CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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Filed:April 20, 200449th Day:June 8, 2004180th Day:October 17, 2004Staff:ALB-LB, JBStaff Report:August 19, 2004Hearing Date:September 8-10, 2004Commission Action:

STAFF REPORT: REGULAR CALENDAR

APPLICATION NUMBER: 5-04-149

RECORD PACKET COPY

APPLICANTS: Robert and Mary Ward

AGENTS: Susan Burgess Landreth, Architect D.B. Neish, Inc.

PROJECT LOCATION: 8 S. La Senda, Laguna Beach, Orange County

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: Demolition of an existing single-family residence and construction of a new two-story, 3372 square foot single-family residence with an attached 528 square foot two-car garage, hardscape improvements and landscaping on a blufftop lot. Approximately 1100 cubic yards of grading is proposed for lower level excavation and site preparation. Excess material will be disposed of at an appropriate site outside the Coastal Zone.

Lot Area: Building Coverage: Pavement Coverage: Landscape Coverage: Parking Spaces: Zoning: Ht above final grade 9659 square feet 2618 square feet 2290 square feet 1373 square feet 4 R-1 25 feet

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is recommending the Commission approve the proposed project subject to eight (8) special conditions which are necessary to assure that the project conforms with Section 30253 of the Coastal Act regarding geology and hazards, with Section 30251 regarding landform alteration and visual quality, and with Section 30231 regarding protection of water guality. Special Condition No. 1 requires submittal of revised plans reflecting conformance with development restrictions within the blufftop setback area; Special Condition No. 2 requires a revised landscape plan which requires the use of native and drought tolerant plantings, and prohibits permanent irrigation and invasive plants; Special Condition No. 3 requires conformance with the drainage plan that proposes drainage be pumped to the street; Special Condition No. 4 requires conformance with the geotechnical recommendations; Special Condition No. 5 prohibits future shoreline/bluff protection devices; Special Condition No. 6 requires that the applicant assume the risk of developing on an oceanfront, blufftop site; Special Condition No. 7 requires conformance with the Water Quality Management Plan submitted; Special Condition No. 8 requires the applicant to record a deed restriction against the property, referencing all of the Special Conditions contained in this staff report.



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At the time of this staff report, the applicant disagrees with Special Condition 1. regarding the imposition of a revised blufftop setback. The applicant proposed to utilize a 25' setback from the bluff edge or a stringline setback. However, Commission staff disagrees with the applicant's determination of bluff edge as well as their depiction of stringline. The Commission staff's determination of bluff edge is located approximately 25 feet inland of the applicant's. By applying the Commission staff's determination of bluff edge, the applicant would have to set their development approximately 25' further inland than proposed. However, the stable geology at the site would allow for a smaller bluff edge setback and larger development footprint that is more in keeping with surrounding development. Therefore, Commission staff is recommending the use of a stringline setback plus a 10' bluff edge setback for structural development and a deck stringline plus a 5' bluff edge setback for deck/hardscape development. Application of the Commission staff's recommended setback would require the applicant to revise their project plans to remove development beyond the structural and deck stringlines and 5'-10' buffer areas. Additionally, the applicant would be required to limit development between the structural setback and the 5' bluff edge setback to only nominal, at-grade improvements. No development would be allowed seaward of the deck stringline and 5 foot bluff edge setback or beyond the bluff edge.

LOCAL APPROVALS RECEIVED: City of Laguna Beach Approval in Concept, dated April 16, 2004; Approval of Variance 7105 and Design Review 04-085 by the Board of Adjustment/Design Review Board of the City of Laguna Beach on April 1, 2004.

SUBSTANTIVE FILE DOCUMENTS: Coastal Development Permit 5-02-357 (Saczalski), Geotechnical Report prepared by Ian Kennedy, Inc. dated June 6, 2003; Water Quality Management Plan (WQMP) prepared by Toal Engineering, Inc. dated March 8, 2004; City of Laguna Beach certified Local Coastal Program (as guidance only).

EXHIBITS:

- 1. Vicinity Map
- 2. Assessor's Parcel Map
- 3. Project Plans
- 4. Applicant's Setback Graphic
- 5. Bluff Edge Depiction
- 6. Modified Setback Graphic

I. APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission APPROVE the permit application as conditioned.

<u>MOTION</u>: I move that the Commission approve Coastal Development Permit No. 5-04-149 pursuant to the staff recommendation.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION OF APPROVAL:

Staff recommends a **YES** vote. Passage of this motion will result in approval of the permit as conditioned and adoption of the following resolution and findings. The motion passes only by affirmative vote of a majority of the Commissioners present.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE PERMIT:

The Commission hereby approves a coastal development permit for the proposed development and adopts the findings set forth below on grounds that the development as conditioned will be in conformity with the policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act and 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. Approval of the permit complies with the California Environmental Quality Act because either 1) feasible mitigation measures and/or alternatives have been incorporated to substantially lessen any significant adverse effects of the development on the environment, or 2) there are no further feasible mitigation measures or alternatives that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts of the development on the environment.

II. STANDARD CONDITIONS:

- 1. <u>Notice of Receipt and Acknowledgment.</u> 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>Interpretation.</u> Any questions of intent or interpretation of any condition will be resolved by the Executive Director or the Commission.
- 4. <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.
- 5. <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. <u>Revised Setback</u>

- A. All primary structures, including but not limited to the enclosed living area of the residential structure, shall comply with the structural stringline setback or be sited a minimum or 10' from the bluff edge, whichever is most restrictive, as generally depicted on Exhibit 6. Development shall be modified as necessary to meet this requirement.
- B. All structural foundation elements such as, but not limited to, caissons for all development, including but not limited to the foundation for the residence and any foundations for decks or other appurtenances, shall comply with the structural stringline setback or be sited a minimum of 10' from the bluff edge, whichever is most restrictive, as generally depicted on Exhibit 6. Development shall be modified as necessary to meet this requirement.
- C. All hardscape improvements, including decks and planters, shall comply with the deck/ancillary development stringline setback or be sited a minimum of 5' from the bluff edge, whichever is most restrictive, as generally depicted on Exhibit 6. Development shall be modified as necessary to meet this requirement.
- D. Only minor development (such as at-grade hardscape improvements) shall occur between the structural stringline setback and the minimum 5-foot bluff edge setback, as generally depicted on Exhibit 6
- E. No form of development (including but not limited to grading, hardscape and planters) shall occur seaward of the minimum 5-foot bluff edge setback or beyond the bluff edge, as generally depicted on Exhibit 6.
- F. **PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT**, the applicant shall submit, for the review and approval of the Executive Director, revised plans reflecting the requirements of Sections A though E above.
- G. The permittee shall undertake the development in accordance with the approved plans. Any proposed changes to the approved plans shall be reported to the Executive Director. No changes to the plans shall occur without a Coastal Commission approved amendment to this coastal development unless the Executive Director determines that no amendment is legally required.

2. <u>Revised Landscape Plan</u>

A. **PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT**, the applicant shall submit, for the Executive Director's review and approval, two (2) full sized sets of a revised planting plan prepared by an appropriately licensed professional which demonstrates the following:

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- (1) The subject site will be planted and maintained for slope stability and erosion control. To minimize the need for irrigation, landscaping shall consist of native and/or drought tolerant non-invasive plant species;
- (2) All planting will be completed within 60 days after completion of construction;
- (3) All required plantings will be maintained in good growing condition through-out the life of the project, and whenever necessary, will be replaced with new plant materials to ensure continued compliance with the landscape plan;
- (4) No permanent in-ground irrigation systems will be installed on site. Temporary above-ground irrigation is allowed to establish plantings;
- B. The permittee shall undertake development in accordance with the approved plan. Any proposed changes to the approved final plan shall be reported to the Executive Director. No changes to the approved final plans shall occur without a Commission amendment to this coastal development permit unless the Executive Director determines that no amendment is legally required.

3. Drainage Plan

- A. All site drainage shall be collected and directed/pumped to the street.
- B. **PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT**, the applicant shall submit, for the review and approval of the Executive Director, a final drainage plan reflecting the requirements of Sections A above.
- C. The permittee shall undertake the development in accordance with the approved plans. Any proposed changes to the approved plans shall be reported to the Executive Director. No changes to the plans shall occur without a Coastal Commission approved amendment to this coastal development unless the Executive Director determines that no amendment is legally required.

4. <u>Conformance of Design and Construction Plans to Geotechnical</u> <u>Recommendations</u>

- A. All final design and construction plans, including grading, foundations, site plans, elevation plans, and drainage plans, shall be consistent with all recommendations contained in the Report of Geologic/Soils and Foundation Conditions prepared by lan S. Kennedy, dated June 6, 2003.
- B. **PRIOR TO THE ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT**, the applicant shall submit, for the Executive Director's review and approval, evidence that the geotechnical consultant has reviewed and approved all final design and construction plans and certified that each of those final plans is consistent with all of

the recommendations specified in the above-referenced geologic evaluation approved by the California Coastal Commission for the project site.

C. The permittee shall undertake development in accordance with the approved final plans. Any proposed changes to the approved final plans shall be reported to the Executive Director. No changes to the approved final plans shall occur without a Commission amendment to this coastal development permit unless the Executive Director determines that no amendment is legally required.

5. <u>No Future Shoreline/Bluff Protective Device</u>

- A. By acceptance of this permit, the applicant agrees, on behalf of him/herself and all other successors and assigns, that no shoreline/bluff protective device(s) shall ever be constructed to protect the development at the subject site approved pursuant to Coastal Development Permit No. 5-04-149 including future improvements, in the event that the property is threatened with damage or destruction from bluff and slope instability, erosion, landslides or other natural hazards in the future. By acceptance of this permit, the applicant hereby waives, on behalf of him/herself and all successors and assigns, any rights to construct such devices that may exist under Public Resources Code Section 30235.
- B. By acceptance of this permit, the applicant further agrees, on behalf of him/herself and all successors and assigns, that the landowner shall remove the development authorized by this permit if any government agency has ordered that the structure is not to be occupied due to any of the hazards identified above. In the event that any portion of the development is destroyed, the permittee shall remove all recoverable debris associated with the development from the beach and ocean and lawfully dispose of the material in an approved disposal site. Such removal shall require a coastal development permit.
- C. In the event the edge of the bluff recedes to within five (5) feet of the principal residence but no government agency has ordered that the structures not be occupied, a geotechnical investigation shall be prepared by a licensed coastal engineer and geologist retained by the applicant, that addresses whether any portions of the residence are threatened by wave, erosion, storm conditions, or other natural hazards. The report shall identify all those immediate or potential future measures that could stabilize the principal residence without shore or bluff protection, including but not limited to removal or relocation of portions of the residence. The report shall be submitted to the Executive Director and the appropriate local government official. If the geotechnical report concludes that the residence or any portion of the residence is unsafe for occupancy, the permittee shall, within 90 days of submitting the report, apply for a coastal development permit amendment to remedy the hazard which shall include removal of the threatened portion of the structure.

6. Assumption of Risk, Waiver of Liability and Indemnity

By acceptance of this permit, the applicant acknowledges and agrees (i) that the site may be subject to hazards due to bluff and slope instability, erosion, landslides or other natural hazards associated with development on an oceanfront, bluff top, site; (ii) to assume the risks to the applicant and the property that is the subject of this permit of injury and damage from such hazards in connection with this permitted development; (iii) to unconditionally waive any claim of damage or liability against the Commission, its officers, agents, and employees for injury or damage from such hazards; and (iv) to indemnify and hold harmless the Commission, its officers, agents, and employees with respect to the Commission's approval of the project against any and all liability, claims, demands, damages, costs (including costs and fees incurred in defense of such claims), expenses, and amounts paid in settlement arising from any injury or damage due to such hazards.

7. Conformance with the Water Quality Measures Proposed

The applicants shall carry out development in conformance with the water quality measures described in the Water Quality Management Plan prepared by Toal Engineering, Inc. dated March 8, 2004;, which incorporates structural and non-structural Best Management Practices (BMPs) designed to control the pollutant load of stormwater and nuisance flow leaving the developed site. These structural measures include, but are not limited to, natural filtration through landscaped areas, efficient irrigation, and installation of a storm drain lift station that will be cleaned annually. The non-structural measures include litter control, catch basin inspection and use restrictions on fertilizers and pesticides. These measures shall be carried out at frequencies sufficient to effectively minimize the accumulation of pollution which could be washed into coastal waters.

8. Deed Restriction

PRIOR TO ISSUANCE OF THE COASTAL DEVELOPMENT PERMIT, the

applicant shall submit to the Executive Director for review and approval documentation demonstrating that the landowner has executed and recorded against the parcel(s) governed by this permit a deed restriction, in a form and content acceptable to the Executive Director: (1) indicating that, pursuant to this permit, the California Coastal Commission has authorized development on the subject property, subject to terms and conditions that restrict the use and enjoyment of that property; and (2) imposing the Special Conditions of this permit as covenants, conditions and restrictions on the use and enjoyment of the Property. The deed restriction shall include a legal description of the entire parcel or parcels governed by this permit. The deed restriction shall also indicate that, in the event of an extinguishment or termination of the deed restriction for any reason, the terms and conditions of this permit shall continue to restrict the use and enjoyment of the subject property so long as either this permit or the development it authorizes, or any part, modification, or amendment thereof, remains in existence on or with respect to the subject property.

IV. FINDINGS AND DECLARATIONS:

The Commission hereby finds and declares:

A. Project Description and Location

The applicant proposes to demolish an existing single-family residence and construct a new two-story, 3372 square foot single-family residence with an attached 528 square foot two-car garage, hardscape improvements and landscaping on an oceanfront bluff top lot. The existing developed portion of the lot measures approximately 50'-75' wide by 100' deep, with undeveloped area extending down the bluff face. The proposed development will extend further seaward than the existing development. Approximately 1100 cubic yards of grading is proposed for lower level excavation and site preparation. Excess material will be disposed of at an appropriate site outside the Coastal Zone.

The subject site is located within the locked gate community of Three Arch Bay in the City of Laguna Beach. Laguna Beach has a certified Local Coastal Program (LCP) except for the four areas of deferred certification: Irvine Cove, Blue Lagoon, Hobo Canyon, and Three Arch Bay. Certification of the Three Arch Bay area was deferred due to access issues arising from the locked gate nature of the community. The proposed development needs a coastal development permit from the Coastal Commission because it is located in the Three Arch Bay area of deferred certification.

Because the site is located within a locked gate community, no public access exists in the immediate vicinity. The nearest public access exists at 1000 Steps County Beach approximately one half mile upcoast of the site.

B. Blufftop Development

Section 30253 of the Coastal Act states:

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.

Section 30251 of the Coastal Act states that:

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. New development in highly scenic areas such as those designated in the California Coastline Preservation and Recreation Plan prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation and by local government shall be subordinate to the character of its setting.

A Report of Geologic/Soils and Foundation Conditions was prepared for the proposed development by Ian S. Kennedy, Inc. dated June 6, 2003. The geologic report included review of available geologic literature for the site area, reconnaissance and mapping of exposed geologic conditions and other pertinent site features, inspection of existing structural conditions, and report preparation. In addition, geologic mapping of the bluff area, logging of five test pit-type excavations, and sampling and testing of soils were conducted.

The subject site is an oceanfront bluff top lot. The lot slopes more or less gradually from the street elevation of approximately 100 feet to the pad level of approximately 85 feet. The height of the bluff is approximately 80-85 feet. As described in the geologic report, *"from the top of the slope (pad level) to about elevation 70 feet, the surface represents the eroded remnant of ancient marine terrace. The slope is irregular, varying from 1:1 to 2:1 (horizontal to vertical). Below elevation 70 feet, the sea cliff becomes relatively steep averaging ¾:1 and very irregular. Bedrock is exposed nearly continuously along the slope along with parched or very dense brush. A 10-15 foot high talus slope has accumulated at the toe of the sea cliff and, during high tide, is within the surf zone." During low tide, a sandy beach exists at the base of the bluff.*

According to the consulting geologist, grading during development of the subject lot and tract in the 1950's modified its natural pre-descending surface.

Setback

Section 30253 of the Coastal Act requires that risks and geologic instability be minimized. Setting development back from the edge of the bluff can substantially decrease risk because the further from the bluff edge development is located, the less likely it is that that development may become jeopardized. Likewise, setbacks decrease the likelihood of geologic instability. The added weight of development, watering or irrigating plants, and human activity closer to the bluff edge can all increase the rate of erosion and bluff retreat. Thus, by reducing these factors bluff stability can be increased. In addition, Section 30251 of the Coastal Act requires that scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas be protected. Setting development further back from the edge of the coastal bluff decreases the project's visibility from the beach below and as seen from the water. For these reasons, the Commission typically imposes some type of bluff edge set back.

In the project vicinity, the Commission typically imposes either a minimum bluff edge setback of 25 feet from the edge of the bluff for primary structures (e.g. the enclosed living area of residential structures) or requires conformance with the structural stringline. These setbacks are deemed acceptable within the Three Arch Bay community based on the relatively stable, underlying San Onofre formation bedrock. The intent of the setback is to substantially reduce the likelihood of proposed development becoming threatened given the inherent uncertainty in predicting geologic processes in the future, and to allow for potential changes in bluff erosion rates as a result of rising sea level.

The applicant's geologic consultant has determined that the edge of the bluff is generally located along the 65-foot contour elevation (Exhibit 4). Commission staff has reviewed the applicant's bluff edge determination and disagrees, as will be discussed below.

The Commission's bluff edge determination is based on the definition contained in Section 13577 of the California Code of Regulations which states, in part: *"…the edge shall be defined as that point nearest the cliff beyond which the downward gradient of the land surface increases more or less continuously until it reaches the general gradient of the cliff."*

Because development setbacks are normally measured from the edge of the bluff top, a great deal of effort often is focused on defining that "bluff edge." The bluff edge is the line of intersection between the steeply sloping bluff face and the flat or more gently sloping bluff top. Defining this line can be complicated, however, by the presence of irregularities in the bluff edge, a rounded stepped bluff edge, a sloping bluff top, or previous grading or development near the bluff edge. The position of the bluff edge may be changed by a variety of processes, natural and anthropogenic. Most obvious is the landward retreat of the bluff edge through coastal erosion. Anthropogenic modification of the bluff edge may occur by grading or construction of structures. A landward shift of the bluff edge commonly occurs through cutting into and removing natural materials during grading operations or the construction of seawalls. Conversely, placing artificial fill on or near the bluff edge still exists, buried beneath fill, and the natural bluff edge is used for purposes of defining development setback.

In the case of the subject site, grading and development has occurred in the past along the bluff edge. Fill was placed near the bluff edge, presumably during grading of the lot in the 1950s. In addition, a deck has been constructed in this area. In determining the bluff edge location, all site alterations were considered, including both the fill and the pre-Coastal Act development.

Based on the information provided by the applicant, the Commission's staff geologist has determined the bluff edge to be the point at which the artificial fill material interfaces with the marine terrace material, as depicted in Exhibit 5. This method for determining the location of the bluff edge is consistent with the Commission's action on CDP 5-02-357, which authorized development at the property immediately downcoast (east) of the subject site. The bluff edge, in conjunction with a stringline analysis, is being used by the Commission to establish the appropriate setback at the subject site.

According to the applicant, the proposed development complies with both the 25' setback from the bluff edge and the stringline setback. However, the applicant's determination of bluff edge, as well as their depiction of stringline, is inconsistent with the Commission's determinations. The Commission has determined the bluff edge to be located at the

interface of the artificial fill material and the marine terrace deposits, approximately 25 feet inland of the applicant's determination of "bluff edge." By establishing the bluff edge at this location, the applicant would have to set their development approximately 25' further landward than currently proposed if the Commission were to utilize the typical 25-foot bluff edge setback for primary structures.

However, the Commission's staff geologist has determined that the 25' bluff edge setback is not necessary for geologic stability purposes. In addition, application of this setback would be inequitable as compared to surrounding development. Therefore, as described more fully below, the use of a stringline setback, in conjunction with a minimum 5 to 10 foot bluff edge setback, is more appropriate at this location.

In this case, the purpose of the setback would be primarily to prevent visual impacts and to maintain the predominant line of development. The setback also allows for a safety margin to address unforeseen and or changed intensity of hazards at the subject site over time.

As stated previously, the Commission often imposes a setback determined by a stringline. A stringline is the line formed by connecting the nearest adjacent corners of the adjacent residences. A stringline most often is imposed to maximize protection of public coastal views. A stringline setback also provides equity among neighboring development's setbacks. At the subject site, the stringline setback ranges from approximately 3 feet to 30 feet landward of the bluff edge (Exhibit 6).

The applicant applied an improper stringline setback when designing the structure. As shown on the plans submitted, the applicant used an adjacent covered deck when establishing the stringline point to the east. The Commission utilizes enclosed living area when establishing the structural stringline. As such, the proposed enclosed living area would encroach up to approximately 2 to 4 feet into the stringline established by the Commission.

In order to protect scenic coastal views and provide equity among bluff top development in the project area, the Commission finds that a stringline setback, in conjunction with a minimum 10 foot bluff edge setback, for enclosed living area is appropriate. The combined use of stringline and bluff edge setback is necessary because sole reliance upon the stringline would result in a very small 2-3 foot enclosed living area setback from the bluff edge. Surficial erosion could quickly erase this setback and provides little margin for error relative to hazards. The City's LCP, which provides guidance but not the standard of review in this case, identifies a minimum 10 foot bluff edge setback. The Commission finds that this same minimum bluff edge setback is appropriate in this case. As a condition of approval, the project must be redesigned to eliminate enclosed structural area seaward of the structural stringline and minimum 10 foot bluff edge setback. The structural stringline and 10 foot bluff edge setback approved by the Commission is generally depicted on Exhibit 6.

A caisson and grade beam system is proposed to support the residence, as well as the deck. A portion of the foundation system extends approximately 10 feet beyond the

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structural stringline setback. Because of their size and the excavation necessary to accommodate them, caissons do not constitute minor, accessory development. The caissons themselves are an alteration of the natural landforms of the bluff. When the bluff erodes to a point that the caissons are exposed, with the structure they support hanging over the edge of the bluff, they effectively alter the natural landform. They are also visually intrusive. For these reasons, the Commission finds that caissons cannot be considered minor or accessory development. Therefore, as a condition of approval, the project shall be redesigned to eliminate caissons seaward of the structural stringline and minimum 10 foot bluff edge setback. Where the structural stringline and the bluff edge setback conflict, the more restrictive setback shall apply.

Only minor accessory development may be approved seaward of the enclosed structural stringline setback. Major development near the bluff edge increases the nsk of bluff instability and alteration of the natural landforms. As with the structural stringline, without some type of minimum bluff edge setback, the deck stringline would also allow ancillary improvements to extend up to the bluff edge in some locations on the seaward portion of the site. If such improvements were allowed to be placed at the bluff edge, there would be no margin for error to accommodate surficial sloughage and erosion that is common to bluffs. Ancillary deck related improvements can be moved away from hazards more readily than primary structures. Thus, in this case, the Commission finds that a deck stringline in conjunction with a minimum 5 foot bluff edge setback is appropriate for these ancillary improvements. The proposed hardscape and landscape improvements, including a deck, concrete block wall, planters and new steps along the bluff face, are inconsistent with the deck stringline and minimum 5 foot bluff edge setback for ancillary improvements. The proposed improvements extend approximately 1 to 4 feet beyond the deck stringline. Additionally, the deck is proposed to be supported by a caisson and grade beam system. As stated above, caissons cannot be allowed to support minor development such as a deck. Caissons (which constitute major development) can adversely impact scenic coastal views if they become exposed. Therefore, as a condition of approval, the project must be redesigned to remove any hardscape improvements that are supported by a subterranean foundation system beyond the structural stringline. Only nominal development may occur between the structural stringline and the deck stringline and 5 foot bluff edge setback for ancillary improvements. Within the deck stringline setback area, accessory development must be limited to at-grade hardscape improvements and landscaping. No development, including minor hardscape improvements and grading, may be allowed seaward of the deck stringline, 5 foot bluff edge setback or beyond the bluff edge. Where the deck stingline and the bluff edge setback conflict, the more restrictive setback shall apply. This will ensure that new hardscape development is appropriately set back.

Only as conditioned can the Commission find that the proposed development is consistent with requirements of Sections 30251 and 30253 of the Coastal Act which require that coastal views be protected and that hazards be minimized.

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Geotechnical Recommendations

Regarding the feasibility of the proposed project the Report of Geologic/Soils and Foundation Conditions, prepared by lan S. Kennedy, dated June 6, 2003 states:

"The subject site is considered suitable for support of the proposed new residence built in compliance with the recommendations made in this report and during construction."

Specifically regarding bluff slope stability, the geologic consultant concludes:

"The San Onofre Formation Breccia and Sandstone bedrock that supports the marine terrace sands at depth is considered to be in a stable condition."

The geologic consultant has found that the subject site is suitable for the proposed development provided the recommendations contained in the Report of Geologic/Soils and Foundation Conditions prepared by the consultant are implemented in design and construction of the project.

The recommendations contained in the Report of Geologic/Soils and Foundation Conditions address bearing material, foundation bearing, lateral resistance, lateral earth pressures, seismic design, settlements, floor slab, exterior flatwork, fill area, trench backfills, surface drainage, construction inspection, and construction plans. In order to assure that risks are minimized, the geologic consultant's recommendation should be incorporated into the design of the project. As a condition of approval the applicant shall submit plans, including grading and foundation plans, indicating that the recommendations contained in the Report of Geologic/Soils and Foundation Conditions prepared for the proposed development by Ian S. Kennedy, dated June 6, 2003 have been incorporated into the design of the project.

Future Protective Device

The subject site is a bluff top ocean front lot. In general, bluff top lots are inherently hazardous. It is the nature of bluffs, and especially ocean bluffs, to erode. Bluff failure can be episodic, and bluffs that seem stable now may not be so in the future. Even when a thorough professional geotechnical analysis of a site has concluded that a proposed development is expected to be safe from bluff retreat hazards for the life of the project, it has been the experience of the Commission that in some instances, unexpected bluff retreat episodes that threaten development during the life of a structure sometimes do occur (e.g. coastal development permit files 5-99-332 A1 (Frahm); P-80-7431 (Kinard); 5-93-254-G (Arnold); 5-88-177(Arnold)). In the Commission's experience, geologists cannot predict with absolute certainty if or when bluff failure on a particular site may take place, and cannot predict if or when a residence or property may be come endangered.

Section 30253 of the Coastal Act requires that new development shall not require construction of protective devices that would substantially alter natural landforms along bluffs and cliffs. The proposed development could not be approved as being consistent

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with Section 30253 of the Coastal Act if projected bluff retreat would affect the proposed development and necessitate construction of a protection device.

The Coastal Act limits construction of these protective devices because they have a variety of negative impacts on coastal resources including adverse affects on sand supply, public access, coastal views, natural landforms, and overall shoreline beach dynamics on and off site, ultimately resulting in the loss of beach. Under Coastal Act Section 30235, a shoreline protective structure must be approved if: (1) there is an existing principal structure in imminent danger from erosion; (2) shoreline altering construction is required to protect the existing threatened structure; and (3) the required protection is designed to eliminate or mitigate the adverse impacts on shoreline sand supply.

The Commission has generally interpreted Section 30235 to require the Commission to approve shoreline protection for residential development only for <u>existing</u> principal structures. The construction of a shoreline protective device to protect a <u>new</u> residential development would not be required by Section 30235 of the Coastal Act. In addition, the construction of a shoreline protective device to protect new residential development would conflict with Section 30251 of the Coastal Act which states that permitted development shall minimize the alteration of natural land forms, including coastal bluffs which would be subject to increased erosion from such a device.

No shoreline protection device is proposed. The geologic consultant for the subject development does not anticipate the need for a future shoreline or bluff protection device, and states:

"Based on historical performance, the potential need for future shoring and/or bluff protective devices are not anticipated for the life of the project."

The proposed development includes demolition of the existing residence and construction of a new single-family residence, which constitutes new development for the purposes of Sections 30235 and 30253. Because the proposed project is new development, it can only be found consistent with Section 30253 of the Coastal Act if a shoreline/bluff protective device is not expected to be needed in the future. The applicant's geotechnical consultant has indicated that the site is stable, that the project should be safe for the life of the project, and that no shoreline protection devices will be needed. If not for the information provided by the applicant that the site is safe for development, the Commission could not conclude that the proposed development will not in any way "require the construction of protective devices that would substantially alter natural landforms along bluffs and cliffs." However, as stated above, the record of coastal development permit applications and Commission actions has also shown that geologic conditions change over time and that predictions based upon the geologic sciences are inexact. Even though there is evidence that geologic conditions change, the Commission must rely upon, and hold the applicant to their information which states that the site is safe for development without the need for protective devices. Therefore, the Commission imposes a special condition which prohibits the applicant and their successors in interest from constructing shoreline/bluff protective devices to protect the proposed development and requiring that the applicant

waive, on behalf of itself and all successors and assigns, any right to construct protective devices for the proposed project that may exist under 30235.

Assumption of Risk

Although adherence to the geotechnical consultant's recommendations will minimize the risk of damage from erosion, the risk is not eliminated entirely. The site is an oceanfront, bluff top lot, which is inherently hazardous. Given that the applicant has chosen to implement the project despite potential risks from bluff erosion and landslide, the applicant must assume the risks. Therefore, the Commission imposes a special condition requiring the applicant to assume the risk of the development. In this way, the applicant is notified that the Commission is not liable for damage as a result of approving the permit for development. The condition also requires the applicant to indemnify the Commission in the event that third parties bring an action against the Commission as a result of the failure of the development to withstand the hazards. In addition, the condition ensures that future owners of the property will be informed of the risks and the Commission's immunity from liability. As conditioned, the Commission finds the proposed project is consistent with Section 30253 of the Coastal Act.

Drainage and Landscaping

One factor that can minimize the hazards inherent to blufftop development is proper collection of site drainage. The proposed Preliminary Grading/Drainage Plan indicates that all drainage will be collected in area drains and then directed to a new sump pit at the southwest lower pad and pumped up to the frontage street through the curb at La Senda. Piping drainage to the street will minimize hazards that can occur from uncontrolled surface runoff along a bluff face. In order to avoid increases in bluff instability and to minimize hazard as required by Section 30253 of the Coastal Act, the applicant shall submit a final drainage plan that indicates that all site drainage be collected and piped to the street, in conformance with the proposed plan. Only as conditioned, does the Commission find the proposed development consistent with Section 30253 which requires that hazards be minimized.

Another factor that can minimize the hazards inherent to bluff development is limiting the amount of water introduced to the bluff top area. In order to maximize bluff stability the amount of water introduced to the site should be minimized. Water on site can be reduced by limiting permanent irrigation systems. The proposed landscaping plan appears to include permanent, in-ground irrigation. No irrigation plan was submitted. However, a landscaping plan note states: *"All landscape areas to be irrigated with low precipitation heads or drip system with automatic controller & backflow device per city codes."* New landscaping is proposed around the entire perimeter of the property. It is not clear whether the proposed irrigation system would be placed in the area adjacent to the bluff edge. Irrigation anywhere on the site would be detrimental to bluff stability. Consequently, irrigation must be limited to temporary irrigation only as needed to establish plants. Therefore, the Commission imposes a special condition which prohibits permanent irrigation on the site. Temporary irrigation may be allowed to establish plantings. Only as

conditioned can the Commission find the proposed development consistent with Section 30253 of the Coastal Act which requires that hazards be minimized.

In addition, to further decrease the potential for bluff instability, deep-rooted, low water use, plants, native to coastal Orange County, should be selected for general landscaping purposes in order to minimize irrigation requirements and saturation of underlying soils. The placement of vegetation that is considered to be invasive which could supplant native vegetation should not be allowed. Invasive plants have the potential to overcome native plants and spread quickly. Invasive plants are generally those identified by the California Invasive Plant Council (http://www.caleppc.org/) and California Native Plant Society (www.CNPS.org) in their publications.

Furthermore, any plants in the landscaping plan should be drought tolerant to minimize the use of water. The term drought tolerant is equivalent to the terms 'low water use' and 'ultra low water use' as defined and used by "A Guide to Estimating Irrigation Water Needs of Landscape Plantings in California" prepared by University of California Cooperative Extension and the California Department of Water Resources dated August 2000 available at http://www.owue.water.ca.gov/landscape/pubs/pubs.cfm.

Low water use, drought tolerant, native plants require less water than other types of vegetation, thereby minimizing the amount of water introduced into the bluff top. Drought resistant plantings and minimal irrigation encourage root penetration which increases bluff stability. The applicant has submitted a planting plan that includes non-invasive, low water use plants. However, the majority of these plant species are not native to coastal Orange County. The Commission typically requires that applicants utilize native plant species, particularly along coastal bluffs. Native plants species should be used adjacent to the bluff and non-invasive, drought-tolerant plants may be used elsewhere on the site.

As a condition of approval, the applicant shall submit a revised landscape plan that indicates no permanent irrigation on the site, and the use of only plants that are low water use, drought tolerant, non-invasive plants, primarily native to coastal Orange County. The landscaping plan as conditioned will reduce the amount of water introduced into the bluff top area and so would not contribute to instability of the bluff. Thus, only as conditioned, is the landscape plan consistent with Section 30253 of the Coastal Act.

Conclusion

The Commission finds that only as conditioned as described above, can the proposed development be found consistent with Sections 30251 and 30253 of the Coastal Act which require that landform alteration be minimized, scenic coastal views be protected, and geologic stability be assured.

C. <u>Water Quality</u>

Section 30231 of the Coastal Act states:

The biological productivity and the quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, estuaries, and lakes appropriate to maintain optimum populations of marine organisms and for the protection of human health shall be maintained and, where feasible, restored through, among other means, minimizing adverse effects of waste water discharges and entrainment, controlling runoff, preventing depletion of ground water supplies and substantial interference with surface water flow, encouraging waste water reclamation, maintaining natural vegetation buffer areas that protect riparian habitats, and minimizing alteration of natural streams.

The proposed residential development has impervious surfaces, such as roofs where pollutants such as particulate matter may settle, as well as driveways where pollutants such as oil and grease from vehicles may drip. In addition, landscaped areas may contain fertilizers and pesticides. During storm events, the pollutants which have collected upon the roof and upon other impervious surfaces created by the proposed project may be discharged from the site into the storm water system and eventually into coastal waters which can become polluted from those discharges. Water pollution decreases the biological productivity of coastal waters.

Typically, adverse water quality impacts to coastal waters can be avoided or minimized by directing storm water discharges from roof areas and other impervious surfaces to landscaped areas where pollutants may settle out of the storm water. In addition, reducing the quantity of impervious surfaces and increasing pervious water infiltration areas can improve water quality.

However, these common techniques of addressing water quality problems, by design, result in increased infiltration of water into the ground. As noted in the hazard section of these findings, the infiltration of water into the bluff is a primary potential source of bluff instability at the project site. Therefore, increasing the quantity of pervious areas, directing runoff to those pervious areas, and encouraging water infiltration for water quality purposes could have adverse impacts upon bluff stability.

There are measures, however, that would contribute to increased water quality that could feasibly be applied even to bluff top lots such as the subject site without increasing instability. In general, the primary contributors to storm drain pollution stemming from single family residential development are irrigation, fertilizers, swimming pool discharges, and pet waste. These can be eliminated or significantly reduced even on bluff top lots. For example, permanent, in-ground irrigation tends to result in over-watering, causing drainage to run off site. Irrigation runoff carries with it particulates such as soil, debris, and fertilizers. Limiting irrigation to that necessary to establish and maintain plantings, reduces the chance of excess runoff due to over-irrigation. Permanent, in-ground irrigation, in general, is set by timer and not by soil moisture condition. Thus, the site is irrigated on a regular basis regardless of the need, resulting in over-saturation and run off. The run off, carrying soil, fertilizer, etc, is then directed either to the storm drain system (which then enters the ocean) or directly over the bluff to plots.

Another way to improve water quality on bluff top lots without jeopardizing stability is the use of native/drought tolerant plantings. Low water use, drought tolerant, native plants require less water than other types of vegetation, thereby minimizing the amount of water introduced into the bluff top. As these plantings use less water than ornamental plants, incidents of over-watering, causing saturation and excess runoff, is substantially reduced. As previously stated, reducing site runoff reduces the extent of pollutants carried into the storm drain system and into the ocean.

Due to the potential for increased hazards in bluff top areas which could be caused by encouraging water infiltration for water quality purposes, maximizing on site retention of drainage is not required. However, the measures described above including no permanent irrigation and the use of native/drought tolerant plants, can help to increase water quality in the area. Special Condition 2 requires primarily native and drought tolerant vegetation and prohibits permanent irrigation.

In addition, the applicant has submitted a Water Quality Management Plan for the subject site. The plan includes structural and non-structural best management practices (BMPs). The structural BMPs include natural filtration through landscaped areas, efficient irrigation and a storm drain lift station that will be cleaned annually. The non-structural BMPs include litter control, catch basin inspection and use restrictions on fertilizers and pesticides. The project has been conditioned to ensure conformance with the BMPs contained in the WQMP.

Therefore, the Commission finds that, as conditioned, the proposed project is consistent with Section 30231 of the Coastal Act regarding protection and enhancement of water quality.

D. Public Access & Recreation

Section 30604(c) of the Coastal Act requires that every coastal development permit issued for any development between the nearest public road and the sea include a specific finding that the development is in conformity with the public access and public recreation policies of Chapter 3.

The proposed project is located within an existing locked gate community located between the sea and the first public road paralleling the sea. Public access through this community does not currently exist. The proposed development, demolition and construction of a single family residence on an existing residential lot, will not affect the existing public access conditions. It is the locked gate community, not this home, which impedes public access. The proposed development, as conditioned, will not result in any significant adverse impacts to existing public access or recreation in the area. Therefore, the Commission finds that the project is consistent with the public access and recreation policies of the Coastal Act.

E. Local Coastal Program

Section 30604(a) of the Coastal Act provides for the issuance of coastal development permits directly by the Commission in regions where the local government having jurisdiction does not have a certified local coastal program. The permit may only be issued if the Commission finds that the proposed development will not prejudice the ability of the local government to prepare a Local Coastal Program which conforms with the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act.

The City of Laguna Beach Local Coastal Program was certified with suggested modifications, except for the areas of deferred certification, in July 1992. In February 1993 the Commission concurred with the Executive Director's determination that the suggested modification had been properly accepted and the City assumed permit issuing authority at that time.

The subject site is located within the Three Arch Bay area of deferred certification. Certification in this area was deferred due to issues of public access arising from the locked gate nature of the community. However, as discussed above, the proposed development will not further decrease or impact public access within the existing locked gate community. Therefore the Commission finds that approval of this project, as conditioned, will not prevent the City of Laguna Beach from preparing a total Local Coastal Program for the areas of deferred certification that conforms with and is adequate to carry out the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act.

F. California Environmental Quality Act

Section 13096 of the Commission's regulations requires Commission approval of Coastal Development Permit applications to be supported by a finding showing the application, as conditioned by any conditions of approval, to be consistent with any applicable requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Section 21080.5(d)(2)(A) 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 effect which the activity may have on the environment.

The proposed project as conditioned has been found consistent with the hazard, visual, landform alteration, and public access policies of the Coastal Act. 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.





Ownership Map

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