

Supervisors approve controversial Stanford Weekend Acres project following revisions

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Despite continued objections from Stanford Weekend Acres residents, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors approved a developer's revised plans Tuesday to subdivide a Bishop Lane lot and build two homes.

The board denied a similar project from Ramin Shahidi in November because the homes envisioned for 21 Bishop Lane were deemed too large and out of character with the rural community near Menlo Park. Supervisors also decided at the time to adopt interim zoning rules to bring order to the largely unregulated area and begin crafting a set of permanent guidelines for development.

Shahidi reworked his plans to comply with the interim rules, said his attorney, Ash Pirayou. The home on the front lot would be 2,650 square feet, 400 square feet less than first proposed, and the dwelling on the second, flag-shaped lot would be 2,000 square feet, 200 square feet less than first proposed. Both structures would be limited to 28 feet in height.

"Today, there are no doubts about the standards that would apply," said Pirayou, referring to the board's concerns last fall over the possibility of three-story homes topping out at 36 feet.

Supervisors agreed the revised plans were much better and voted 5-0 to grant Shahidi the subdivision and variance he needs to build the homes.

"I think we have a proposal that is superior," said Supervisor Dave Pine. "What we will see on that property is an improvement to what we see there today."

Shahidi

also received clearance to build an access lane to the rear lot that is 15 feet wide instead of the required 20, as well as permission to build the home on the front lot eight feet closer to Bishop Lane than typically allowed.

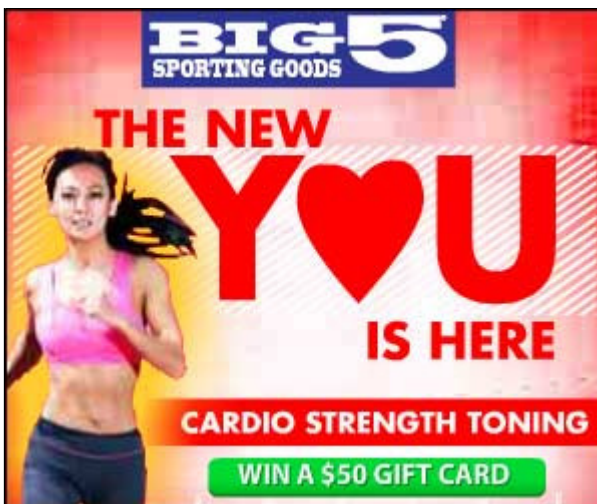
Two dwellings currently occupy the 12,504-square-foot lot adjacent to San Francisquito Creek. As a condition of approval, Shahidi must remove the 1,150-square-foot rear home that is encroaching on the waterway and posing a threat to downstream residents, county officials said.

Without the subdivision, Shahidi would still be allowed under the interim rules to build a 3,601-square-foot home and wouldn't have to demolish the rear dwelling, according to Jim Eggemeyer, the county's director of community development.

Shahidi's neighbors disagreed that the revised plans were an improvement and argued that the board's approval would lead to sweeping changes throughout Stanford Weekend Acres.

"Approving this subdivision is really a tipping point for this neighborhood," said Chad Kinzelberg, who lives across the road from 21 Bishop Lane. "It really will set a precedent."

Margaret Williams, a resident of nearby Sneckner Court, said in a letter to Board President Adrienne Tissier that such projects are leading people to move out of the quirky neighborhood.



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"People are scared of the declining value of our major asset -- our homes -- and the increasingly negative -- and accurate -- perception of (Stanford Weekend Acres) as an ungoverned neighborhood in turmoil," Williams wrote.

Kinzelberg also took aim at the exception for the access lane, which includes a 5-foot easement on the front lot. He said the current 29-foot-wide turnaround isn't big enough for fire engines.

"It is impossible for an emergency vehicle to access that rear lot," Kinzelberg said.

Pirayou countered that the new plans had been checked and approved by county fire officials.

"Our proposal enhances public safety and emergency access," Pirayou said.

Supervisor Pine acknowledged the frustration of residents over the board's support for the revised project, but said their efforts had kick-started an important effort to bring order to the community.

"I would humbly suggest," Pine said, "the neighbors should feel they accomplished a lot."

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