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Wight House Denied on Split Vote

By Cathy Tyson

On a vote of three in favor of denial, one abstention, and one in favor of approval, the controversial Wight home on a 13-acre parcel at the end of Monticello Road was officially denied. This may not be the last word, however. Attorney David Bowie may sue the city on behalf of his clients, Steven and Linda Wight.

Bowie explained that, in his opinion, there's no difference in terms of impact depending on the size of the home. The process of creating a buildable lot on this site requires infrastructure, road construction and more, which are needed regardless of house size, whether it's 3,000 square feet or 10,000. "In essence, this is nothing more than a single family residence that isn't even that large by Lafayette standards," argued Bowie.

This decision was seven years in the making. At the April 13 Lafayette City Council meeting, both an approval and a denial were prepared, just in case, depending on the decision of the five city council members. Three of the five tipped the scales to deny the project: Mayor Brandt Andersson and city council members Traci Reilly and Mark Mitchell all voted no.

Mitchell was clear, commenting, "If we can't make all the findings, we have to vote for denial. In my reading of the Ordinance, I cannot make the findings." Reilly did her homework, going point by point over specific concerns on a number of issues.

In an unusual move, Council Member Don Tatzin abstained from making a decision, explaining he was concerned about the lack of clarity and sufficiency of the construction management plan. He had concluded weeks ago that the city would be sued, regardless of what the council does.

Spelling out Phase I and Phase II requirements, the mayor pondered, "Is it too much?" The building application describes a 10,000-square-foot home on a ridge, and the findings require a small footprint. He also questioned whether the project was in the best interest of the public's health, safety and general welfare summarizing that "building large homes on ridgelines is an anathema to the city's policies and the public's sensitivity to those ridgelines. I really find it impossible to make the findings without dishonoring the plans and expectations of two generations of citizens of this city."

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