



Northridge East Neighborhood Council

Wednesday, October 17, 2007 7:00pm to 8:30pm
Andasol Elementary School Auditorium 10126 Encino Ave.

Call to Order: 7:10pm

Judith Nutter called the roll and Kelly Lord led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendance: Yeprem Davoodian, Peter McCarty, Harold Ellison, Travis Daniels, Sarah Adelman, Barry Greenberg, Steve Patel, Don Dwiggins, Kelly Lord, Alice McCain, Lucille Meehan, Judith Nutter, Thomas Baker, Ray Calnan, Caroline Moore.

Absent: None. Tom Baker noted that he had an excused absence last month.

Minutes: Kelly Lord moved to approve the September minutes. Don Dwiggins seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.

Public Comments

Kelly welcomed the city officials present, and noted that there was a full house on account of the proposed White Oak project.

John Bwarie from Council Member Greig Smith's office:

Invited the assembly to check out their website -- www.cd12.org -- which lists all upcoming community events. The first community cleanup of this school year will be on November 3rd, at Northridge Park at 8:30am. Also, he noted that of the 15 city council members, Greig Smith represents the north valley. Their efforts are intended to create more jobs and reduce taxes. This is the Jobs Business Growth & Tax Reform Committee. Futher, an environmental policy is being worked on -- called the Renew LA Plan -- which will eliminate dependency on landfills, reduce dumping at Sunshine Canyon landfill, and establish an alternative fuel technology. They are ahead on their scheduled 20-year plan, will be building a plant in the next 5 years.

Tom Baker asked: which sites have been determined for community cleanup? John responded: the Wilkins Senior Center renovation, Limekiln Canyon graffiti elimination, the Balboa and Granada Hills off-ramps, and 2 locations in Chatsworth -- basically, our local adjacent areas.

Kristopher Daams, State Senator Alex Padilla's representative:

Our efforts cover Sylmar, Pacoima, the San Fernando Valley, all the way to Canoga Park, and half of Northridge is included -- we can't deal with street resurfacing and land use, but we can help with freeways, off ramp debris, and DMV. In other words, all matters related to the state. I will be here all meeting and will be happy to meet with everyone.

Kelly Lord: we want to deal with the agenda first, starting with Item #3 on the published agenda.

AGENDA:

3. Request by Neighborhood Council Congress to pay for annual meeting (possible action \$500).

Melvin Canas, project coordinator with the city of LA, for neighborhood empowerment: The Congress of Neighborhoods is coming up on Saturday Oct 27th. Most neighborhood council representatives will contribute to the budget, which is \$75000. The city provides 60%, and the rest comes from private company donations and neighborhood councils -- we ask each council for \$500 but that is up to you. Various councils have pledged more. The Congress is a bi-annual event, meant to bring together council members and stakeholders in networking events. The October 27th meeting will take place from 7:30am-12:30pm; breakfast will be provided. See www.Lacityneighborhoods.com for more details.

Tom Baker: Is this meeting open to the public? Melvin Canas: Yes, it's a free event. All are welcome.

Barry Greenberg: Why are we paying for this? Melvin Canas: This is our eighth Congress. Previously, the department has paid for the event, but this year, because of department criticism, the budget for this event was cut. Also, this is the 1st congress done in concert with neighborhood councils, the 1st one in partnership. We expect the councils to do more of the organization in the future.

Steve Patel: Is this congress a once a year event? Melvin Canas: Twice, but one will be city-wide, the other more regional.

Steve Patel: Which one are you requesting funds for? Melvin Canas: The city-wide one.

Steve Patel made a motion to support the neighborhood congress with a donation of \$500.

Peter McCarty seconded the motion.

Before the vote, Kelly Lord asked the board for any questions or discussion:

Tom Baker: The valley is networking very well currently. How will this benefit our current alliance of valley neighborhood councils (which we don't pay for)?

Melvin Canas: I'm not familiar with the valley alliance, though I do know about last week's meeting. This congress is on a much larger scale, and lasts longer, also has 8-10 workshops. The convention center, where the event is held, is charging for it to be held there. The valley alliance is independent of the department I represent.

Tom Baker: Do any of the board members present have time to attend this Congress?

Don Dwiggins: I am considering attending those workshops concerning land use and transportation -- those issues we are involved with. There may be valuable contacts to be made. Steve Patel: I may attend as well.

Peter McCarty invited the audience interested in land use matters to attend also.

Kelly Lord then asked for a vote on the motion. Barry Greenberg opposed the motion.

Every other board member voted for the motion. The motion passed.

1. Jon S. Perica, Continue to sell Beer/Wine at Arco Station located 18473 Devonshire St., Northridge (Action Required). Jon will also present a proposed Beer/Wine Application for the Union 76 filling Station located at 18050 Nordhoff St., Northridge.

Jon Perica:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. I have been the zoning administrator for the city planning department, for 35 years now. I handled this case in 2003, concerning the station at Reseda, where I personally buy my own gas. I initially gave a 3-year grant for the submitted request to sell beer and wine with 17 conditions, and now the tenant has refiled. I have consulted Officer Mike Duarte of Devonshire Vice and his team, who have been investigating underage beer and wine purchases in the area -- the station in question has a very good identification (ID) checking system. Since the 3-year grant expired, the applicant wants to refile now. There are no outwardly conspicuous signs about alcohol being sold there, as per conditions. I appreciate Tom Baker's assistance on this issue.

A head's up on a beer & wine case to be filed at the end of this year: A Union 76 station will be replacing the auto repair location at Nordhoff and Lindley. It's a low-crime location. We propose sales limitations similar to the Arco: A one-year trial period to allow the applicant to prove that he runs a responsible operation. We are sensitive to the impact on Cal State Northridge -- I have contacted them, and the university does not consider this an unreasonable request; there is no initial opposition. I will leave the proposed conditions for Nordhoff & Lindley station, and the university's communication to me, here with the board.

In response to Tom Baker's query: 10 days before the public hearing, for which notices are sent to residents within 600 feet, this all will be announced.

Tom Baker: How do you receive feedback? Jon Perica: My email address is the best way to reach me. I have left my card.

Steve Patel: Do we know the history of the applicant? Jon Perica: He has owned this site for 3 years, and has another station in Mission Hills and one on Pacific Coast Highway -- both are responsible operations. I suggested that he volunteer his information at the hearing. He promises thorough ID checks for anyone under 30, and accepts the one-year trial period. He will stand behind those promises.

Peter McCarty: Have the police noticed any increase or decrease in the amount of drunk-driving incidents? Is that statistic being kept? Jon Perica: That information is available from the ATF: These two areas have significantly lower crime rates than the rest of the city. Some trend evaluation can be researched, but I can give this general comment today.

Audience: Have there been any ATF cases against that facility? Jon Perica: In the case of the ARCO station, there are three years worth of licenses, which is indicative of how carefully alcohol has been sold there.

Audience: What about the high school that is now on that college campus? Jon Perica: Distance and consumer identity are always considered. With an ID check done under the police Star System (which is specifically trained), that can be regulated.

Audience: Without advertising, do we know their annual sales? Jon Perica: I can't tell you that. I can say that 7-11 has to make beer and wine available, in order for anyone to get that franchise.

Audience (Dorothy): Why does the city feel it appropriate to have alcohol available at gas stations? Jon Perica: Probably as a convenience to some people. Maybe not us. It's just how the market is going.

Audience: On Devonshire, can they sell individual bottles and cans? Jon Perica: Yes.

Audience: At Lindley? Jon Perica: No. Audience: Every 7-11 does this though. Jon

Perica: The applicant is aware. There won't be a 7-11 franchise there if he can't sell beer and wine. Audience: Will there be a condition where he can't sell individuals? Jon

Perica: If the city of LA allows it, he can sell it -- ATF cannot override the city's verdict.

Audience: What prevents minors from paying adults to pick up alcohol for them? Jon

Perica: Sales to minors violate the terms of conditional use and will result in the grant being taken away.

Audience: I believe that enough alcohol is being sold already, because I clean it up myself every day. Just commenting. (*Applause from the assembly.*)

Audience: I support convenience, but I'm not aware of crimes and accidents done under the use of Kleenex. Jon Perica: Noted.

In response to a chorus of audience complaints about the overabundance of local stores selling alcohol, Jon maintained that the city of LA looks at existing licenses and bases it on trends. There is not an over concentration of these locations, according to the official stats.

Barry Greenberg: Is there an action on this?

Kelly Lord: No, Jon is just informing us.

2. Tom Stemnock, 9800 White Oak Ave. Developer to present project (possible Board Action).

Tom Stemnock, Land Use Planner:

For the record, I am being compensated for being here tonight. I am presenting a proposal to develop a project midway between Lassen and Superior. (*Tom presents a map.*) This is a copy of the radius map of the area. An amendment for the zone change was filed in December 2006. When that lapsed, we filed an environmental assessment form, which is taken over by the city, in order to decide the appropriate environmental clearance.

I was here before the board in April 2007, noting that we expected a public hearing in July. We continued to appeal to the planning department, but the public hearing announcement ultimately came suddenly. The hearing will be held at 10am this Monday October 22nd at Marvin Braude Constituent Service Center in Van Nuys. The general public is invited to attend and speak. A staff member of the planning department will conduct the meeting and receive comments and objections. When that is done, the hearing administrator will submit a written report to the city planning committee who usually meet monthly. They will meet again on December 29th. They make a recommendation -- not a decision -- and then forward that recommendation to the city council. February or March will likely be when we hear the decision. The full city

council will rule to either approve, deny, or modify the request. We are asking for a general amendment to the plan, and for a zone change. There are 94000 square feet on the lots -- we want to change the plan designation to a low-one. (*Further reference to the map:*) The yellow on map is called an ad area. When an application is filed for a general plan amendment, the applicant is asked to provide suggestions of surrounding areas that might be considered for the zoning expansion. The committee's policy is to not approve general amendments.

Audience: What will this do for the residents of the community? Tom Stemnock: We want to resubdivide those lots into 36 family homes -- small lot subdivisions, it's called. It will be a gated community, with two private driveway entrances, 2 parking spaces per home, and a recreation area for children. Houses are designed to display their fronts on White Oak Avenue. We provided a traffic study to the Department of Transportation, who ruled that there will be no impact on traffic. (*Audience loudly revolts in disbelief.*) Kelly Lord called for decorum and asked Tom: What meeting order would you prefer? Tom Stemnock: I would like to do my presentation. Kelly Lord: Please continue, and then we will open the floor.

Tom Stemnock then called up Ken Stockton, the project architect, to describe the project's design detail:

These will be two story homes, at a maximum of 28 feet in height, coming in 2-3 arch styles. They are 4-bedroom houses with a den or 5th bedroom. 6 of the homes face White Oak. The whole project is about 330 feet wide. All houses have front yards. There will be an average of a house every 50 feet, with some rear yards adjacent to property line. The two-driveway concept is intended to split the property -- there is a pedestrian path running through the site, but not a motorist one. We followed design commission's guidelines in designing this project -- you can see the property, for example. Homes are 2000 sq. ft. at the largest, with two-car garages. There is guest parking throughout, and a children's park also. In response to an audience question about similar projects elsewhere: I can only address this property. The house spacing varies. The houses are staggered. None are abutting each other. These are typically single-family-looking, with side yards, and with windows facing in all directions. The site design is varied, but generally there is one house for every 2600 sq. ft. of land, on the net land left after dedication. I only have the renderings here today, I will happily send the floor plans to the neighborhood council if asked. These renderings are accurate.

Audience: How close are these homes to the existing homes on Shoshone? Ken: Anywhere from 7-18 feet. There is no fence or block wall on White Oak. On the back there will be one, at a minimum of 6 feet. It will be no more than 28 feet to top of the roof, like a typical two-story single-family house, with a rear yard and a backyard. The backyards will be 18 feet deep. Yes, neighbors could look into the yards behind them, barring tree planting or so on, but this is no more a loss of privacy than any other development.

Audience Question: I live at 9627 White Oak and have been affected by one of your previous developments on Halsted. We only get 5 or 6 days to come up to speed -- a professional land planner couldn't do that -- how could you expect us laymen to ask the right questions? How about delaying the public hearing on Monday? This project will affect many lives for many years to come.

Tom Stemnock: I had meant to apologize at the outset, because we ourselves were

surprised by the suddenness of this notice. But I can't stop the meeting. We can have further dialogue over the next two months, before we get to the commission. We have not yet filed the tentative track map -- they will not rule on that until the city has approved development. Audience Question: Can you ask the city to cancel the meeting?

Tom Stemnock: I can ask, but they won't do it.

Audience Comment: I recently moved to Northridge -- the development on Halsted -- and I'm very happy with the development.

Audience Question: What was the date of the notice? Why didn't we get it? Tom

Stemnock: Any resident or property owner within a 500 foot radius receives a copy.

Audience Question: What is happening to the present owners? Tom Stemnock: The four properties are owned by four separate individuals. The developer purchased all four properties, all four owners signed the applications, and the properties are in escrow until approval. But I don't know if the owners live there.

Audience Comment: The notice was mailed September 26, for the record.

Audience Question: Can you explain further what it means to widen White Oak Avenue?

Tom Stemnock: Only if these properties are resubdivided can the city re-obtain the right of way. I've asked the bureau of engineering, and they can't tell me how a public roadway was built on private property. That's why the dedication is wide, because this area was originally designated as a roadway. The street will continue to be 28 feet wide as long as that continues.

Audience Comment: I am affected by this development and see no way how traffic will not be affected. It's a traffic situation already. I feel abused by the development; it doesn't consider our lifestyle, and because of the way it was handled, I can't help but be against it.

Tom Stemnock: The traffic study, based on the total ad area for 173 homes, shows that there will be no change in the Lassen/ White Oak intersection. This study was done by Archer in 2007.

Audience Question: Who is the developer? Tom Stemnock: Grader Construction, led by

Ted Stein. Audience Question: What is the selling price of these homes? Tom

Stemnock: I can't answer that, but a similar project on Hayvenhurst (south of Nordhoff) consisting of 48 homes, was approved in 1999. That one sold units in 2001 in the \$280K-290K rate. All sold quickly, and 5 were resold recently in the \$650-660K range. Another project on the northeast corner of Roscoe sold at prices in the \$350-390K range, and they resold 6 in past 18 months, at the \$620-690K range.

Audience Question: That traffic study: at what day of the week and what time of the day was it done? Tom Stemnock: It is normally done for a full week, every hour. I can't tell you specifics without looking at the study again.

Audience Comment: This developer has worked well with the neighbors before. You can't stop development.

Audience Question: Financially, how much money has been spent by this developer to commissioners and officials to get this through? Tom: None.

Audience Question (Pat): Once development is completed, the adjacent properties can be developed. Will that be done? Tom Stemnock: They will still have to change the zone.

Audience Question: I need clarification on the street widening. Traffic has to stop for me to pull into my driveway. Will the city rezone my property? Tom Stemnock: Depends.

Are you part of the ad area? Audience: Yes, the corner of Superior and White Oak, since

1999. Tom Stemnock: The commission may decide to change the general plan designation if you live within the ad area. They don't change the zoning; they change the general plan. You're not required to do anything, to change your property.

Ray Calnan: You only apply for a zone change if you want to change your property. If you sell your property and the buyer wants to change it, they would have to file.

Kelly Lord then called on the board members for questions and comments:

Tom Baker: I encourage everyone to attend the public hearing on October 22nd. (To Tom Stemnock:) The area at Nordhoff and Hayvenhurst does not compare at all to this area in question, and it's not suitable to compare them. The Nordhoff and Hayvenhurst area is surrounded by extremely busy streets, and surrounding lots, that are approximately 7500 square feet. The area we are discussing is very rural and has surrounding lots that start at 16,000 square feet and go to much larger than that size. What I would like to know is: What is the footprint of each house? How much home, driveway, and so on, is on that line?

Tom Stemnock: Each property is dedicated at 32 feet. The street widening is by roughly 8 feet. It's currently 14 feet I think. There is a gutter -- no sidewalk. The footprint of each house is 1200 square feet.

Barry Greenberg: That street floods at every rain. The mud will continue into that street, and there are no sewers. Will you put in sewers? Tom Stemnock: You mean storm drains, and there are none on White Oak. We're not adding any run-off to what's already there. There is a shallow gutter that will continue to be maintained. We are required to not increase the amount of water maintenance elements along the road.

Yeprem Davoodian: Can you clarify the zoning of surrounding community? Tom Stemnock: (*Referring to map:*) The white area here is zoning, the yellow is ad area. The zoning varies from highest density, at Zelzah. All along Lassen are RD3 zoning areas. The White Oak lots are going to be RD1, changed to RD2. They will be 5000 sq. ft. -- one dwelling unit for every 2600 feet of housing area. Everything to east is zoned RA. Yeprem Davoodian: Parking issue -- how many spots per home? Tom: There will be 2 parking spaces per home, regardless of number of bedrooms.

Steve Patel (to assembly): If you don't like this -- most of our homes are RA1 zones -- we need to make an amendment to the general plan, and a change to the zoning. The city decides on that. We don't complain to these guys here (Tom and Ken); we need to appeal to the city at the hearing on October 22nd. Most of the questions asked today are only relevant once the development is approved.

Kelly Lord: Tom and Ken, we saw you in April, without any drawings. We would have appreciated more than one drawing. All we have now is words. If you present the community with a plan, we can all work together and everyone wins. Our ultimate concern here is: What will our community look like in ten years? Thank you for coming tonight.

Public Speaker Cards:

Stakeholders were then invited to voice their support for, or disapproval of, the project:

Michael Constantine (against):

I've lived here 30 years. Lassen and Zelzah used to have a lot of small farms, and back then there were objections to incoming apartments. The proposed units will grow in number still, and create more traffic problems. We need to stop this project. There is very little low-density housing in this area, and I think we need to maintain that.

Pat Fitzgerald (against):

The current residents will have their property devalued by the insertion of this development. The proposed expansion of White Oak will lead to puddling during rainfall. Using the map, let me show you how traffic will become a chokehold in certain areas. Also the development has 16 guest parking spaces, too many. White Oak cannot support that kind of parking.

Terry Guy (for; owner selling property being discussed, signed application for rezone):

We didn't buy our property with this in mind. There used to be horses in the area. When we purchased our property, thirty years ago, we didn't expect a developer to come in. Our property is beautifully maintained. But at our age, we have to downsize. This is actually to our benefit, and that's why we signed up.

Howard Smith (against):

I lived here 21 years, raised my daughter here. I don't blame Terry for selling. But we're talking about the impact on our lifestyle and that of our kids. We've worked so hard for that, and it's being taken away. The city council voting on the zone change worries me -- it will probably increase the property taxes. We have to dedicate our energy on the things that matter; we can't get emotional. We as a group as an entity can preserve our homes if we do it from a logical point of view.

Joanne Lashbrook (for; owner selling property discussed, signed application for rezone):

We live at 9750 White Oak, since 1973. Our daughters rode horses here. This area needs improvement and renovation. Old homes are showing their age. We can no longer maintain our property, therefore it is time to downsize.

Lorraine Anashment (against):

I am concerned about this project. I am a property owner of 20 years and a real estate agent who sells property here. We bought here for the rural feeling. There are no sidewalks -- people have to walk in the streets. The first development I lived in was Bianca and Labrador. Beautifying the neighborhood is as important as what we do inside our homes. When our daughter started driving, we petitioned for a third-car garage, so there wouldn't be more cars parked on the streets. We were turned down because the city said it didn't make the neighborhood look good. My design was strong and my neighbors agreed with the plan. In our second home on Superior, by Shoshone, fast-moving cars

are disruptive in the middle of the night -- there is traffic. People are parking on our streets. There is a traffic and a parking problem. The value of our property is going to change. Please go to the meeting Monday.

Fay Milton: Could you please repeat the email address of Tom Glick?

Ray Calnan: tom.glick@lacity.org He is the staff contact with the planning department.

Carl Melnick (for; owner selling property being discussed, signed application for rezone):
I'm also a property owner. From Zelzah to our property at 9800 White Oak, from a Google map, I could see that this is a higher density property. We have problems as renters -- the realtors strain us, there are big parties, porn shoots. The properties are run down and weeded over. I think that a property like this will add to the community's beauty.

Judy Greenberg (against):

I've lived on Kinsey St since 1995. It was sold as a rural area, but has been used as a thoroughfare. There isn't street cleaning. Students mess up the area, and that will only increase. Faculty staff housing and student housing will be built on Zelzah soon -- we have to factor that in when we consider traffic problems. The entire area, in truth. They already speed down Kinsey all night long. During spring break, they towed cars that the students left parked there.

Rosanne Earhart (against):

I have been a homeowner since 1961. I was the secretary of the Northridge Civic Association. We compromised with CSUN about housing. Now they're putting in more. The compromise was that the parking density would decrease as it got closer to this area. I am against changing that long-standing plan we fought hard for. We like large lots and can handle them. I have a copy of the original small lot ordinance -- this is not a multi-family residential zone, so this development should not even apply. That's why they are trying to rezone. Is the council going to take a stand?

Kelly Lord: Yes. Thank you very much.

Joel Lippman (against):

I moved to this area for the large lots and the scenery. I can't even believe they would change a planned community of low-density housing. The plan was implemented for good reason and should be maintained, and I implore the board to take that position.

Chris Block (against):

Longtime homeowners have spoken well -- my perspective is from one of less than two years. Large lots, low traffic, low density -- people flee Sherman Oaks and areas like that for neighborhoods of this kind of character. Please oppose this zoning change.

Audience Question: Will there be any carpooling to the meeting, any organized transportation?

Kelly Lord: Not on the behalf of NENC.

Audience members then traded contact information towards transportation plans.

Don Dwiggins:

Here is the address of the meeting for those planning to attend:

Marvin Braude Constituent Services Center

6262 Van Nuys Blvd.

Van Nuys, CA 91401

Phillip Anaya (against):

If Greig Smith is on board with this project, then stay away. I remember a similar situation that we had to take to court. Councilmen don't tell other councilmen what they can do in their own districts. You all need to get to Greig Smith before he makes up his mind. The developer has just completed a project at my rear yard -- I believe he will work with the community, but he needs to do so on a community plan amendment. We can't prepare in four days for Monday -- it's ludicrous.

Kelly Lord: We will now discuss the action we will take on this:

Don Dwiggins submitted the motion:

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Draft Motion on the White Oak Project

By recommending the Add Area, the Planning Department is implicitly admitting that the proposed project is out of compliance with the Los Angeles General Plan and the Northridge Community Plan, and out of character with the neighborhood.

Rather than requiring the development to conform to the plans, however, the implied resolution to this discrepancy is to change the plan to accommodate the developer. No justification is given for this, other than "City Planning Commission policy to ensure General Plan consistency and compatibility."

This policy is not "smart growth", by any reasonable definition of the term. Rather, by acquiescing to the ad-hoc and piecemeal development driven by developers whose interests are narrow and short-term in nature, it's the kind of thinking and acting that got the city into the current crisis in the first place.

Therefore, I move that the Board vote to oppose the community plan amendment, and encourage the developer to submit a different development proposal that conforms to the current city plans and maintains the character of the neighborhood.

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Ray Calnan: We need to make sure that we are growing in a smart way; we need to give them some ideas, develop this in a way that we can contribute. I'm not necessarily for 36 homes, in fact I think it's too much, but we can't assume that the current 4 will stay forever.

Steve Patel: This is going to be an annual issue; we will face this more and more. Let's agree on an answer to take to the developer -- to say, 'this is what would work for us.' I love being in the valley and having elbow room, but I also accept that my elbow room

may change a little. I will be willing to compromise.

Don Dwiggins: I would like to respond to Ray, because it's separate from the motion but a good point. I propose that we start thinking towards the long-term: Identify and join with other neighborhood councils on citywide basis, respond to the planning department, and create a collective dialogue.

Kelly Lord then asked the board to voted on the motion. 12 board members voted in favor. 1 voted against. 2 were absent. The motion passed.

Board Member Reports

There were none made.

Future Agenda Items and other Calendar Events

Were not discussed.

Kelly Lord motioned to adjourn the meeting. Don Dwiggins seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned: 9:35p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jon Abrams, AppleOne, October 17, 2007