Midcoast Community Council

An elected Advisory Council to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
representing Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton, and Miramar
PO Box 248, Moss Beach, CA 94038-0248 | midcoastcommunitycouncil.org

Gus Mattammal| Gregg Dieguez | Scott Bollinger | Ann Rothman | Dan Haggerty | Claire Toutant |
Chair Vice-Chair Treasurer Secretary **| Kimberly Williams**

Date: January 24 2024
To: Mr. Glen Jia, Planner III, Design Review Officer & WELO Coordinator, County of San Mateo Planning and Building Department
From: Midcoast Community Council
Subject: PLN2023-00311
APN: 037063380
Coastside Fire Station 44, 501 Stetson Street, Moss Beach CA 94038

Dear Mr. Jia:

The MCC appreciates Station 44 fire personnel and acknowledges the need for a safe and healthy work environment. That environment needs to blend harmoniously with the neighborhood in which it resides. We believe this project merits a CEQA review process. The site has had significant exposure to contaminating materials and diesel fuel storage. We ask for a full evaluation of the status and management of hazardous materials, to be performed by a third party chosen by the County.

We have found concerns with the project designs as stated below.

LIGHTING
The residents of the neighborhood surrounding Fire Station 44 have enjoyed the natural surrounding wildlife and the relatively healthy dark sky environment for decades. This proposed lighting plan does not come close to blending in with existing conditions. It threatens the peaceful and harmonious living of all neighbors and wildlife in the area. Beyond the potential harsh lighting that will shine off to the neighbors and into their home windows, the ability to see stars will be diminished. There are many documented health hazards to humans and to wildlife from all the blue-rich 4000k lights listed on your lighting schedule. These hazards are well described at DarkSky.org. and travislongcore.net. The structure of property values are also linked to these pleasant environmental conditions.

For all these reasons, many communities similar to ours have taken steps to become a certified DarkSky community. Several examples can be seen for Santa Cruz, West Marin, and other DarkSky locations.

This lighting plan needs to be redesigned to comply with the DarkSky International and IES agreed 5 Principles of Responsible lighting and with an intensity no greater than recommended by IES for lighting zone LZ2, and the DarkSky International Board Policy recommending 2200K Amber lamps. The new lighting plan should be responsible and have no light trespassing onto any of the neighbors of Station 44 including from the interior light shining to the outside through the large windows of the building. Reduce the potential of glare disability of intense artificial light to residents and vehicles on the roadway. The potential sky glow as a result of the new light plan should consider darker colored building materials on the building and the ground surface to reduce any reflection. All fixtures should be motion controlled and automatically dimmable when there are no tasks performed near the lights. It is apparent that other fire stations are able to operate with appropriate lighting. Premier examples include Flagstaff, Arizona and Station 35 Burlingame, CA.

We believe these guidelines will result in a night environment that will not interfere with the good health and safety of the neighbors, the site fire personnel, and the wildlife of the surrounding area. If any planning reasons arise to not support what we request, SMC Planning should give a variance to benefit the community since several variances were already given to benefit the fire district.

EXHAUST/VENTILATION SYSTEM

No information has been provided on the size, decibel level, or the planned use of the new exhaust/ventilation system. Current exhaust of the bay exits the building externally from the top of the building 1 story high.

a. What will the new exhaust system consist of?

b. What will be the location and elevation of the proposed system because the location of the current exhaust system potentially will move from the center of the property to the more populated portion of the neighborhood at the South end of the property. How will the exhaust be kept from going into the neighboring homes?

c. When will the exhaust system be in operation and what length of time will it run?

d. What decibel does it run at?

e. If the exhaust system is placed on the roof of the new Bay it has the potential to obstruct Ocean views. How will you mitigate this?

Historically, the existing ventilation system has been extremely noisy and runs 15 minutes every time a fire truck leaves the station garage and runs the same 15 minutes when it returns. Some neighbors surrounding the fire station are awakened at night by the noise. The system also spews oil droplets that cover the windows of two of the neighbors directly east of the fire station and are difficult to remove.

One potential top solution is offered by Plymovent which makes novel solutions for fire stations which uses “grabbers” that are on the end of hoses that extend to and are connected to the roof motor that only take seconds to hook and unhook by the firemen when they depart or return to the fire station. If this solution is adopted, then the very best noise mufflers should be incorporated, as well as diesel oil exhaust filters before exhausting it into the neighborhood from the roof.

GENERATOR and FUEL STORAGE

No information has been provided on the size, decibel level, or the generator use outside of power failures. Please provide. The generator runs continually when there is an electrical power outage. It is a constant sound at the same frequency without varying for electrical load. A battery backup system should be incorporated for the purpose of reducing short term power outages causing the generator to run. There is concern with the proximity of the exhaust from the generator close to bedroom windows.

Page 10 of Proposed plans show the relocation of the fuel storage and generator from the north end of the property to the south end where the greatest number of houses next to the fire house property reside. The proposed generator and fuel storage are in the path of where fire trucks need to turn in order to enter the bay of the drive thru feature of the firehouse. Any mechanical or human failure of this precarious turn can result in hazards to the surrounding properties.

a. What precautions are being taken to safeguard home owners nearby?
b. How often will the generator run outside of power outages, ie maintenance and testing and for what period of time?
c. What is the decibel level?
d. How will you monitor fumes emitted by the generator and fuel storage tanks? Is fuel storage for the generator only?
e. How do you ensure that carcinogenic diesel fumes will not enter the homes of the nearby neighbors? (Most of whom do not have air conditioning and ventilate their homes with open windows)
f. Have alternative locations on the property been explored for the generator and fuel storage?
g. Have alternative generators, such as solar batteries, been explored?

Please provide a plan to address potential impedance of Firetrucks exiting or entering the neighborhood during calls due to additional cars parked in the neighborhood and traffic during commute hours the building of Cypress Point will cause.

During construction what precautions will be put in place to keep hazards, such as asbestos from entering neighboring properties? Will sound barriers such as acoustic blankets be used

on fencing to reduce noise from construction? Can construction be limited to weekdays to give neighbors respite from noise?

We expect that this station will adhere to all County and Coastal building standards and regulations, including complying with the S-17 zoning standards, a building height limit of 28 feet, floor area 6,200 sq ft and 20 ft setbacks need to be followed without variance.

Most of the concerns expressed stem from the drive thru feature design and the overall size of the project which has a proposed gross square footage of 10,400 square feet.

Sincerely,

MidCoast Community Council

s/ Gus Mattammal, Chair