 Princeton Street, stated she felt the Traffic Study didn't reflect the true impact on neighbors.

Ken Porter, 1033 Princeton Street, stated his experience with school traffic was that congestion was worse in the afternoon due to people parking and waiting for students.

Patjens closed the public hearing at 7:29 p.m.

Moved by McVay and seconded by Foss to adopt a resolution, approving a conditional use permit for a new intermediate school facility located at 130 Alameda Avenue, based on the findings and subject to the conditions listed in the preliminary resolution provided in Exhibit 1.

Discussion included:

- Traffic concerns related to drop off and pick up
- Desire for parent traffic to access the school from 19th
- Concern if the building met the design standards
- Desire to have a school again
- Concern over impact on properties in southwest corner of the school site
- Desire to see visual of rendering of scale from adjacent properties perspective
- Any development on the property will have a traffic impact

Moved by Otness and seconded by Foss to table the motion.

Ayes: Kathy L. McVay, Jerry Foss, Karen Patjens, Kenneth Halgren, and Jim Otness.

Noes: None. Absent: None. Excused: None. Motion carried.

Moved by Otness and seconded by Foss to reopen the public hearing.

Ayes: Kathy L. McVay, Jerry Foss, Karen Patjens, Kenneth Halgren, and Jim Otness.

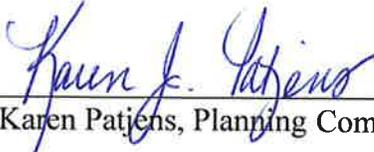
Noes: None. Absent: None. Excused: None. Motion carried.

Moved by Foss and seconded by Otness to continue the public hearing to April 21, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

Ayes: Kathy L. McVay, Jerry Foss, Karen Patjens, Kenneth Halgren, and Jim Otness.

Noes: None. Absent: None. Excused: None. Motion carried.

Moved by McVay and seconded by Foss to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m. Ayes: Kathy L. McVay, Jerry Foss and Karen Patjens. Noes: None. Absent: None. Excused: Kenneth Halgren and Jim Otness. Motion carried.



Karen Patjens, Planning Commission Chair



Jeff Boers, Principal Planner