

Members of the Santa Barbara City Council
De la Guerra Plaza
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

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John B. Manning
1716 Overlook Lane
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 965-5197

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE
SANTA BARBARA, CA March 6, 2007

To All Members of the City Council:

Re: Advisability of rescinding the Planning Commission's approval of subdividing APN 015-161-054.

I am writing to impart salient information that will be important to the decision making process and will therefore be beneficial to have considered before the upcoming appeal hearing. Some of this information is potentially of considerable concern to the City of Santa Barbara.

Exhibit F (beginning on p. 130 of 186 of the full document) in the proposal indicates that on Sept. 9, 2004, Pacific Materials Laboratory of Santa Barbara, Inc. dug an exploratory trench and drilled two 20 foot bore holes on the site. That trench reached tan-white shale, the alleged bedrock, at a depth of 6 feet. The one 20 foot bore hole that is represented by profile revealed alternating layers of clay and sand, but no shale (cf. p. 145 of 186). The other bore hole is mentioned as having been dug, but it is never referred to again in the report. On the map showing one bore hole location, B-1 (p. 142 of 186), no exploratory trench is shown, the second bore hole is not shown, and the field density test location, D-1, is listed in the legend but not shown. The stated conclusion is that there is a clay layer about 3-7 feet thick at the top, which becomes shale below that depth. It then goes on to require that "all piles shall be drilled a minimum distance of 10 feet into the stiff shale layer, which was encountered approximately 3 to 7 feet below the present grade." Yet the 20 foot bore hole never reached the shale. Clearly there are considerable inconsistencies in this report and its recommendations.

A detailed environmental impact report was prepared in October, 1976 for APN 015-202-039, the lot immediately adjacent, on the south side of APN 015-161-054. In a subsequent field investigation in 1983 it was revealed that the geology of the western side of the canyon is highly suspect in terms of building safely. Indeed, past shallow landslides have shaped the topography. It was further suggested that "some of the underlying Monterey formation moved by block-gliding," and is actually unstable. Those findings suggest that a far more detailed geologic study of the proposed parcel than has been prepared so far is in order since the possibility of a similar problem in APN 015-161-054 has not been eliminated. The 1983 study concludes, "In any event, construction on the parcel should be designed with foundations resting on Monterey bedrock and not on existing soil or fill." Since both geologic reports recommend bedrock and since the 20 foot bore hole did not encounter any, there is a problem.

As a result of the various studies of APN 015-202-039 and the concerns expressed therein, applications to divide the parcel and add buildings were turned down twice, with one of the petitions having gone all the way to the California State Board of Appeals. The canyon has remained essentially in its natural state since then, and unquestionably the geology has not changed.

The above studies are on file in the city archives, and geologic concerns are outlined therein that resulted in these previous applications having been turned down. As a result the city may well be approving an unwise project. If geologic problems actually come to light at a later date, those archives and the inconsistencies in the current report could put the city in an uncomfortable position of having approved a building in an area known to be potentially unstable and in which the city wisely blocked similar proposals in the past.

At the Planning Commission hearing it was noted that part of the footprint for the proposed residence is on a slope that exceeds 30%, and when the proponents were asked how the slope calculations were

made, no adequate answer was given. It is possible that the average slope is greater than 28% and perhaps approaches or exceeds 30%. The lack of clarity in the slope calculation process and brings into question the purpose of the 450 yards of fill dirt that need to be imported. The questions that remain are: Just how was the slope calculated? How can the "original" natural slope be determined, and what happened to the original 450 yards of soil that is having to be replaced by the imported soil? Was that soil moved, or did it never exist? If the soil was moved, where did it go and how did it change the topography of the land? Is it possible that before the soil was moved the average slope of the footprint was greater than 30%?

It is unclear how the project will affect fire truck access to both the existing residence and the proposed residence. How will the new driveway allow for such vehicles?

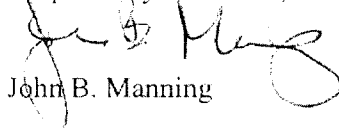
The portion of Eucalyptus Hill Road between Alameda Padre Serra and Salinas Street is full of spectacular, framed and panoramic views. One of these views is across APN 015-161-054 and can be enjoyed by any driver headed downhill. There is a beautiful corridor looking down the canyon to the ocean framed by trees on both sides, and on a clear day one can see part of Anacapa Island. In the Architectural Board of Review reports it is emphasized that the concept proposal for the residence is set back and down from the road, and that it will block the view minimally at most. This is re-emphasized in the Final Initial Study (p. 4 and 7 of 32, or p. 37 and 40 of 186). That concept proposal to the ABR emphasized that the conceptual height of the project would not exceed the height of Eucalyptus Hill Road. As a result, under Aesthetics (p. 6 of 32 or p. 39 of 186), the answer to 1 a. should be "potentially significant, mitigable," and include the above-mentioned height restriction (which was self-imposed by the owner in the original ABR hearing). This stipulation should be included under the Planning Commission Conditions of Approval and should encompass landscaping as well to avoid future issues that might arise because of the current omission.

The last 130 feet of above ground culvert and below ground cisterns extend into undisturbed woodland and riparian areas that serve as a wildlife refuge in an otherwise urban area. Additionally, the runoff volume graphs are due to over 8 inches of rain in a 24 hour period, most of which fell in a matter of four hours around 10:00 a.m. The prognosis of such a deluge even being a 25 year event is an exaggeration, as is the contention that the minor amount of erosion resulting from that deluge is symptomatic of a serious problem. The project should be revised to have no or little impact on the undisturbed area.

All of the above suggests that approval of the division should be rescinded because:

1. The geology of APN 015-202-039 is known to be unstable, the geologic study that has been made of APN 015-161-054 is full of inconsistencies, and the city may be approving building in an area known to be unsafe.
2. Adequate accessibility by fire safety vehicles is unclear.
3. Preservation of public view lines is not adequately covered in the Conditions of Approval.
4. The pastoral beauty and the unspoiled nature of the area along with the accompanying flora and fauna and the general impact on the environment have not been given sufficient recognition or consideration in the decision, especially in relation to the location of the drain and cisterns.
5. The above renders the proposal inconsistent with the Conservation Element of the Santa Barbara General Plan and the California Environmental quality act.

Respectfully submitted,


John B. Manning