CALIFORNIA COASTAL COMMISSION

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STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION ON APPEAL SUBSTANTIAL ISSUE DETERMINATION

Local Government: City of San Diego

Decision: Approved with Conditions

Appeal Number: A-6-SAN-21-0050

Applicant: 8423 El Paseo Grande, LLC

Location: 8423 El Paseo Grande, La Jolla, San Diego, San

Diego County (APN: 346-072-03)

Project Description: Demolition of an existing 1-story, 1,528 sq. ft. single

family residence and detached 2-car garage and construction of a new 30-ft. tall, 2-story, 3,989 sq. ft. single family residence with attached 2-car garage and 1,090 sq. ft. attached accessory dwelling unit on

a 0.12-acre lot.

Appellants: Drs. Uri and Ayelet Gneezy

Staff Recommendation: No Substantial Issue

IMPORTANT HEARING PROCEDURE NOTE

This is a substantial issue only hearing. Testimony will be taken <u>only</u> on the question of whether the appeal raises a substantial issue. Generally and at the discretion of the Chair, testimony is limited to 3 minutes <u>total</u> per side. Please plan your testimony accordingly. Only the applicant, persons who opposed the application before the local government (or their representatives), and the local government shall be qualified to testify. Others may submit comments in writing. If the Commission determines that the

appeal does raise a substantial issue, the de novo phase of the hearing will occur at a future Commission meeting, during which it will take public testimony.

SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission, after public hearing, determine that NO substantial issue exists with respect to the grounds on which the appeal has been filed.

The locally approved project is to demolish an existing 1-story, 1,528 sq. ft. single family residence and detached 2-car garage and construction of a new 30-ft. tall, 2-story, 3,989 sq. ft. single family residence with attached 2-car garage and 1,090 sq. ft. attached accessory dwelling unit on a 0.12-acre lot on the inland side of El Paseo Grande in the La Jolla community of the City of San Diego, across the street from Kellogg Park.

The appellants contend that the approved project is inconsistent with policies and ordinances regarding setbacks, community character, bulk and scale, parking contained in the La Jolla Community Plan, city-wide development regulations, and the Planned District Ordinance (PDO). Specifically, the appellants argue that the approved home has insufficient northern and rear yard setbacks, excessive floor area ratio, and inadequate off-street parking for the accessory dwelling unit.

However, upon review of the locally approved project plans and the certified LCP, the approved residence does comply with the applicable policies and ordinances regarding community character and parking. The La Jolla Shores PDO allows residences within the planned district area to have small or no side yard setbacks, depending on the design of the residence's façade. If the façade of a structure has openings such as windows or doors, it can be a minimum of 4 feet from the property line, while facades with no openings can be built right along the property line. The approved residence complies with these requirements, as it has a 4-foot setback along the southern façade, a 6-foot setback along the rear façade, and a 4-foot setback along the majority of the north façade that has windows and a zero-foot setback for the easternmost 23 feet of the northern façade of the first floor that has no openings. The second story observes a 4-foot setback along the north and southern facades, and a 6-foot setback along the rear façade. The front of the residence observes a 15-foot setback. All of these setbacks are consistent with the LCP, and not dissimilar to other homes in the vicinity.

In addition to setbacks, the approved residence will comply with the density, height, lot coverage, and floor area ratio (FAR) requirements of the LCP. The new home will have a FAR higher than the average of the residences in the general vicinity, but will have a variety of architectural features, articulations, and building material which will ensure the home is not significantly different in bulk and scale than surrounding structures, and the publicly visible street frontage will step back the second story approximately 4 feet from the first floor, complying with the recommendations of the "Residential Land Use" chapter of the La Jolla Community Plan. Finally, the placement of the parking space provided for the attached accessory dwelling unit on the residence's driveway complies with Section 141.0302 addressing development of such units. Thus, in every aspect of

its design, the approved residence can be found to comply with the application requirements and limits of the certified LCP.

Because there are no identified inconsistencies with the LCP and the Coastal Act, staff recommends that the Commission determine that the project raises <u>no substantial issue</u> regarding conformance with the certified LCP and the Chapter 3 policies of the Coastal Act.

Standard of Review: Certified City of San Diego Local Coastal Program.

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Exhibit 2 – Arial View

Exhibit 3 – Approved Plans

Exhibit 4 – Appellants' Appeal

Exhibit 5 – City Notice of Final Action

I. APPELLANTS CONTEND

The appellants contend that the approved two-story residence with attached accessory dwelling unit does not conform with the certified LCP's policies regarding setbacks, community character, bulk and scale, and parking. The appellants also raise arguments related to the adequacy of the Mitigated Negative Declaration produced for compliance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

II. LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTION

The project was approved with conditions by the City of San Diego Planning Commission on June 24, 2021.

III. APPEAL PROCEDURES

After certification of a Local Coastal Program (LCP), the Coastal Act provides for limited appeals to the Coastal Commission of certain local government actions on coastal development permits.

Section 30603(b)(1) of the Coastal Act states:

The grounds for an appeal pursuant to subdivision (a) shall be limited to an allegation that the development does not conform to the standards set forth in the certified local coastal program or the public access policies set forth in this division.

Coastal Act Section 30625(b) states that the Commission shall hear an appeal unless it determines:

With respect to appeals to the commission after certification of a local coastal program that no substantial issue exists with respect to the grounds on which an appeal has been filed pursuant to Section 30603.

If the staff recommends "substantial issue" and no Commissioner objects, the Commission will proceed directly to the de novo portion of the hearing on the merits of the project, then, or at a later date. If the staff recommends "no substantial issue" or the Commission decides to hear arguments and vote on the substantial issue question, those allowed to testify at the hearing will have 3 minutes per side to address whether the appeal raises a substantial issue. It takes a majority of Commissioners present to find that no substantial issue is raised. If substantial issue is found, the Commission will proceed to a full public hearing on the merits of the project then, or at a later date, reviewing the project de novo in accordance with sections 13057-13096 of the Commission's regulations. If the Commission conducts the de novo portion of the hearing on the permit application, the applicable standard of review for the Commission

to consider is whether the proposed development is in conformity with the certified Local Coastal Program (LCP).

In addition, for projects located between the sea and the first public road paralleling the sea, Section 30604(c) of the Act requires that a finding must be made by the approving agency, whether the local government or the Coastal Commission on appeal, that the development is in conformity with the public access and public recreation policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act. In other words, in regard to public access questions, the Commission is required to consider not only the certified LCP, but also applicable Chapter 3 policies when reviewing a project on appeal.

The only persons qualified to testify before the Commission at the "substantial issue" stage of the appeal process are the applicant, persons who opposed the application before the local government (or their representatives), and the local government. Testimony from other persons must be submitted in writing. At the time of the de novo portion of the hearing, any person may testify.

The Coastal Act requires that the Commission shall hear an appeal unless no substantial issue exists with respect to the grounds on which the appeal was filed under Section 30603. (§ 30625(b)(2).) Section 13115(c) of the Commission regulations provides that the Commission may consider the following five factors when determining if a local action raises a significant issue:

- 1. The degree of factual and legal support for the local government's decision that the development is consistent or inconsistent with the certified LCP;
- 2. The extent and scope of the development as approved or denied by the local government;
- 3. The significance of the coastal resources affected by the decision;
- 4. The precedential value of the local government's decision for future interpretations of its LCP; and
- 5. Whether the appeal raises only local issues, or those of regional or statewide significance.

The Commission may, but need not, assign a particular weight to a factor.

Even when the Commission chooses not to hear an appeal, appellants nevertheless may obtain judicial review of the local government's coastal permit decision by filing a petition for a writ of mandate pursuant to the Code of Civil Procedure, section 1094.5.

The City of San Diego has a certified Local Coastal Program (LCP), and the subject site is located in an area where the Commission retains appeal jurisdiction because it is located within 300 feet of the coast. Therefore, before the Commission considers the appeal de novo, the appeal must establish that a substantial issue exists with respect to the grounds on which an appeal has been filed pursuant to Section 30603. In this case, for the reasons discussed further below, the Commission exercises its discretion to

determine that the development approved by the City does not raise a substantial issue with regard to the appellants' contentions regarding coastal resources.

IV. SUBSTANTIAL ISSUE MOTION AND RESOLUTION

Motion:

I move that the Commission determine that Appeal No. A-6-LJS-21-0050 raises NO substantial issue with respect to the grounds on which the appeal has been filed under § 30603 of the Coastal Act.

Staff recommends a **YES** vote. Passage of this motion will result in a finding of No Substantial Issue and adoption of the following resolution and findings. If the Commission finds No Substantial Issue, the Commission will not hear the application de novo and the local action will become final and effective. The motion passes only by an affirmative vote by a majority of the Commissioners present.

Resolution:

The Commission hereby finds that Appeal No. A-6-LJS-21-0050 does not present a substantial issue with respect to the grounds on which the appeal has been filed under § 30603 of the Coastal Act regarding consistency with the certified Local Coastal Plan and/or the public access and recreation policies of the Coastal Act.

V. SUBSTANTIAL ISSUE FINDINGS AND DECLARATION

A. Project Description and Background

The locally approved project is to demolish an existing one-story, 1,528 sq. ft. single family residence and detached 2-car garage and construct a new 30-ft. tall, 2-story, 3,989 sq. ft. single family residence with attached 2-car garage and 1,090 sq. ft. attached accessory dwelling unit on a 0.12-acre lot at 8423 El Paseo Grande in the La Jolla community of the City of San Diego. The site is located on the inland side of El Paseo Grande, which is the first public roadways along the shoreline in this area, across the street from Kellogg Park. [Exhibit 2]

The site is within the City of San Diego's permit jurisdiction and appealable to the Coastal Commission due to a portion of the property being located within 300 feet of the inland extent of the beach (§ 30603(a)(1)). The La Jolla Community Plan, which serves as the certified Land Use Plan for the community, and the Land Development Code, which serves as the certified Implementation Plan, serve as the standard of review.

B. Setbacks

Section 1510.0304(b) of the La Jolla Shores Planned District Ordinance states:

(b) Siting of Buildings

- (1) Buildings with openings (i.e., doors and/or windows) facing the side property line shall be constructed not closer than four feet from said property line, in some circumstances, provided the see-through provisions in Section 1510.0310(c) are observed.
- (2) Buildings without openings facing the side property line may be constructed on the side property line in some circumstances, provided the see-through provisions in Section 1510(c) are observed and provided the drainage of storm water falling on the roof of such building is carried off on the subject property and shall in no way endanger or interfere with an abutting property, easement, or rights-of-way.
- (3) Increased yard dimensions may be required for development adjacent to a public park to avoid any detrimental impact on the park.
- (4) Building and structure setbacks shall be in general conformity with those in the vicinity.

The approved residence is a 30-foot tall, 2-story single family residence with an attached 2-car garage facing the street and attached 1,090 sq. ft. accessory dwelling unit in the rear half of the first floor. [Exhibit 3]

The La Jolla Shores PDO is different from most of the City in that it allows residences within the planned district area to have small or no side yard setbacks, depending on the design of the residence's facade. If the façade of structure has openings such as windows or doors, it can be a minimum of 4 feet from the property line, while facades with no openings can be built right along the property line. The approved residence complies with these requirements, as it has a 4-foot setback along the southern façade, a 6-foot setback along the rear façade, and a 4-foot setback along the majority of the north façade that has windows and a zero-foot setback for the easternmost 23 feet of the northern facade of the first floor that has no openings. The second story observes a 4-foot setback along the north and southern facades, and a 6-foot setback along the rear façade. The front of the residence observes a 15-foot setback. [Exhibit 3]

The appellants focus on subsection (4) of Section 1510.0304(b), alleging that the approved setbacks are not in "general conformity" with structures in the vicinity because the neighboring property to the north has an 11-foot setback from the shared property line, and the neighboring property to the east (the home of the appellants) has a 20-foot rear setback from their shared property line. However, the general directive of subsection (4) is to be read in conjunction with subsections (1) and (2), which contain specific, permissible setbacks for a residence's façade, and which the approved project adheres to. The fact that the immediately adjacent structures have larger setbacks than is required by the LCP does not render the subject residence out of conformity with the neighborhood.

The La Jolla Shores PDO is an area-specific set of development regulations that encompass approximately two square miles of northern La Jolla, and there are a range of development setbacks within this community. Commission staff identified several residences on El Paseo Grande that utilize 4-foot or less side yard setbacks, such 8405 El Paseo Grande, 8415 El Paseo Grande, 8449 El Paseo Grande, and 8455 El Paseo Grande, among others. The property immediately to the south of the subject site at 8415 El Paseo Grande has a 4-foot setback from the shared property line. [Exhibit 2] Additionally, the existing detached garage in the northeast corner of the lot currently observes a zero-foot setback from the northern property line and a 1-foot setback from the rear property line it shares with the appellants, while the new residence will observe a 6-foot setback from the rear, so it will be set back farther back from the rear property line than the existing structure.

Finally, the northeast corner of the approved residence's first floor, which has no northern setback, consists of the attached accessory dwelling unit. The currently certified ordinance language in Section 141.0302(1)(6) of the Land Development Code allows an accessory dwelling unit to encroach within a required side and rear yard setback if such encroachment does not block a designated public coastal view

Thus, the approved residence observes the required setbacks of the LCP and is in conformity with the siting design of the community, and no substantial issue is raised.

C. Community Character

Section 1510.0301(a) and (b) of the La Jolla Shores Planned District Ordinance states:

(a) Character of the Area

In this primarily single-family residential community, a typical home is characterized by extensive use of glass, shake or shingle overhanging roof, and a low, rambling silhouette. Patios, the atrium or enclosed courtyard, and decks facilitate the "inside-outside" orientation of life in Southern California. Spanish Mediterranean and Mexican influences are seen in the prevalent use of the arch and of terra cotta and glazed tiles. The residential and commercial structures incorporate an honest use of natural building materials and, in many instances, are characterized as a truly American style of architecture, fusing the purity and geometry of the Mexican-Spanish period with a simplicity of materials and detail with integrated landscape design.

(b) Design Principle

Within the limitations implied above, originality and diversity in architecture are encouraged. The theme "unity with variety" shall be a guiding principle. Unity without variety means simple monotony; variety by itself is chaos. No structure shall be approved which is substantially like any other structure located on an adjacent parcel. Conversely, no structure will be approved that is so different in quality, form, material, color, and relationship as to disrupt the architectural unity of the area.

The subject site is located in a single-family residential community north of the village area of La Jolla. The neighborhood is entirely built out with street, sidewalks, and residential structures. The nearest public accessways to the beach are across the street at Kellogg Park, a grassy shoreline park with public parking and a boardwalk abutting the sandy beach.

The appellants argue that the existing one-story home has "a low, rambling silhouette" as described in the PDO, but that the approved two-story residence does not because it is two stories, and thus is not in conformance with the requirements of the LCP. However, there are numerous two-story structures in the neighborhood, including several along El Paseo Grande alone. Two-story homes are not prohibited, and given the existing development in the area, are not so different that the subject project could be considered atypical. The façade of the home incorporates typical residential architectural articulation, windows, and building material such as wood and stone. Thus, the approved two-story residence does not substantially deviate from the community character of the surrounding area or the requirements of the PDO.

The appellants also argue that the approved residence, with a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.97, is substantially higher than the average FAR of surrounding residences and thus cannot be found to conform to the language in subsection (b) regarding not approving structures that are "so different in quality, form, material, color, and relationship as to disrupt the architectural unity of the area." During the local review process, the applicant submitted a FAR survey of surrounding residences that showed a range of FAR as high as 1.07. The City reviewed the submitted study and determined that the approved residence is consistent with the character of the surrounding development. However, the appellants argue that this survey is not accurate because the data allegedly came from the website "Scoutred," which data they assert includes basement square footage, which is excluded from FAR calculations, in the amounts listed for surrounding residences. The appellants base this assertion on their agent's experience designing a remodel for one of the surveyed homes, 8543 El Paseo Grande, which they state has a FAR of 0.53 when excluding the basement, rather than the greater than 1.0 FAR listed in the applicant's survey. Furthermore, the appellants argue that even accepting the applicant's survey, only six of forty-two surveyed properties had a FAR above 0.70, and the average FAR of all the properties is 0.55.

However, other than referencing the appellants' agent's past experience with one of the listed properties, no separate survey purporting to be a more accurate representation of the FAR for the general area has been submitted, nor is any evidence provided that the applicant's survey is inaccurate other than a statement by the appellants' agent guessing that "Scoutred's data likely comes from the San Diego County Assessor's Office," which according to the agent does not make a distinction between basement and above-grade square footage in its data. Regardless, even if the FAR of the approved project is higher than several of the nearby properties, FAR is but one facet of a structure's design that determines its final form, and neither a structure's character nor the community character is determined by narrowly looking at FAR alone. The La Jolla Shores Planned District has no specific FAR requirement or limit in its PDO. The

development regulations of the LCP regulate a structure's setbacks, height, lot coverage, and density in addition to FAR, and all of these factors are looked at together in determining the ultimate character of the development, and by extension its relation to the community character.

As discussed above, the approved residence complies with the setback requirements of the LCP, as well as complying with the density, height, and lot coverage requirements of the LCP. Indeed, even with the above-average FAR, the residence will cover 49% of the lot, whereas the LCP allows up to 60% lot coverage, and will not encroach into any public rights-of-way or public view corridors. Thus, the approved residence is clearly similar to other existing residences in the area in size and design, and is compatible with the community character as required by the La Jolla Shores Planned District.

D. Bulk and Scale

On Page 67 of the La Jolla Community Plan, the "Goals" in the "Residential Land Use" chapter state:

Goals:

- Provide a high quality residential environment in La Jolla that respects its relationship to the sea, to hillsides, and to open space.
- Promote the development of a variety of housing types and styles in La Jolla.
- Introduce opportunities for the production of more affordable housing within La Jolla to meet the housing needs of all income levels.
- Maintain the character of la Jolla's residential areas by ensuring that redevelopment occurs in a manner that protects natural features, preserves existing streetscape themes and allows a harmonious visual relationship to exist between the bulk and scale of new and older structures.

On Page 76 of the La Jolla Community Plan, Section 2 of the "Plan Recommendations" in the "Residential Land Use" chapter addresses "Community Character" and states the following:

2. Community Character

- a. In order to maintain and enhance the existing neighborhood character and ambiance, and to promote good design and visual harmony in the transitions between new and existing structures, preserve the following elements:
 - 1) Bulk and scale with regard to surrounding structures or land form conditions as viewed from the public right-of-way and from parks and open space;

- 2) Street landscape with regard to size and shape or generalized type of planting materials;
- 3) Hardscapes with regard to pavement types, patterns or lack of patterns, colors, widths, colors and contours;
- 4) Street fixtures with regard to type, size and location (street light fixtures, benches, street signage);
- 5) Site fixtures with regard to height, type, material and location (fences, walls, retaining walls, curb cuts and driveways);
- 6) Curbs, gutters and street pavements -with regard to types and materials; and
- 7) Public physical and visual access as identified in Figure 9 and Appendix
- b. In order to regulate the scale of new development, apply development regulations to all residential properties in La Jolla that proportionally relate the building envelope to the existing lot dimensions. Apply minimum side and rear yard setback requirements that separate structures from adjacent properties in order to prevent a wall effect along the street face as viewed from the public right-of-way. Side yard setbacks should be incrementally increased for wider lots.
- c. In order to promote transitions in scale between new and older structures, create visual relief through the use of diagonal or off-setting planes, building articulation, roofline treatment and variations within front yard setback requirements.
- d. For large lots in single dwelling unit areas, apply development regulations that will limit the perceived bulk and scale differences relative to surrounding lots. Apply a sliding scale for floor area ratios that will decrease building scale as the lot size increases.
- e. In order to address transitions between the bulk and scale of new and older development in residential areas, maintain the existing 30-foot height limit of the single dwelling unit zones and Proposition D. Structures with front and side yard facades that exceed one story should slope or step back additional stories, up to the 30-foot height limit, in order to allow flexibility while maintaining the integrity of the streetscape and providing adequate amounts of light and air.
- f. Review and revise applicable Planned District Ordinance (PDO) residential regulations to implement the community character recommendations in this Plan.

The appellants argue that because both the first and second stories of the approved residence are set back 4 feet or 6 feet from the side and rear property lines - except for

the previously discussed 23-foot eastern segment of the north wall sited along the property line – that the residence does not conform to the Plan Recommendation 2(e) requiring that floors above the first floor should be set back or sloped further than the first floor, and thus does not create adequate architectural transition between the approved residence and the neighboring property to the north.

Specifically, the appellants cite the following section of the community plan:

e. In order to address transitions between the bulk and scale of new and older development in residential areas, maintain the existing 30-foot height limit of the single dwelling unit zones and Proposition D. **Structures with front and side yard facades that exceed one story should slope or step back additional stories**, up to the 30-foot height limit, in order to allow flexibility while maintaining the integrity of the streetscape and providing adequate amounts of light and air. [Emphasis added]

This LUP policy does not identify a specific amount or length of setback or slope, nor does the Land Development Code have any specific requirements for step backs or slopes in the LJSPD-SF zone which covers residences in the La Jolla Shores Planned District, including the subject site.

For the approved project, the entire second-story street frontage of the residence, which is the portion of the home most visible from the public road, will be stepped back approximately 4 feet from the first story, creating an articulated appearance. While the northern and southern sides of the residence will not have a step back on the second story, the LCP does not specific that the entire second story be stepped back, and other two-story residences along El Paseo Grande, do not have upper story step backs, instead having fairly uniform vertical façade on the sides. The approved residence is within the size range of residences in the neighborhood and would not be substantially different in size from its neighbors, especially as viewed from the public right-of-way. Thus, the approved residence includes an upper story step back along the publicly visible street frontage, and the lack of upper story setbacks along the side yards does not deviate from the character of other residences in the community, nor create a structure that substantially degrades the visual quality of the community of public views. Thus, no substantial issue is raised with regard to conformity of the project with the certified LCP.

E. Parking

The appellants argue that the approved residence with attached accessory dwelling unit is required to provide three off-street parking spaces, two for the primary residence and one for the accessory dwelling unit but is unable to legally do so. The approved residence will have an attached two-car garage with a 20-foot by 16-foot driveway, and the appellants argue that while the two-car garage satisfies the parking requirement for the primary residence, the approved plans show the parking space for the accessory dwelling unit being provided on the driveway inconsistent with Section 142.0510(e)(2)(A) of the Land Development Code, which prohibits reliance on driveways to satisfy parking requirements.

The Land Development Code typically does not allow required off-street parking spaces to be located on driveways. However, because the parking space in question is for the accessory dwelling unit, Section 141.0302(a)(7)(C) addressing such units applies, which states:

141.0302 Accessory Dwelling Units and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units

(7) Parking for the entire premises shall be brought into compliance with Chapter 14, Article 2, Division 5 (Parking Regulations) and with Section 141.0302, except as otherwise indicated herein by the zone.

[...]

(C) Off-street parking space(s) may be located in any configuration, may be within the setback areas, and may include covered or uncovered parking tandem spaces, or mechanical lifts. Off-street parking space(s) shall be located within hardscape areas and shall comply with the minimum standards and guidelines to provide safe and efficient means of vehicular access to the lot. [emphasis added]

In order to promote the development of accessory dwelling units, the LCP allows greater flexibility in their development requirements to allow them to be incorporated into larger, primary residences. As approved, the parking space for the accessory dwelling unit will be placed on the hardscape driveway within the front yard setback area, as permitted by the Land Development Code, and the approved residence will thus meet all of the off-street parking requirements for both the primary residence and accessory dwelling unit, raising no substantial issue.

F. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

The appellants allege that the City's environmental review of the project under CEQA was inadequate, arguing that the City should have prepared an Environmental Impact Report because the project would have significant impacts with regards to air quality, neighborhood character, noise, and greenhouse gas emissions. The alleged deficiencies of the City's CEQA review are not a valid basis for an appeal to the Commission. As discussed previously, Section 30603(b)(1) states that the grounds for an appeal shall be limited to an allegation that the development does not conform to the standards set forth in the certified local coastal program or the public access policies of Chapter 3 of the Coastal Act.

G. Substantial Issue Factors

As discussed above, on review by staff of the local record, there is factual and legal support for the City's determination that the proposed development is consistent with the certified LCP. The other factors that the Commission normally considers when evaluating whether a local government's action raises a substantial issue also support a finding of no substantial issue. The objections to the project suggested by the appellants do not raise any substantial issues of regional or statewide significance.

APPENDIX A – SUBSTANTIVE FILE DOCUMENTS

• Appeal by Drs. Uri and Ayelet Gneezy dated July 9, 2021