

1846 Grove Street Commissioner Comments and Technical Difficulties San Francisco Planning Commission

The Planning Commission changed its stance dramatically from the 12/12/19 meeting to the 4/9/20 meeting. In December, the PC raised and reiterated the same issues NOPAWN raised. Commissioners listened to and were sympathetic towards the neighbors.

Commissioner Comments from 12/12/19 Planning Commission meeting:

Commissioner Koppel:

"...I want something to be built here, but I can't ignore the extreme concern of, not looks or little tiny details, but their lives. And **I'm going to prioritize our existing residents over our future residents.** I wanted to ask a question about that life safety system. Will it extinguish an electrical fire?" Response: "Thank you, commissioner. To be honest, I don't know about an electrical fire..."

Commissioner Moore:

"I'm concerned that the **3' 6"** addressing portion of the project is **far too small...** The fact that most of **these units are built too closely to each other** makes this project appear more like a **barrack-type assembly** than putting five units in a looser arrangement into the lot. The fact that they are all sitting **literally on the property line with 17 other units** further creates the impression that the **project is too dense** for where it is..."

"...that there was a **significant amount of lack of privacy or intrusion of privacy among the units with each other.** When you follow that path, people are getting to the front doors by directly walking by the bedroom window of the adjoining unit..."

"...It's difficult to compare this project with York street, particularly the entry feature to York street is a building that's an integral part to the project which is beyond it. **Here, I believe, the project almost a detriment to the adjoining units which are being affected by this.** Imagine picking up the garbage can. Three and a half feet on this type of circulation pass is almost impossible. **So I believe there is something that doesn't quite work. I'm not sure what the answers are, but at this moment I cannot support the project as it's being presented to us here.**"

Commissioner Fung:

"...I share commissioner Moore's concerns with the 3.5' breezeway, entry point..."

Former Commissioner Melgar:

"...**So I've got to say that the structure coming right up against the property line, that doesn't work for me.** And I would rather have height in the middle of the lot and space in between than lower. I get it, it's a trade off. And this is such a difficult site, and it's a very densely-built

environment. So I get it that we are making trade offs. I love the living roof. **But I've got to say, if this were my house, you know, I would have a really hard time with it.**"

"Compounded with the life safety issues. Because I get it with the materials, but I still don't understand how you are going to get construction equipment in there. Even if it's done by hand. That's -- that's a lot. I don't understand it. So the big difference with York street, of course, is that they had that block in the first, and you could phase it and build everything and then build that structure last, and you can get cranes in there and everything. You can't do that here. I'm not really sure how you are going to do it. **But even if it's metal frame, you are still going to have to be doing welding, you are going to be doing stuff there that's right against the property line of other folks. And so those -- that really concerns me. I don't like it. I wouldn't approve it.**"

"And then the 3.5' whatever it is, long -- I still, you know, you said that it was very similar to York street, but I didn't hear any specifics. So I would like to hear that again how it is, you know, where is the fire hydrant, where is the shutoffs? What's the plan? Where will people congregate? **So I'm not convinced. And to me, that compounded with the structures being right against the property line is just a no deal for me...**"

"...I understand now the issue with the height and the fire... that actually doesn't help me in terms of making this decision, but now I understand it. I think it's maybe one or two units too many, you know? Because of the way that the access is and how it sits with all of the properties around it."

Commissioner Moore:

"...Because if you look at drawing 801, you realize that it's not just cottages, it's basically a completely connected building form, joined the entire side, given that the west side as well as the east side has a large portion of storage sheds and other utility structures, which completely fill out the sides. So I would agree with you, Commissioner Melgar, that **less would be more. And that would be creating fewer units in a slightly more informal way that complements the openness of the surrounding backyards and do not completely dominate the entire space in which the buildings sit. I think it requires a redesign.** It requires reduction in unit numbers, potentially reduction in unit size, and still leaves the overall attitude of how the building reads to the street as an address very unresolved, because I personally don't believe that it is enough. That it's mostly the width of a tradesman entrance in other parts of the city, and that is not very convincing to me. But as far as building mapping and side organization, I think this project needs to do other things to properly respond to the surrounding development."

Commissioner Fung:

"How is the noise handled, people coming in and out, deliveries made. What do people see from their rear yards and a lot of this stuff is right up against the property line. So I would support a continuance and give them an opportunity to see if they can come to a more sensitive design and perhaps come to a lesser number of issues that are in disagreement with their neighbors."

Commissioner Diamond:

“When I read the packet, I was extremely worried about the fire danger and spoke to staff about it in detail, and I'm appreciative of the information that was handed out today that indicated the numerous ways you are going to address it, some of which are similar to York street.”

“But as I focused on the site plan and saw that you had **zero lot lines** and heard all of the operational issues, you know, I just don't understand how you are constructing this with a 3' work passage way. I don't see how you are getting dirt in and out.”

“But even if you solve those problems, **I do believe that you should work on the design and that less density may address some of these issues, but I would also ask you to focus on how you are going to deal with garbage and move in and move out and the noise concerns** so even if we get beyond the fire marshal signing off on this, I still want to know how you are going to make this function.”

“But the idea of being able to add additional housing back there has a great deal of appeal to me. So I'm hopeful that you are work on this and come back and address the concerns you heard today.”

Between December and April there were several changes to the Planning Commission and the Planning Department. Former Commissioner Hillis was appointed Planning Director. Commissioner Richards stepped down from the Commission. Commissioner Imperial joined the Commission. Former Commission President Melgar stepped down from the Commission. Commissioner Koppel is the current President of the Planning Commission.

Technical Difficulties at the Planning Commission hearing on 4/09/20

- The April 9, 2020 Planning Commission hearing was the first held during the pandemic – there were major technical difficulties.
- This project was deemed an “essential construction project,” and was therefore eligible to be added to the Commission hearing agenda.
- Project Sponsor was the first speaker, before public comment. He had no problems during his presentation. He was able to communicate with Planning staff, and he could see his presentation slides.
- NOPAWN’s designated speaker was caller #32 in the queue, buried in the middle of public comment. He could not hear the Commissioners or Planning staff. He could not see the proceedings and had to present without knowing if he had an audience. He also did not know if his presentation slides were visible on the screen or if the clerk was advancing the pages when requested.
- Members of the public who had called into public comment also couldn’t hear the proceedings and didn’t know if the PC could hear them. At one point, Planning staff suggested hanging up on an elderly lady who was particularly struggling with the connection.
- It was discovered at 5pm that the AT&T services had a 4-hour meeting limit. The hearing was cut off at that time, and everyone had to log out and log back into a new event. When resumed after a delay, numerous speakers in opposition, who had been waiting for hours, were unable to rejoin and were excluded from making their voices heard.
- Immediately following our portion of the hearing, the commissioners and staff discussed what went wrong. The PC and BOS use SFGOV TV for their conference calls. They then established a phone bridge line with AT&T through which the public could call in and be bridged to SFGOV TV and Microsoft team meetings. AT&T’s server went down, and the hearing was subsequently unable to be broadcast via teleconference.