

Dear Marc--

After reading the resolution draft for the Coast Inn project that was published in the Staff Report, prior to the hearing on June 23, I feel compelled to let you know that there is a high level of outrage on the part of the residents around the Coast Inn, about the City's position on granting the variances for the Coast Inn sign and flags:

1. **As per 25.54.016, signs on rooftops are prohibited.**
2. In the 1970's, the ordinance was passed to prohibit signs on rooftops and building owners were required to remove all signs from their roofs, including the historic Hotel Laguna. *(see photo below)*
3. **There is currently not a single sign on a rooftop in Laguna Beach.**
4. The 3-sided sign and flags proposed for the Coast Inn are NOT historic. The proposed signs are based on a postcard in which an artist took "creative license" and illustrated a sign that never existed on the building. THERE ARE NO HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PROPOSED SIGN.
5. The proposed sign and flags have no purpose when it comes to the function or operation of the hotel. It is my understanding that the sign is designed to screen HVAC equipment on the roof. The use of a sign to hide roof equipment should not be approved, especially given that the applicant is re-designing the entire roof. Surely there must be another place for the equipment where it is not visible from any of the surrounding streets or the neighborhood above.
6. The applicant is NOT being deprived of any special privileges enjoyed by other properties in the vicinity, because no other property has a sign or flags (or a pool) on the roof, including the properties named in the resolution: Hotel La Casa del Camino, Heisler Building, and Hotel Laguna.
7. The proposed signs add an ENTIRE STORY to the existing hotel.
8. **Approval of this variance WILL be detrimental to the ocean views of neighboring properties and injurious to property values of residents in the vicinity.**
View Equity. The development, including its landscaping, shall be designed to protect existing views from neighboring properties without denying the subject property the reasonable opportunity to develop as described and illustrated in the city's "Design Guidelines."
9. The applicant's *Application for Variance*, which is on page 199 of the June 23, 2020 Staff Report, does not specifically mention a variance required for signs prohibited on a rooftop, as per 25.54.016.
10. The sign was never specifically discussed at any of the Planning Commission hearings, nor were all the facts relating to the signage ever presented at a PC or CC hearing. At DR hearings for ANY other projects in this city, signage is thoroughly vetted by the approving entity, down to the very last detail. Why has this not happened with the Coast Inn project?
11. **25.05.040 Design review. (13) Sign Quality. Signs shall be incorporated into the architecture of the structure and shall be made of high quality materials, be simple in design and be visually compatible with the surrounding physical environment in terms of color, scale and size. Use of natural materials in the construction of signs is encouraged.**
12. The sign and flag variances were combined with all the other variance requests requiring a height variance. The variance for the sign and flags should be considered separately because 25.54.016 prohibits rooftop signs.
13. The issues of variances and view equity were both brought up at the City Council sub-committee meeting which followed the 1st City Council meeting. Yet no action has been taken by the applicant or the City to address these issues.
14. The first Staff Report for this project, prior to the Dec 14, 2016 hearing, states: *"Further, staff is concerned that granting the requested variances for the rooftop deck will constitute a special privilege."*
15. The approval of ALL the requested variances sets a dangerous precedent in this city.

I have attached a memo from the LB City Attorney which describes the standards and finding requirements associated with variance applications. On page 2, it states: "*The procedures are created to bring the applicant to substantial parity with other owners in the zone in devoting his property to the **basic function** of that zone; they are not created to give the applicant a better position than that enjoyed by his neighbors in the zone.*"

Clearly, the size of the rooftop deck should be questioned, given that the proposed deck is completely out of scale with the other rooftop decks in the City. A pool on the roof of the hotel is not a "basic function" of the Coast Inn, and is not an amenity enjoyed by the other three properties referenced in the resolution. It should be denied. Neither is the sign nor the flags. The large turret only exists to enclose an elevator shaft for access to the pool which never existed on this historic hotel. Clearly, if these variances are approved by the City, the owner of the Coast Inn is in a better position to advertise his hotel over any other hotel owner or business in the entire City, and provide amenities not enjoyed by any other hotel in the city.

Also included in the attached memo: *If, based on the facts presented at the hearing on a variance application, **any** of the required findings cannot be made, the application must be denied.*

I sincerely hope you will take the above points into consideration if/when a new resolution is drafted. The standards for granting the Coast Inn variances clearly cannot be met. These variances must not be supported by the City.

Warm regards,
Terry Meurer