

BEACON

Wednesday, January 9, 2008

Peninsula Beacon News

Cliff erosion puts Pescadero project in the crosshairs

by Sebastian Ruiz
January 03, 2008

A project planned for construction right up against the bluffs at the end of Pescadero Drive in Ocean Beach has drawn concern from the neighbors over size, style and potential danger because of the project's planned proximity to the continuously eroding cliffs.

The project is still under review by the city's staff and is scheduled for a Jan. 16 public hearing, according to city officials. The decision is subject to appeal to the Planning Commission.

The project would call for the demolition of existing multi-family units at 1466 Pescadero Dr. in order to construct two multi-family units in a two-story building, officials said. The development requires special review by the city because part of the project would cantilever over a 40-foot setback required by city code.

"Anytime you have development near the cliffs, there's going to be some opposition to that," said Patrick Hooper, a project manager.

The city requires developers to mitigate environmental impacts to allay concerns about projects.

While the owners of the property have satisfied that requirement, Coast Law Group attorney Todd Cardiff said the development could result in the construction of a seawall, which isn't allowed by state law, he said.

Since new developments cannot require a seawall, any new developments would require the project be set back a certain amount of space — in this case about 40 feet, he said.

The proposed cantilever would violate the setback, he said.

While the project doesn't call for the immediate construction of a seawall, future tenants could apply to the Coastal Commission for an emergency seawall to protect their property from an eroding coastline, he said.

"Five to ten years later, the new development is coming back for a seawall, and quite frankly,

we're not going put up with that type of [development] anymore," Cardiff said.

While attorneys can debate the legality of the project based on possible outcomes, several neighbors, former and present, are voicing opposition to the project.

Tara Lawrence, a current neighbor, said the bulk and scale of the project doesn't fit with the style of surrounding homes and could block views and sunlight to the neighborhood.

Lawrence said she wouldn't have a problem with the new development if it were smaller.

"He wants to build one of these McMansions," said Lawrence. "It isn't a responsible job of building."

Former Ocean Beach resident and land-use attorney Jeff Russell said the bluffs near south Ocean Beach are in a constant state of erosion. The 1983 El Niño caused a lot of erosion to the cliffs, he said.

"It's going to be dangerous for anybody who buys this beautiful home without knowing the history of the bluffs," he said.

Both Russell and Cardiff outlined their concerns in letters to the city's Development Services Department.

Repeated attempts to contact the apparent owner of the property were not returned by press time.

© 2008 Peninsula Beacon News | Accessibility