CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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Staff Report:

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Hearing Date: June 11-14, 1996 Commission Action:

STAFF REPORT: REGULAR CALENDAR

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APPLICATION NO.:

5-96-073

APPLICANT:

Fred and Victoria Adams

AGENT:

Donna Olsen

PROJECT LOCATION:

18 Breakers Isle, City of Dana Point, County of Orange

Construction of a 6,243 square foot, three level (23' PROJECT DESCRIPTION: high streetside, 46'6" high oceanside) single-family residence with an attached 462 square foot two-car garage and an attached 226 square foot one-car garage, 244 square feet of deck area, and 481 square feet of oceanside patio area with a swimming pool, and 1,040 cubic yards of grading on a vacant lot on an altered coastal blufftop in the private Niguel Shores community above Salt Creek County Beach.

Lot area:

8,640 square feet

Building coverage: Pavement coverage: 2,587 square feet 2,142 square feet

Landscape coverage:

3.911 square feet

Parking spaces:

Three

Zoning:

RSF-4/PRD-3

Height above grade:

46'6" oceanside, 23' streetside

LOCAL APPROVALS RECEIVED: City of Dana Point Variance 96-1

SUBSTANTIVE FILE DOCUMENTS: See Appendix A

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is recommending approval of the proposed development with special conditions regarding conformance to geotechnical recommendations, a future improvements deed restriction, and an assumption-of-risk deed restriction.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The staff recommends that the Commission adopt the following resolution:

I. Approval with Conditions.

The Commission hereby grants a permit, subject to the conditions below, for the proposed development on the grounds that the development, located between the first public road and the sea, will be in conformity with the provisions of Chapter 3 of the California Coastal Act of 1976 including the public access

and recreation policies of Chapter 3, will not prejudice the ability of the local government having jurisdiction over the area to prepare a Local Coastal Program conforming to the provisions of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act, and will not have any significant adverse impacts on the environment within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act.

II. Standard Conditions.

- 1. Notice of Receipt and Acknowledgment. The permit is not valid and development shall not commence until a copy of the permit, signed by the permittee or authorized agent, acknowledging receipt of the permit and acceptance of the terms and conditions, is returned to the Commission office.
- 2. <u>Expiration</u>. If development has not commenced, the permit will expire two years from the date this permit is reported to the Commission. Development shall be pursued in a diligent manner and completed in a reasonable period of time. Application for extension of the permit must be made prior to the expiration date.
- 3. <u>Compliance</u>. All development must occur in strict compliance with the proposal as set forth in the application for permit, subject to any special conditions set forth below. Any deviation from the approved plans must be reviewed and approved by the staff and may require Commission approval.
- 4. <u>Interpretation</u>. Any questions of intent or interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the Executive Director or the Commission.
- 5. <u>Inspections</u>. The Commission staff shall be allowed to inspect the site and the project during its development, subject to 24-hour advance notice.
- 6. <u>Assignment</u>. The permit may be assigned to any qualified person, provided assignee files with the Commission an affidavit accepting all terms and conditions of the permit.
- 7. <u>Terms and Conditions Run with the Land</u>. These terms and conditions shall be perpetual, and it is the intention of the Commission and the permittee to bind all future owners and possessors of the subject property to the terms and conditions.

III. Special Conditions.

1. Assumption-of-Risk

Prior to issuance of the coastal development permit, the applicant shall execute and record a deed restriction in a form and content acceptable to the Executive Director and shall provided written evidence of the recordation of said deed restriction. Said deed restriction shall provide that (1) the landowner understands that the site may be subject to extraordinary hazards from wave action and geologic instability and assumes the liability from such hazards, and (2) the applicant unconditionally waives any future claims of

liability against the Commission and its successor agency for damage from such hazards, and agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the Coastal Commission, its officers, agents, and employees relative to the Coastal Commission's approval of the project for any damage. The deed restriction shall run with the land, binding all successors and assigns, and shall be recorded free and clear of all liens and encumbrances.

2. Geotechnical Recommendations

Prior to issuance of the coastal development permit, the applicant shall submit, for the review and approval of the Executive Director, final revised grading and foundation plans signed and stamped by the geotechnical consultant which incorporate the recommendations contained in the geotechnical investigation prepared by Petra Geotechnical (Job No. 211-95 dated May 9, 1995) for The Alliance for Mature Americans and the Geotechnical update prepared by Petra Geotechnical (Job No. 211-95 dated July 26, 1995) for The Alliance for Mature Americans. The approved development shall be constructed in accordance with the final revised plans as approved by the Executive Director. Any deviations from said plans shall require an amendment to this permit or a new coastal development permit, or written concurrence from the Executive Director that the deviation is not substantial and therefore a permit amendment or new permit is not needed.

3. Future Improvements

Prior to issuance of the coastal development permit, the applicant shall execute and record a deed restriction in a form and content acceptable to the Executive Director and shall provide written evidence of the recordation of said deed restriction. Said deed restriction shall provide that any future improvements or development of the subject site seaward of the existing neighborhood walkway midway down the bluff face, as shown on Exhibit B to the staff report for permit 5-96-073, shall require an amendment to this permit or a new coastal development permit from the Coastal Commission, its successor agency, or the local government which has permitting authority over the subject site pursuant to a certified local coastal program. The deed restriction shall run with the land, binding all successors and assigns, and shall be recorded free and clear of all liens and encumbrances.

IV. Findings and Declarations.

A. Project Description / History

1. Proposed Project

The applicant is proposing to construct a 6,243 square foot, three level (23' high above grade on the streetside, and 46'6" high above the existing mid-bluff walkway on the oceanside) single-family residence with an attached 462 square foot two-car garage and an attached 226 square foot one-car garage, 244 square feet of deck area, and 481 square feet of oceanside patio area with a swimming pool, and 1,040 cubic yards of grading (23 cubic yards of fill and 1,017 cubic yards of cut) on a vacant coastal blufftop lot with an altered bluff face in the private Niguel Shores community above Salt Creek County Beach.

2. Previous Commission Action

The Commission approved permit P-80-7056 (Smyth Bros., Inc.) for the stabilization of a 1977 landslide and the reconstruction of the failed slope on 6 contiguous lots along Breakers Isle. The 6 lots were Lots 18-23, including the subject site which is Lot 18. This permit required recordation of an assumption-of-risk deed restriction which could be removed in the event that the geotechnical consultant submitted written evidence, acceptable to the Executive Director, indicating that the approved bluff work had been completed and the bluff was considered stabilized (page 7 of staff report for P-80-7056). Pursuant to this clause, the revocation of the assumption-of-risk was recorded on August 24, 1981 (Book 14191, Page 1917 of the Official Records of Orange County).

Subsequently, the Commission approved permit P-80-7505 (Seagate) for construction of five new single-family homes on the same lots 18-23. The home proposed for the subject site under this permit was not built.

B. Geologic Hazards

Section 30253 of the Coastal Act states, in relevant part:

New development shall:

- (1) Minimize risks to life and property in areas of high geologic, flood, and fire hazard.
- (2) Assure stability and structural integrity, and neither create nor contribute significantly to erosion, geologic instability, or destruction of the site or surrounding area or in any way require the construction of protective devices that would substantially alter natural landforms along bluffs and cliffs.

The subject site is located on Breakers Isle street. Breakers Isle runs along near the top of a coastal bluff whose face has been altered. A pre-Coastal rip-rap seawall exists at the base of the entire length of the bluff.. Running along the length of the bluff face midway between top and bottom is a pre-Coastal private walkway. Several stairs approved by the Commission connect homes on Breakers Isle to this walkway. In 1977, the bluff on adjacent lots 19-23 failed. The Commission approved permit P-80-7056 (Smyth Bros., Inc.) to reconstruct the bluff on Lots 19-23. In addition to the work on Lots 19-23, the bluff reconstruction permitted under permit P-80-7056 also involved some grading on the subject site which is Lot 18. Thus, geologic stability is a factor in this area.

A geotechnical investigation for the subject site was prepared by Petra Geotechnical (Job No. 211-95 dated May 9, 1995) for The Alliance for Mature Americans, as was a geotechnical update prepared by Petra Geotechnical (Job No. 211-95 dated July 26, 1995) for The Alliance for Mature Americans.

The update indicated that the bluff on the subject site is fairly stable because of the soundness and favorable structure of the underlying bedrock, lack of seepage observed, protection from wave hazards by the beach and an

existing rip-rap wall, a lack of trees that would result in adverse wedging action from tree roots, the presence of thick plant cover on the lower half of the bluff, a minimal presence of burrowing animals, controlled access by humans down the bluff face to the beach via existing stairs and the mid-bluff walkway, and the control of surface drainage which will prevent water flowing over the top of the slope.

The update concludes that the subject property is considered suited for the proposed construction provided the conclusions and recommendations contained within the original report are incorporated into the design criteria and project specifications.

Incorporation of these recommendations would assure structural integrity and geologic stability, minimize risks from geologic hazards and minimize the need for increased armoring of the existing seawall on the subject site. Therefore, the Commission finds that it is necessary to impose a special condition requiring the submission of plans which have been approved by the geotechnical consultant and incorporate the recommendations of the consultant.

Because of the previous landslide on the adjacent site, the Commission finds that it is also necessary to impose a special condition requiring an indemnification/assumption-of-risk deed restriction. This is necessary because geologic conditions cannot be predicted with certainty, so the applicant and future owners must be put on notice that the Coastal Commission is not liable for damages resulting from geologic conditions. This would be consistent with the special conditions of the Commission's previous approvals of permit P-80-7056 (Smyth Bros.) for landslide stabilization involving work on the subject site as well as coastal development permits 5-88-020 (Koenig), P-80-7505 (Seagate), 5-84-378 (Mazur), 5-84-32 (Sanchez), and 5-88-343 (Pinola) for other homes on Breakers Isle.

In addition, a future improvements deed restriction is necessary for development below the mid-bluff walkway. Except for three staircases for the homeowners association approved by permit P-73-1468 (AVCO Community Developers), the entire lower half of the bluff along Breakers Isle below the mid-bluff walkway is undeveloped. Therefore, development on this currently undeveloped area of the bluff could have potential adverse geologic impacts. A future improvements deed restriction which requires a permit or permit amendment for development on the currently undeveloped bluff area below the walkway would allow the Commission to review such development for adverse geologic impacts. Therefore, only as conditioned does the Commission find the proposed project to be consistent with Section 30253 of the Coastal Act regarding geologic hazards.

C. <u>Visual Impacts</u>

Section 30251 of the Coastal Act states, in relevant part:

The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.

The proposed development would be partially visible from Salt Creek County Beach below, and 1,040 cubic yards of grading would be involved. The homes along Breakers Isle sit at the top of a 1.5:1 (horizontal to vertical) coastal bluff which has been altered by previous development. At the subject site, the bluff is about 54 feet high. The visual quality issues associated with the proposed development involve (1) landform alteration due to the grading and (2) the visual impact of the home on the bluff when viewed from the public beach below and the use of stringlines/seaward encroachment.

1. Landform Alteration

The bluff face has already been altered by existing development. Mid-way down the slope running the entire length of the bluff is a pre-Coastal paved private walkway with drainage channels. Several stairs descend down the bluff face from various homes to this walkway (see Appendix A for permits approved by the Commission). Further, three stairs approved by permit P-73-1468 (AVCO Community Developers) descend from this walkway to the beach below. Permit 73-1468 also approved a fence along the entire length at the base of the bluff. In addition, the subject site has already been altered by the previous bluff stabilization and reconstruction approved by permit P-80-7056 (Smyth Bros.).

The subject site is currently vacant. Excavating the bluff face for the proposed basement level and spa area would result in additional significant landform alteration amounting to 1,033 cubic yards of cut and 71 cubic yards of fill. However, the proposed development and proposed grading would be in character with other alterations of the bluff face previously approved by the Commission. The proposed spa and basement level would still be screened by vegetation on the lower portion of the bluff. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed landform alteration would not result in significant adverse impacts on visual quality.

2. Stringline/Seaward Encroachment

In urbanized areas where development is general infill, the Commission has used stringlines as a method to protect the visual quality of coastal areas by preventing seaward encroachment of development. Requiring new development to remain at or landward of stringlines is consistent with Section 30251 of the Coastal Act. The proposed development is a case of infilling, since the subject site is one of only three remaining vacant lots out of the 23 total lots on Breakers Isle.

Separate stringlines are used for enclosed living area of structures and for decks/patio area. The Commission has consistently applied the stringline for enclosed living area to limit seaward encroachment of homes along Breakers Isle. In fact, the Commission denied permit application 5-86-488 (McKeehan) for a basement at #14 Breakers Isle which would extend beyond the stringline. All levels of enclosed living area of the proposed home would conform to the stringline for enclosed living area.

However, the Commission's application of the deck/patio stringline has varied. The Commission approved coastal development permit P-77-2505 (McKeehan) for a new 3-story home at #14 Breakers Isle with a condition that

no part of the proposed structure and decks could be built seaward of the structural or deck stringlines. Permit A-78-2816 (Tombini) required that a proposed deck at #17 Breakers Isle could not be built seaward of the bluff edge, although proposed stairs down the upper bluff from the existing home to the mid-bluff walkway were allowed under this permit. Both these permits only contained standard findings and no specific justification for the special conditions imposed.

Subsequently, the Commission has approved development associated with single-family residences, such as pools and patios, which extend past the bluff edge and stringlines. For example, in approving permit 5-88-020 (Koenig) for #7 Breakers Isle, the Commission found that "[t]he only issues are stringlines for the main structures and geology." The Commission also approved permit 5-88-343 (Pinola) for #21 Breakers Isle and found that "[l]andscape type improvements including pools have been allowed to tier down the 2:1 slope because no impact to coastal resources would result."

The proposed pool and patio area of this permit application would also extend past the bluff edge and stringline as well. However, the proposed home would conform to the enclosed living area stringline. Thus, the proposed development would be in character with other development approved by the Commission on Breakers Isle.

Further, development such as patios, stairs, and pools have less visual impact on the bluff than does the house itself. This is because the house is significantly bigger in bulk, and has more vertical height, than spas, pools, and stairways, and thus would be more visible. Further, development on lower levels such as spas, pools, and stairways are screened from public view from the beach below because of vegetation on the lower portion of the bluff.

Also, Breakers Isle was less developed in the late 1970's than it is today. The subject site is one of only three vacant lots remaining of the 23 residential lots on Breaker's Isle. The tops of all these homes (the upper two levels) are visible from the beach. The lower levels of existing homes and structural improvements such as spas, pools, and stairways are generally hidden from view from the beach below because of dense vegetation on the bottom, undeveloped half of the bluff (below the walkway which runs lengthwise along the bluff midway down to the beach). The existing walkway would serve as the de facto stringline for pools, spas, patios, and other similar development. Thus, the walkway becomes the de facto limit for development.

Further, because the homes are located above the level of the beach, they do not block views along the coast at beach level. In addition, because Breakers Isle is in the private Niguel Shores community, the proposed development would not block public views to the shoreline. The proposed development would be in character with the existing pattern of development along Breakers Isle. Thus, the Commission finds that the proposed development would not result in significant adverse impacts to visual quality.

3. Special Condition (Section 30251)

The lower, undeveloped half of the bluff containing the existing vegetation which screens the lower levels of the existing homes from view by the public is regulated by the homeowners association. The homeowners association has a slope maintenance easement over the undeveloped lower half of the bluff below the walkway. The architectural guidelines restrict development in this area.

If development were allowed on the lower half of the bluff, it would be much closer to the public beach level and thus would be more visible to the public. This would result in adverse impacts on visual quality along Breaker's Isle. Since the easement does not expressly prohibit all development on the lower half of the bluffs, the Commission finds that it is necessary to impose a future improvement deed restriction requiring any a coastal development permit or amendment to this permit for any future improvements or development seaward of the walkway. This would allow the Commission to review any such improvements or development for adverse impacts to visual quality of the area. Therefore, only as conditioned for a future improvements deed restriction does the Commission find that the proposed development would be consistent with Section 30251 of the Coastal Act regarding view protection and landform alteration.

D. Public Access/Recreation

Section 30212 of the Coastal Act states, in relevant part:

- (a) Public access from the nearest public roadway to the shoreline and along the coast shall be provided in new development projects except where:
- (2) adequate access exists nearby . . .

Section 30252 of the Coastal Act requires in part that new development maintain access to the coast by providing adequate parking.

The subject site is located between the nearest public roadway and the shoreline in the private Niguel Shores community. The site fronts Salt Creek County Beach Park which provides adequate lateral access and public recreation opportunities. Adequate vertical access exists via the stairs at the southern end of Niguel Shores leading from the County of Orange's Selva Road public parking lot. Adequate vertical access also exists at the northern end of Niguel shores via the trail which connects to the northern portion of Salt Creek County Beach.

The proposed development would provide adequate parking. The proposed development includes three on-site parking spaces which exceeds the Commission's regularly used standard of two parking spaces per individual dwelling unit. The Commission finds that the provision of three parking spaces will ensure that the proposed home maintains access to the coast by allowing residents to park on-site and not use off-site public parking which should be available to coastal zone visitors.

In addition, the Commission noted in its approval of permit 5-88-343 (Pinola) for development at 21 Breakers Isle adjacent to the subject site, that the

homes along Breakers Isle are "sufficiently far away from the public beach area so as to not create any psychological burden on access opportunities". Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed development would be consistent with Section 30212 of the Coastal Act regarding public access.

E. Local Coastal Program

Section 30604(a) of the Coastal Act provides that the Commission shall issue a Coastal Development Permit only if the project will not prejudice the ability of the local government having jurisdiction to prepare a local coastal program ("LCP") which conforms with the Chapter Three policies of the Coastal Act.

The subject site is located in the Laguna Niguel LCP segment of the City of Dana Point. The Laguna Niguel segment has neither a certified land use plan nor a certified implementation plan. It is anticipated that the City will submit a total LCP in the near future for this area.

The proposed development has been conditioned to conform to the geologic hazards and visual quality policies of Chapter Three. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed development, as conditioned, would not prejudice the ability of the City of Dana Point to prepare an LCP which is consistent with and adequate to carry out the Chapter Three policies of the Coastal Act.

F. California Environmental Quality Act

Section 13096 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations requires Commission approval of Coastal Development Permits to be supported by a finding showing the permit, as conditioned, to be consistent with any applicable requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 21080.5(d)(2)(i) of CEQA prohibits a proposed development from being approved if there are feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact which the activity may have on the environment.

The proposed development is an infill site located in an urban area. All infrastructure necessary to serve the site exist in the area. The proposed project has been conditioned in order to be found consistent with the geologic hazards and visual policies of Chapter Three of the Coastal Act. Mitigation measures requiring an assumption-of-risk deed restriction, future improvements deed restriction, and conformance to geotechnical recommendations, will minimize all significant adverse impacts.

As conditioned, there are no feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact which the activity may have on the environment. Therefore, the Commission finds that the proposed project can be found consistent with the requirements of the Coastal Act to conform to CEQA.

APPENDIX A (Substantive File Documents)

GEOTECHNICAL REPORTS

- 1. Geotechnical investigation prepared by Petra Geotechnical (Job No. 211-95 dated May 9, 1995) for The Alliance for Mature Americans
- Geotechnical update prepared by Petra Geotechnical (Job No. 211-95 dated July 26, 1995) for The Alliance for Mature Americans.

Selected Coastal Development Permits (Breakers Isle)

Permit #	Address	Brief Project Description
P-73-2435	#1	2-story home with basement
A-76-7981 (Nitta, et.al.)	#4	Stairs down bluff face
A-77-2028 (Lerten)	#5	Rear deck with stairway
P-76-8683 (STJ, Inc.)	# 7	3-story home (permit expired)
5-88-020 (Koenig)	ti .	3 stories with pool past blufftop
P-77-2505 (McKeehan)	#14	3 story home with condition prohibiting structures or decks from projecting past the stringline
5-86-488 (McKeehan)	il	Basement level addition beyond stringline (denied)
A-78-2816 (Tombini)	#17	Rear wall, rear stairs to bluff walkway, wood deck (condition; deck can't project past top of bluff)
P-80-7056 (Smyth Bros)	#18-23	Reconstruction and stabilization of 6 contiguous lots damaged by 1977 landslide
P-80-7505 (Seagate)	#18-23	Five homes on five vacant lots
5-84-32/A/E (Sanchez)	#20	New single-family home (expired)
5-88-343 (Pinola)	#21	Pool, greenhouse, retaining walls, landscaping on seaward side of home
P-73-1468 (AVCO)	None	Fence around property by beach, 3 staircases from mid-bluff walk to beach

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