Notes from BNC January Meeting

Saturday, Jan. 11, 2020

**Present**: Pam Ormsby, Gale Garcia, David Ushijima, Sylviane Cohn, Steve Martinot, Lilana Spindler, Meryl Siegel, Martin Schwartz, Leila Kasrovi, Dean Metzger, Janis Ching, Taree Klausnor, Toni Mester, Scott Fanning, Gary Facente, Paul Warren, Brenda Baca, Terry Taplin, Paul Pursell, David Cole, Charity Kenyon, Mike Eaton, Jan Tharp, Shirley Dean, Carole Marasovic, Ed Herzog, Jacqueline McCormick

**Neighborhood Updates**:

**2435 San Pablo:** Toni Mester

The project is to be continued off calendar per ZAB. The directions given by ZAB at the December meeting are not yet posted, as they will be part of the meeting minutes. Neighbors will follow up to see whether all recommendations are met. Neighbors will also canvas the neighborhood to increase awareness. There are no standards or regulations for a residential hotel in Berkeley. This should be brought up at a future Planning Commission meeting. It was suggested that the City Attorney should be consulted as to whether a residential hotel is bound by any regulations or laws governing its operation.

**2730 San Pablo Ave**.: Mike Eaton

This is a Mark Rhoades project, described as 6-story, co-living with 97 bedrooms. The project was previewed at ZAB and went through Design Review without neighborhood participation. Neighbors are concerned with parking problems and increased traffic that the project will bring to the neighborhood. Pardee is a narrow St. and traffic could pose safety or fire hazard. It was suggested that the neighbors organize a neighborhood meeting to plan their approach.

**2650 Telegraph**: Leila Kasrovi, Martin Schwartz, Sylvi Cohn

Developer is from Southern California, Orwitz. Trachtenberg is the architect. The project is a 5-story apartment. Privacy is a concern as the terraces will overlook neighboring properties. Other concerns include noise, shadowing, and in particular the blockage of solar panels which are installed on the medical building next door. Parking is a concern as the medical practice includes a pediatric office which relies on parents bringing their children in via car. The project was previewed at ZAB and has gone to Design Review. This is a Density Bonus project with 4 BMR units out of 45 units.

**Property Tax Issue** (Update): Laura Menard, Lilana Spindler

The group is now organized under Berkeley for Assessment Tax Equity (BATE). There has not been any reply from the Mayor and Council to the letter that was sent by BNC regarding this matter. The group has received financial data from the city finance office listing the city-derived tax assessments. The group has been comparing the city-calculated tax base with the county numbers. Specific information can be found on the BATE website: <http://Berkeleytaxes.info>. Should be noted that Council member Wengraf is looking into the number of illegal or unreported living units in Berkeley. Additional taxes which would result from including such units would result in increased property taxes.

**Review of BNC’s efforts in past year**:

Accomplishments: (see agenda)

**Current Issues on our radar**:

* Regulatory Capture: Janis Ching and Gary Facente
  + Discussion of ways to address regulatory capture
  + There is currently a 2-year restriction for staff to be able to participate in lobbying efforts after leaving their position
  + Lobbyists must register with city
  + Check the website under “New from BNC” for the remarks made at ZAB.
* Consistency ordinance: Dean Metzger
  + There is currently no consistency ordinance in Berkeley.
  + A consistency ordinance would require the Zoning Code to adhere to the terms of the General Plan.
  + The current General Plan is over 20 years old and would require revision.
  + Dean will be meeting with Jacqueline and the Mayor to discuss.
  + Possible to bring this up via the Open Government Commission.
  + Dean prefers to focus first on a specific area (density) versus taking a broader approach which would require a complete rewrite of the General Plan.
* Bay Area Quality Management District: Meryl
  + BAQMD has been unwilling to monitor and measure air quality at Pacific Steel in the past. They have relied on subjective assessments of problematic odors by BAQMD staff. Efforts have been unsuccessful to get BAQMD to respond to neighborhood complaints of problematic odors.
* Harold Way (will be addressed in future meeting)
  + Discussions are currently being held by Councilmember Droste with the developer to possibly modify the Use Permit to allow the project to go forward. More will be reported at the next meeting.

**Plans for 2020**: (see agenda)

**Condo Conversions**: Ed Herzog

1500 San Pablo is under construction and nearing completion. Developer has now appealed to Planning Commission for permission to convert some units to condominiums at some unspecified point in the future. Original project was 171 apartment units, 6 stories. Studios are renting for $2990/mo, townhouses are renting for $6K/month. Ed is requesting that the public attend and speak at the upcoming Planning Commission meeting January 15, 7 pm at the South Berkeley Senior Center.

**City Manager Review**: Dean Metzger, Jacqueline McCormick

City Manager review is currently underway. The Mayor is meeting with the City Manager to conduct a review. Each Council member will also be meeting with the City Manager as part of the review. The review process is being managed by an outside consultant, Management Partners, who is being paid an estimated $150K (not confirmed). Jacquie will review the contract and send a copy to BNC listing the contract requirements for the review that must be met. The City Manager has recently started holding open office hours every Friday afternoons for 2 hours. The open hours will alternate every other Fridays between the public and small businesses who will apply for time slots of indeterminate length.