



File #: 20-0806, Version: 1

REPORT TO THE ZONING ADMINISTRATOR

SUBJECT

Proposed Project:

VARIANCE: to allow the replacement of an electrical panel board and add additional equipment to be located between the street and face of the building.

Location: 623 W. Fremont Ave. (APN: 202-06-001)

File #: 2020-7250

Zoning: R-1

Applicant / Owner: California Water Company

Environmental Review: A Class 3 exemption relieves this project from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provisions.

Project Planner: Cindy Hom, (408) 730-7411, chom@sunnyvale.ca.gov

BACKGROUND

The site operates as a pump station for California Water Service, which is a private water system operator. The facility consists of one 50,000-gallon tank, one well pump, and one booster pump and multiple accessory structures for equipment and storage. The existing electrical panelboard that supplies power to the pumps was installed in the 1960s. Due to the age of the electrical panelboard and foundation, they are beginning to fail and need to be replaced.

Description of Proposed Project

The proposed project consists of the demolition of the existing electrical panelboard and installation a new electrical panelboard and PG&E meter that will be mounted on a new foundation as well as additional equipment to help control and monitor the well and pump. The project requires a Variance to deviate from SMC 19.38.020, which prohibits equipment being located between the street and face of the building. See Attachment 1 for a map of the vicinity and mailing area for notices and Attachment 2 for the Data Table of the project.

Previous Actions on the Site

In August 2003, the Planning Commission approved Use Permit 2003-0457 that allowed outdoor maintenance/storage yard to an existing water pump station.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A Class 3 Categorical Exemption (New Construction or Conversion of small structures) relieves this project from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provisions.

DISCUSSION

Site Layout

The proposed project site is located on a 0.75 acre site and is bounded by the Fremont Union High

School District offices to the east, single family homes to the north, a childcare center and church to the west, and Fremont Avenue and single-family homes to the south. Access to the site is provided by three driveways located along Fremont Avenue. The driveway entrances are gated and restricted to employee access only.

The existing tank and pumps are located in the middle of the site. Small accessory structures for storage and equipment are located on the southwest portion of the property and along the Fremont Avenue frontage. An open, paved surface yard is located on the eastern portion of the lot. The facility is fully enclosed by an 8-foot tall chain-link fence that is screened by Oleander shrubs and various mature trees.

The existing electrical panel proposed for demolition is currently located in between the tank and booster pump shelter. The new electrical panelboard will be installed in a different location that is closer to the Fremont Avenue frontage and existing accessory structures. The proposed panelboard measures 12 ½ - feet long, 7 ½ - feet tall and 2 ½ - feet in width. A new hydraulic enclosure measuring 3-feet tall and 2 ½ - feet wide will be added to the left side of the new electrical panelboard. A new PG&E meter is proposed behind the existing PG&E vault and transformer that are located north of the middle driveway. The new PG&E meter measures 5-feet long, 7 ½-feet tall and 2-feet and 3-inches in width. All of the proposed equipment will still be screened by the existing fence and landscaping screen.

Development Standards

The proposed panelboard and associated equipment comply with the R-1 development standards in terms of setbacks, height, landscaping, floor area ratio and lot coverage. The proposed electrical equipment will be setback substantially from abutting property lines and below the height limit. Moreover, the proposed electrical equipment does not result in any loss of trees or landscaping and does not exceed lot coverage or generate floor area or additional parking.

A Variance would be required to allow the proposed electrical panelboard and associated equipment to be located between the face of the building and street. Staff finds that the requested variance is reasonable due to the unique use of the site and negligible visual impacts to the adjacent neighbors. See Attachment 3 for required Variance findings.

Noise

Noise was previously analyzed under the Negative Declaration for Use Permit 2003-0457 for the service yard. Staff does not anticipate a change in the noise levels since the project is a removal and replacement of electrical panelboard and associated equipment. However, staff recommends a condition of approval to provide noise assessment to ensure that the noise levels comply with the City's noise standards prior to building permit issuance. (Recommended as Condition No. PS-1)

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACTS/COMPATIBILITY:

The proposed electrical panel and associated equipment are intended to improve operations and essential water service. The project is not expected to have a detrimental visual impact on the surrounding properties and will be adequately screened from street view through the existing landscaping buffer and tree plantings.

PUBLIC CONTACT

48 notices were sent to surrounding property owners and residents adjacent to the subject site in addition to standard noticing practices, including advertisement in the Sunnyvale Sun Newspaper and on-site posting. Staff received one public comment. The comment expressed concern about potential noise.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Approve the Variance Permit with recommended Conditions in Attachment 4.
2. Approve the Variance Permit with modifications.
3. Deny the Variance Permit and direct staff with changes.

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1. Approve the Variance Permit with recommended Conditions in Attachment 4.

Prepared by: Cindy Hom, Associate Planner

Reviewed by: Shaunn Mendrin, Principal Planner

Approved by: Momo Ishijima, Senior Planner

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity and Noticing Radius Map
2. Project Data Table
3. Recommended Findings
4. Recommended Conditions of Approval
5. Site and Architectural Plans
6. Comment letter