



County of Monterey Planning Commission

Agenda Item No.2

Legistar File Number: PC 25-083

Item No.2

Board of Supervisors
Chambers
168 W. Alisal St., 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

October 29, 2025

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PLN200047-AMD1 - KNOOP MICHAEL & MICHELLE

Public hearing to consider an Amendment to a previously approved Combined Development Permit (PLN200047) that allowed a lot line adjustment between two legal lots of record, construction of a single-family dwelling, a detached accessory structure, guesthouse, and associated site improvements including ridgeline development and development on slopes in excess of 25 percent. This Amendment proposes the removal of six Coast live oak trees.

Project Location: The properties are located at 120 Country Club Heights Road, Carmel Valley, Carmel Valley Master Plan

Proposed CEQA Action: Find the project qualifies for a Class 4 Categorical Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15304 and that none of the exceptions apply pursuant to section 15300.2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Planning Commission:

1. Find the project qualifies for a Class 4 Categorical Exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15304 and that none of the exceptions apply pursuant to section 15300.2.
2. Approve an Amendment to a previously approved Combined Development Permit (PLN200047) that allowed a lot line adjustment between two legal lots of record, construction of a single-family dwelling, a detached accessory structure, guesthouse, and associated site improvements, including ridgeline development and development on slopes in excess of 25 percent. This Amendment proposes the removal of six Coast live oak trees.

The attached draft resolution includes findings and evidence for consideration (**Exhibit A**). Staff recommends approval of the Amendment subject to 7 conditions of approval.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Property Owners: Michael and Michele Knoop

Agent: Tai Tang c/o Studio Schicketanz

APNs: 187-021-042-000

Zoning: Rural Density Residential, 10 acres per unit, with Design Control, Site Plan Review, and Residential Allocation Zoning overlays [RDR/10-D-S-RAZ] and Permanent Grazing, with a minimum building site of 40 acres and a Visual Sensitivity Zoning overlay [PG/40-VS]

Existing Parcel Sizes: 121.31 acres

Plan Area: Carmel Valley Master Plan

Project Planner: Kayla Nelson, Associate Planner

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SUMMARY

The proposed project includes an Amendment to a previously approved Combined Development Permit (HCD-Planning File No. PLN200047; Planning Commission Resolution No. 21-014) that allowed a lot line adjustment between two legal lots of record, construction of a single-family dwelling, a detached accessory structure, guesthouse, and associated site improvements. Associated site improvements included widening the dirt access road to 12 feet and installing turnouts as required by the Monterey County Regional Fire District, as well as a new road base and gate. PLN200047 allowed approximately 1.85 acres of the existing dirt road to be improved by paving and slightly widening the dirt access road to provide better access to the site and planned residence. The previously planned permit also authorized ridgeline development and development on slopes in excess of 25 percent. During review of PLN200047, five trees were recommended for removal due to the roadway work; however, the project engineers were confident that they could be retained and protected during construction. Therefore, no tree removal was approved under PLN200047. After starting initial roadwork improvements, the Applicant/Owner was informed by their contractor and project arborist that five trees would be impacted by the necessary access improvements. Three of these five trees were deemed hazardous (hazardous rating of 10) and thus were authorized for removal without a Use Permit or Tree Removal Permit. The hazardous tree removal was documented in Tree Removal Permit No. TRM250278. The remaining two trees identified for removal were authorized for removal with a Tree Removal Permit (TRM250309), pursuant to Title 21 section 21.64.260.D.2, which allows for the removal of three healthy native trees in a one-year period. After the removal of these trees and the completion of additional roadway work, six more trees were identified as being impacted. Given that two healthy trees have already been removed in a one-year period, one more tree would be allowed, but any additional tree removal after that requires the granting of a Use Permit pursuant to Title 21 section 21.64.260.D.3. Accordingly, this Amendment proposes the removal of six Coast live oak trees to accommodate the remaining access road improvements (Country Club Heights Road), which are needed to provide access to the single-family dwelling (currently under construction).

DISCUSSION

The project includes an application for the removal of six Coast live oak trees. In accordance with the applicable policies of the Carmel Valley Master Plan (Policy CV-3.11) and the Monterey County Zoning Ordinance (Title 21 section 21.64.260.D.3), a Use Permit is required for the removal of more than three protected trees in a one-year period. Furthermore, a Forest Management Plan is required for such tree removal pursuant to this section. Pursuant to the Carmel Valley Master Area Plan Policy CV-3.11, "A permit shall be required for the removal of any healthy, native oak, redwood, or madrone trees with a trunk diameter breast height (DBH) in excess of six inches, measured two feet above ground level." Additionally, landmark oak trees are those trees that are 24 inches or more in diameter when measured two feet above the ground, or trees that are visually significant, historically significant, or exemplary of their species. The County requires a 1:1 replacement ratio for the removal of native trees and a 2:1 replacement ratio for landmark trees.

A Forest Management Plan was prepared by Denise Duffy and Associates (County of Monterey Library No. LIB250250) and recommended the removal of six Coast live oak trees, three of which are landmark trees. One of the proposed tree removals is in poor condition and is showing signs of decay with the presence of fungal conks, while the remaining five trees are in fair condition, but will be

impacted by the road improvements. The necessary cut and fill of the road to install soil-stabilizing retaining walls would significantly impact tree root systems, potentially leading to a hazardous condition. Without the necessary cut for roadway improvements, the road will not meet fire code standards (**Exhibit C**).

The project is an Amendment to a previously approved project that did not anticipate any tree removal for site improvements. The applicant is proposing the removal of six oak trees with a trunk diameter of 14, 16, 24, 29, 32 and 40 inches (see **Attachment 2 of Exhibit A**). The purpose of the tree removal is to accommodate the driveway improvements that were previously approved under HCD-Planning File No PLN200047. As recommended by Desnise Duffy and Associates, nine trees are proposed to be replanted on-site following completion of the main residence and roadway work (**Exhibit C**).

The Forest Management Plan recommends replacement plantings be 15 five-gallon Coast live oaks sourced from a local nursery in locations with the greatest openings to minimize competition and maximize sunlight. The spacing between trees is recommended to be at least eight feet. Watering for establishment within the first two months shall be at least once per week, then every two weeks during the late spring, summer, and fall for two years. Furthermore, the replacement trees whose critical root zone was within the areas impacted by construction will be monitored annually by a qualified arborist for a period of no less than five years. If any noticeable decline in the health of any trees is observed, additional trees shall be planted onsite at a 1:1 ratio in a suitable location as determined by a qualified arborist or forester (**Exhibit A**). The project has been designed and sited to minimize the removal of protected trees to the greatest extent feasible. The location of the trees to be removed is adjacent to an existing dirt road. The project planner requested that the driveway be redesigned to avoid tree removal. However, given the existing site constraints and necessary road widening to accommodate fire truck access to the primary residence, the six trees to be removed are the minimum amount necessary to achieve development standards.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT

The following County agencies have reviewed this project, have comments, and/or have recommended conditions:

HCD-Environmental Services
Environmental Health Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The project is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15304, which allows minor public or private alterations in the condition of land. The project consists of the removal of six Coast live oak trees to accommodate private road access to a single-family dwelling on a legal lot of record. Therefore, the project has been found to meet this exemption. None of the exceptions under CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 apply to this project. The project does not involve a designated historical resource. The project is also not located near a hazardous waste site or within view of a scenic highway corridor. The project, as proposed, does not cause any unusual circumstances that would result in a significant effect or would result in a cumulative significant impact. The project site is located within an area of moderate archaeological sensitivity. Subject to CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2(c), a field reconnaissance survey (County of Monterey Library No.

LIB210067) was required to be performed for the proposed project. The result of that survey was negative. Therefore, a standard condition of approval was incorporated into the previously approved project to ensure construction work is halted if archaeological resources are accidentally uncovered. Although tree removal is proposed, the subject trees are not within a scenic highway and will not damage a scenic corridor. Thus, there is no feature or condition of the project that distinguishes the project from the exempt class (**Exhibit A**).

Prepared by: Kayla Nelson, Associate Planner, ext. 6408

Reviewed by: Fionna Jensen, Principal Planner

Approved by: Melanie Beretti, AICP, Chief of Planning

The following attachments are on file with HCD:

Exhibit A - Draft Resolution, including;

- Recommended Conditions of Approval
- Site Plan

Exhibit B - Vicinity Map

Exhibit C - Forest Management Plan

Exhibit D - Planning Commission Resolution No. 21-014, dated May 26, 2021

cc: Front Counter Copy; Planning Commission; Monterey County Regional Fire Protection District; Environmental Health Bureau; HCD-Development; HCD-Environmental Services; Fionna Jensen, Principal Planner; Kayla Nelson, Project Planner; Tai Tang c/o Studio Schicketanz, Agent; Michael and Michelle Knoop, Owner; The Open Monterey Project (Molly Erickson); LandWatch (Executive Director); Lozeau Drury LLP; Christina McGinnis, Keep Big Sur Wild; Planning File PLN200047-AMD1.