



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

Minutes - Draft

Planning Commission

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

7:00 PM

Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Present: Chris Spivey (Chair), Darrell Windsor, Katie Riley, Stacy Mudry, Wendy Alderson, Thor Christianson (Assembly Liaison)
Staff: Amy Ainslie, Kim Davis
Public: Scott Wagner, Ariadne Will (Sentinel)

Chair Spivey called the meeting to order at 7:05pm.

II. CONSIDERATION OF THE AGENDA

III. CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES

A [PM 22-18](#)

M-Mudry/S-Alderson moved to approve the October 5, 2022 meeting minutes.
Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

IV. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

V. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ainslie reminded Commissioners of the joint work session with the Assembly on October 27th for the review of the tourism plan. Commissioner Alderson will be absent for both Planning Commission meetings in November, and Commissioner Mudry will be absent for the December 7th meeting. Commissioner Windsor had asked about creating an upcoming agenda item for discussion of the subdivision code requirements regarding access and utilities. Commissioner Riley would like staff to report on the history of how the code requirement was developed and what other communities of Sitka's size (both in and out of Alaska) have as subdivision code requirements.

VI. REPORTS

VII. THE EVENING BUSINESS

B [VAR 22-20](#)

Ainslie introduced a request for a zoning variance to reduce the side setback on the west side from 9' to 5' at 304 Nicole Drive. The applicants currently had an 8' x 5' deck

on the west side of the property and the deck had deteriorated and required replacement. Rather than a like-for-like replacement, the applicants planned to improve the deck to provide for more practical use. The placement of the proposed deck would maintain the minimum fire separation distance of 5'. As a minor variance only the deck and covering would project closer to the property line as opposed to a larger, major structure. The improvement of the deck would increase the property owners enjoyment of their outdoor space and rehabilitates a structure in need of replacement. Staff recommended approval.

Applicant Scott Wanger was present and didn't have anything else to add but clarified there was enough parking in front of the house. Public comment was read into the record from neighbor Erin Clay in support of the variance request. A letter was read into public comment from neighbor Nick Olney-Miller also in support for the variance request. Commissioners had no discussion.

M-Mudry/SWindsor moved to approve the zoning variance for a reduction to the side setback at 304 Nicole Drive in the R-1 Single-Family/Duplex Residential District subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot B, Pete Jones Subdivision. The request was filed by Scott Wagner. The owners of record were Scott Wagner and Danielle Snyder. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M-Mudry/SWindsor moved to adopt and approve the required findings for variances involving minor structures or expansions as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

C [VAR 22-21](#)

Ainslie introduced a request for a platting variance to waive access and utility requirements at 1190 Seward Avenue. This location was the intended location for the new seaplane base, but the property itself had interesting platting history to consider. A right-of-way grant (ROW grant) was given from Alaska Indian Health Service in 1975 to the U.S. Coast Guard. The access driveway from the Coast Guard base extends over the property line, utilizing the ROW grant. The City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) was interested in purchasing the property for a seaplane base, but CBS needed approval from the FAA; due to security requirements, the property had to have clear title and no other interest in the property (i.e. easements or encroachments). The best option was to subdivide off the portion of the lot where the U.S. Coast Guard utilized the ROW grant and to reduce the size of the ROW grant to the most practical size. A condition of approval had been added requiring that the plat carry a note stating that all easements including the ROW grant could not be modified without approval of the platting board. This would provide oversight for any changes to the ROW grant and empower the Planning Commission to address access and/or utility concerns in the future if needed.

This action would resolve the ROW grant encumbrance on the remainder of the lot which enables the land acquisition to be reimbursed by the FAA. In addition to the unique circumstances created by the platting history, the lot would also be challenging to develop due to the steep topography. By realigning the ROW grant, it would free up some of the level terrain useable for development of parking and other upland amenities for seaplane base users. Ainslie also cited a similar platting variance granted under case file V 20-03.

There were two comprehensive plan actions to support the variance. T 2.1.c stated the

importance to replace Sitka's deteriorating seaplane base to maintain the economic and transportation benefits Sitka residents, businesses, and visitors depend on. The platting action was a critical step in advancing the land acquisition for development of the seaplane base. Action PTR 3.8 encouraged CBS pursue funding and grant opportunities for development of a new seaplane base. Staff recommended approval.

Commissioner Windsor asked about the code requirement staff was referencing for the platting variance request. Ainslie clarified Sitka General Code 21.52.010(C)(1) stated that plats can be approved by the Planning Commission upon proof that, legal access to each tract or lot within the subdivision exists over a street or access easement of at least twenty feet. Relief was being requested from the requirement. There was no public comment or other discussion from commissioners.

M/Alderson- S/Windsor moved to approve the platting variance to waive access and utility requirements for the resultant Lot 2A of the proposed minor subdivision of the property at 1190 Seward Avenue in the P public lands district. The property was also known as Lot 15A, US Survey 1496. The request was filed by the City and Borough of Sitka. The owner of record was the State of Alaska, Department of Education & Early Development. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M/Alderson- S/Riley moved to adopt the required findings for platting variances. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

D P 22- 10

Ainslie introduced the consideration of a preliminary plat for a minor subdivision resulting in two lots at 1190 Seward Avenue. The larger of the lots would be purchased by City and Borough of Sitka (CBS) for development of the new seaplane base, and the smaller lot would continue to be used by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) for a driveway adjacent to their property. There was no minimum lot size in the public lands district, the smaller lot would be 9,016 square feet and the larger lot would be 78,667 square feet (1.8 acres). Limiting access to Lot 2A helped to preserve security to USCG property. Most of the lot was undeveloped. There was a steep slope from the south side of the lot towards the waterfront. It was heavily vegetated with significant water frontage. Access was available from Seward Avenue which terminated in a cul de sac. There was also a fence sounding the USGS base which would be moved closer to the property line of the smaller lot. Staff recommend approval. There was no public comment or commissioner discussion.

M/Riley-S/Mudry moved to approve the preliminary plat for a minor subdivision to result in two lots at 1190 Seward Avenue in the P public lands district subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property was also known as Lot 15A, US Survey 1496. The request was filed by the City and Borough of Sitka. The owner of record was the State of Alaska, Department of Education and Early Development. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

M/Riley-S/Mudry moved to adopt the following findings as listed in the staff report. Motion passed 5-0 by voice vote.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no objections, Chair Spivey adjourned the meeting at 7:31 PM.