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Cc: [Council, City](#)
Subject: ARB Appointments - Monday, December 13, 2021 SPECIAL ORDERS OF THE DAY Item #3
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Mayor DuBois, Vice-Mayor Burt, and Members of the Council:

I'll get right to the point. After following the interviews for ARB I do not believe you have enough properly qualified candidates to fill all the open seats. I respectfully recommend you defer the appointment of candidates and reopen recruitment in the hopes of a more qualified pool.

I hope you all know that I am an advocate for the Architectural Review process in Palo Alto. As an Architect who has been responsible for leading some of the larger and more complex projects recently built, I see the benefit of analysis and critique which is an integral part of navigating entitlements in our City. I believe the highly technical and inherently subjective discussion which occurs as part of the ARB process results in a clearly exhibited project evolution that is positive.

I have been a Licensed Architect for more than 30 years and have worked on a range of project types spanning residential, multi-family, senior living, education, medical, office, research and development, community service, hospitality, and restaurants. I have been responsible for leading entitlements for many projects which required ARB interaction including the Taube-Koret Campus for Jewish Life (JCC), the Marriott Hotels on San Antonio Road, the ArtX (Analog) Hotel on El Camino, and numerous others.

I am proud to have been selected to serve both as a Member and Chair of the ARB between 2012 and 2015. I believe that was in no small part a result of the experience and education that is part of my background. As a single-person firm, out of a concern for conflict-of-interest, I elected to resign my position but not before I had gained a clear understanding of the workings and complexity from the Board side of the process. Every 2 weeks I received a packet with a detailed staff report along with a set of drawings for anywhere from 1 to 5 projects. It's fair to say that while applicants spend hundreds of hours developing the information, as a Board member I only had days to gain an understanding of all the materials in preparation for a hearing. It was my responsibility to fully grasp the project scope, review what was often dozens of sheets of plans, elevations, sections, details, photometric reports, landscape layouts and plant lists, civil site plan sheets with drainage, bio-swales, and utilities, Green Building conformance, Energy compliance, and material samples. These are not simple documents and while a part of the process is to evaluate aspects of the project aesthetics, the review must consider all the technical, zoning, and code requirements for every project. Fire and life-safety issues affect design. Material installation affects design. Accessibility requirements affect design. Having facility with all these elements is critical to being a capable reviewer. In my opinion, most of the applicants you have been presented with have not had the education or opportunity necessary to develop the experience that is required to capably review the projects that are in the ARB purview.

I recognize that our Municipal Code defines that the Council appoints an "Architectural Review Board consisting of five persons...and at least three of whom shall be architects, landscape architects, building designers or other design professionals." During my time on the ARB I served with an attorney, Wynne Furth, and would use that as an example of a person who was limited in ability to critically comment on projects in the manner that was required. While I very much appreciated her attention to the zoning regulations, staff is capable of managing that aspect. Wynne was vocal about her aesthetic preferences and often spoke of practical matters relative to the design but regularly deferred technical and more complex aesthetic decisions to the design professionals on

the board. I know from that experience it makes the board less effective. Applicants deserve capable analysis and constructive critique and must be given direct and clear information about what is successful or elements needing more attention or further development.

I'll end by suggesting that a temporarily short board with skill is better than a full board without. I recognize that we do not want to discourage people from applying for these positions but as with any job, you must possess the necessary education, skill, and experience to be successful both individually and as part of a team. The decision to place a candidate on the ARB has decades of impact on our City as those individuals guide applicants toward our goal of quality buildings. I hope you will carefully consider the impact elevating an unqualified candidate to the ARB could have.

Thank you,

Randy

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