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Planning Commission reapproves development project for single-family home

By Jennifer Wake



Image courtesy City of Lafayette

The approval for the construction of a 2,265 sq. ft. single-family residence on an undeveloped parcel in the Hillside Overlay District, located at the intersection of Sierra Vista Way and Sessions Road in Lafayette, returned to the Planning Commission Dec. 5, after nine hearings had already been held regarding the property, with the last approval vote taken in 2021.

According to a staff report by Senior Planner Renata Robles, approvals for the Phase I and Phase II Hillside Development Permits for the project expired on Jan. 27, 2022. "Section 6-250 of the Lafayette Municipal Code allows the Planning Director to extend the approval period for up to one additional year at the request of an applicant," Robles noted in the report. "However, the applicant was unable to submit a request for an extension prior to the approvals expiring."

Owner Robin Holt explained in a letter that they were not able to move forward with the project within the timeframe of the original approval since her son, in mid-2020, was diagnosed with a deadly brain tumor and after treatments and surgeries, had passed away at the end of 2021. Not long after, her husband Dick was diagnosed with a recurrence of cancer and passed away on Aug. 12. "Needless to say, it has been very difficult to lose both my son and husband in less than a year," she wrote. "I now am able to revisit this project and am requesting a re-approval with no change of conditions."

The city received multiple letters from neighbors who continue to object to the development, with a number of them citing that it violates several easements, creates unsafe ingress and egress, is too large for the development, and would be built on a natural drainage swale. During the commission's discussion, several commissioners objected to the insinuation in several letters that there was any conflict of interest, noting they never knew Mr. Holt and never had any interaction with him.

After an extended discussion regarding whether this was a valid legal lot and whether there had been any changes since the original approval, the Planning Commission voted 4-2 (with Sturm and Mason voting no) to reapprove the project. There is a 14-day window to appeal.

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[back](#)

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