

Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council



Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council General Meeting

July 8, 2009

Approved by the Board
September 9, 2009

MINUTES

Call to Order

A duly noticed meeting of the Board of Directors of the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council ("GWNC") was held on Wednesday, July 8, 2009, at the Ebell of Los Angeles, 743 South Lucerne Blvd. President Charles Dougherty called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m.

Roll Call

The Secretary, Elizabeth Fuller, called the roll. Board of Directors members in attendance at the roll call were: Patti Carroll, Charles Dougherty, Elizabeth Fuller, Rudy Gintel, Frances McFall (alt. Alison Hannon), Margaret Hudson, Mike Genewick (alt. Alex Jones-Moreno), Martha Schuur, Owen Smith, Cindy Chvatal (alt. Jane Usher) and James Wolf. Alternate Director Patricia Lombard joined the meeting at 7:27 p.m., Alternate Director Charles D'Atri joined the meeting at 7:35 p.m., Director Moon Chung joined the meeting at 7:36 p.m., Director John Gresham joined the meeting at 7:41 p.m., and Director Jane Usher joined the meeting at 9:15 p.m. Directors Yigal Arens, Charles Bergson, Sam Cunningham, Jane Gilman, Clinton Oie and Russell Sherman were absent and not represented by an alternate.

The Secretary stated that a quorum was present as of 7:36 p.m.

Introductory Presentations

Kyle Fitzharris, from the Emergency Communications Network West, introduced his company's Code Red emergency communications system, a web-based emergency notification system. Director Margy Hudson noted that the City's Emergency Preparedness Ambassadors are trained to use a different emergency communications system and urged Mr. Fitzharris to work through that organization

[Alternate Director Patty Lombard joined the meeting at 7:27 p.m.]

Amanda Martin, field representative for Speaker of the Assembly Karen Bass,

introduced herself, provided information about the current budget crisis and state-issued IOUs and passed out a flyer on an upcoming Green Jobs symposium. She invited people to check, Ms. Bass' website and Facebook page for important updates on issues affecting our district.

Rebecca Bernal, field deputy for State Senator Curren D. Price, Jr., introduced herself, provided her contact information and invited people to call her if they have questions or problems she can help with.

[Alternate Director Charles D'Atri joined the meeting at 7:35 p.m.]

[Director Moon Chung joined the meeting at 7:36 p.m.]

Featured Presentation

Joe Esposito, Head Deputy, Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office, Major Narcotics Division, explained that the District Attorney's office used to prosecute "higher level" drug traffic and didn't really deal with marijuana issues...but the current frustration with illegal medical marijuana dispensaries has changed that. He said marijuana laws are easy to interpret in different ways and are difficult to understand, so it's been easy for enforcement agencies to move on to other issues when this one gets too frustrating. Also, as a result of the confusing laws, the D.A.'s office was losing most cases that did get to court, which made it even harder for prosecutors to tackle the problem.

According to Mr. Esposito, and contrary to popular belief, typical medical marijuana clients are between the ages of 18-28, do not have any major illnesses, and are most often prescribed the drug for soft tissue damage.

[Director John Gresham joined the meeting at 7:41 p.m.]

Mr. Esposito said the D.A.'s office began working on the dispensary issue in 2007, and prosecution is ramping up – the office has filed charges against three different dispensaries in the last week. They are also developing protocols for prosecution, which should help when going up against the small group of very smart, very well informed defense lawyers who tend to represent dispensaries.

According to Mr. Esposito, the D.A.'s office is also cooperating now with other law enforcement agencies, and all of them are starting to recognize the major issues involved in the problem and coming to agreement on how to combat it. He said, however, that educating judges will be a long process, especially since defense lawyers for the dispensaries tend to bring in their sickest patients to testify, even though they're not the most representative of that population.

Director Margy Hudson asked why medical marijuana can't be prescribed through standard pharmacies like other controlled drugs, and Mr. Esposito said that doctors and pharmacies are obligated to comply with all state and federal laws...and federal law

prohibits the distribution of marijuana. He cautioned people to remember that medical marijuana is legal in California, though, so law enforcement's job is not to eradicate dispensaries, but to make sure they're operating within the law.

Alternate Director Patty Lombard asked if it would help to legalize marijuana generally, but Mr. Esposito said his personal opinion is that while it would help generate tax revenues, the cost of the overall consequences would outweigh the benefits. He said, however, that people need to become more educated about this difficult issue, and discuss it further.

Stakeholder Dan Kegel said that he lives within walking distance of two or three dispensaries, and that he had a friend who died from cancer who could have benefited from marijuana during his illness. Even so, however, he feels there's too much violence around storefront dispensaries, worries for his family's safety, and hopes that dispensaries that aren't following the rules can be closed down. He agreed we have to have a fact- and science-based conversation about legalization, and that we also need to concentrate on public safety.

James O'Sullivan, president of the Miracle Mile Residential Association, said he's working with Scott McNeely, from the Pico Neighborhood Council, on some suggested guidelines for distribution, but it's a big process. He said he has learned that before the medical marijuana law was passed, Senator Dianne Feinstein pointed out big holes in the legislation, but the state took the easy way out by not creating a distribution system within the law.

Mr. O'Sullivan said that the City Attorney is working on a new control ordinance, which isn't bad, and that recent court cases have fleshed out some sticking points, like the definition of "primary caregiver," "collectives" and "cooperatives," and that dispensaries do need to be non-profit organizations. He said this information will be widely distributed soon.

GWNC President Charles Dougherty said he agrees with Mr. Kegel that a dialogue on legalization is necessary, but that legalization and dispensaries are two different things. He said the proliferation of dispensaries creates a public danger on two levels. First, most dispensaries operate on a cash basis, so the storefronts have large amounts of money and marijuana on hand and are not very secure. Second, as a parent of teenagers, he knows that many drug dealers in our parks are re-selling vials from medical marijuana dispensaries. Also, the varieties of marijuana sold tend to have "cute" names that appeal to kids. He said there's a lot that's wrong with the current situation and he agrees that the state has dropped the ball.

Finally, Mr. Dougherty thanked Mr. Esposito for his time, saying we don't want to see anyone's rights trampled in this fight, but that we do want to see the public interest protected.

Reading of the Minutes

The Secretary presented the Minutes of the previous meeting, which had been distributed to Directors by e-mail and posted on the Council's *greaterwilshire.org* web site. Additional copies were distributed at the meeting.

Alternate Director Patty Lombard moved that the minutes be approved as written. Director Owen Smith seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Elizabeth Fuller reported that the extreme budget cuts we were facing did not come to pass, and each neighborhood council has been given \$45,000 for the coming year, which is only 10% less than our previous budget of \$50,000 and is in line with other City cuts. She noted that DONE also now has a Neighborhood Purposes Grant program, which will allow us more freedom in providing money for neighborhood projects.

Ms. Fuller presented a proposed budget for the 2009-2010 fiscal year. Betty Wong Oyama, from DONE, suggested that we increase the amount allotted for election outreach from \$5,000 to at least \$10,000. Director John Gresham asked if DONE sends out the ballots for the election, and Ms. Fuller said yes, but that we have to pay for flyers, distribution, candidate forums and other related costs. She noted that we do have some "unassigned" money in the election category that we could move if we want to.

Alternate Director Patty Lombard asked how much we spent for outreach in our last election, and President Dougherty said that in the past Neighborhood Councils didn't directly pay for election costs, though we did spend money on outreach – probably about \$7,000.

Ms. Fuller and Director Margy Hudson said we could also move some money from the Community Improvement category if we need to. Ms. Lombard said it is nice to use Community Improvement money for general outreach and improvements to the community if we can, and that the amount of money we'd be taking away from that category seems like a lot.

Mr. Gresham said we don't have to decide now, and moved that we approve the budget as is, and move things around later if we decide we need to. Director Owen Smith seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Alternate Director Frances McFall asked if our next budget could be more specific, and said it didn't seem good to leave so much money "unassigned." Ms. Fuller explained that we do that intentionally to leave room for projects we don't know about yet, but which people bring to us throughout the year. Mr. Dougherty agreed saying there are many worthy projects that come up during the year, and we need to leave some room in the budget to support them.

President's Report

President Dougherty read the names of Directors and Alternates who have not yet completed DONE's required Ethics Training course: Jared Abrams, Charles D'Atri, Charles Bergson, Moon Chung, Sam Cunningham, John McIntyre, Jane Gilman, Michael Rosenberg, Rudy Gintel, Alison Hannon, Frances McFall, Margaret Swoma, Alex Jones-Moreno, Shar Penfold, Patricia Lombard, Russell Sherman, Tom Rubinson, Cindy Chvatal, James Wolf and Jennifer DeVore.

Director John Gresham pointed out that Mr. Rubinson recently ran for public office and probably took the training as part of that process. DONE representative Betty Wong Oyama said that if he did, he can provide his certificate number.

Ms. Oyama provided several other notes and updates from DONE:

- Thanks to our Secretary for submitting DONE's requested inventory list. The GWNC was one of only 12 Neighborhood Councils that have submitted lists so far.
- A request that we view the DONE-required Sexual Harrassment video that she provided at our last meeting. President Dougherty promised that it would be on our agenda for viewing at our September meeting.
- The new Neighborhood Purpose Grants may not be used for religious, private or charter schools. To make a grant, a community organization submits an application to the NC, the NC board reviews the application and, if they approve it, sends the application to DONE for its approval and funding. Alternate Director Charles D'Atri asked who made the decision to exclude charter schools from the grant program and Ms. Oyama said it was the City Attorney and DONE staff.
- The City Clerk will conduct the 2010 Neighborhood Council elections. That office will let us know our election date and will work with us to coordinate the event. President Dougherty asked that our assigned election date not be a Saturday, which would be a hardship to our large Orthodox Jewish population. Ms. Oyama said DONE can help with outreach, and asked anyone who has specific outreach ideas to contact her. Mr. Gresham asked about newspaper ads and Ms. Oyama said she's already looking into it.
- We need to choose two representatives for the City's October budget meeting.
- There's a planning meeting coming up for the next Community Congress event. The July 23 Congress theme is public safety.
- Those who do not take the required ethics training course may face

consequences such as not being able to participate in Board votes. President Dougherty promised to send out a reminder to all of our board members and alternates who have not yet taken the training. Ms. Oyama said she would send a reminder as well.

- Because of the City budget cuts, there will be layoffs and furloughs for City staff. Beginning July 10th, many employees will not work on the second and fourth Fridays of each month. These cuts will also affect our funding office – which will lose 10 positions. This means DONE will be reorganizing and Ms. Oyama may no longer be our coordinator. Mr. Dougherty said he hopes that she can stay on because we really appreciate the work she does.

Nikki Ezhari, field deputy for City Council Member Tom La Bonge, provided several notes and updates from her office:

- This coming Monday, there will be a groundbreaking ceremony at Capitol Park.
- There is new playground equipment at Pan Pacific Park.
- Improvements are ongoing at Robert Burns Park, thanks to the efforts of GWNC Board Member Margy Hudson.
- The Windsor Square lighting project is progressing, with the current efforts aimed at figuring out what can and can't be done legally.
- The Mozza Restaurant issues in Hancock Park are still being worked out.
- In the St. Andrews Square neighborhood, traffic flow from the Western Ave. trunk line project is causing problems, so they're trying to get new stop signs installed.
- John Burroughs Middle School has made lots of improvements. They have also put a community member on their School Site Council to help better integrate the school with the surrounding community. Another community member is working on landscaping and a new marquee. The school will need money for the second phase of the improvements and perhaps that could be provided with a Neighborhood Purpose Grant.
- The LAPD Wilshire Station will have its annual open house on August 16. To fund upgrades to the interior of the station, they're selling ads in a community resource book. They will also be seeking funding for community room and locker room upgrades. Ms. Ezhari asked if the GWNC could help with this, but Ms. Oyama noted that the NPGs cannot be used for remodeling projects.
- Tom La Bonge will be hosing his annual series of summer bike rides, which

are starting soon.

Director Rudy Gintel asked if there is any news about the possibility of selling liquor at the new Mozza to Go restaurant, and what CD 4's position is on that issue. Ms. Ezhari said she thinks there has been some resolution, but since the restaurant is in Council District 5, not 4, she doesn't know the details.

Director Patti Carroll confirmed that traffic in the St. Andrews Square area has gotten worse, and neighbors don't know what to do about it.

Alternate Director Charles D'Atri asked if there's a completion date in sight for Robert Burns Park. Director Margy Hudson said one holdup is that they have landscaping seeds ready, but are not allowed to water enough to plant and sprout the seeds, so the improvement committee is seeking a dispensation from water restrictions from the DWP. Mr. D'Atri asked if the fences will come down when the irrigation system has been installed and Ms. Hudson said yes.

Alternate Director Cindy Chvatal asked where things stand with proposals for a Permit Parking District in the area near the Mozza restaurants, and Ms. Ezhari said that they're now looking at instituting "no parking" restrictions during evening hours, so a PPD wouldn't be necessary.

Director John Gresham asked that Ms. Ezhari please let Mr. La Bonge know that many neighbors are still "underwhelmed" with the new LAPD Olympic/Wilshire Division split. He said his area is ignored by the Wilshire Division and no one knows who to call. Ms. Ezhari asked if they know their Senior Lead Officer, and Mr. Gresham said they do, but he doesn't respond. He reminded her that the GWNC passed a resolution asking that the entire GWNC area be kept in one police division, but Mr. La Bonge didn't support the idea and we are still not happy.

Moving on, President Charles Dougherty raised the subject of our increasingly lengthy board meetings and opened a brief discussion on whether it might be a good idea to meet monthly instead of bimonthly.

Secretary Elizabeth Fuller said we're a victim of our own success – people are now coming to us more and more often with issues that need to be heard, and we can't say no. In fact, we already have five items on our agenda for September, and two more months for new things to be added. She said at that rate, we can't avoid four-hour or longer meetings if we don't start meeting more often.

Alternate Director Mike Genewick said all meetings should end by 9:30 p.m.

Director John Gresham said our meetings are as long as they need to be. So if we have more meetings, they will be shorter.

Alternate Director Patty Lombard noted that our meetings might still be long,

even if we meet monthly. Mr. Gresham said the only reason we meet every two months now is because he set it up that way when the GWNC was being formed...but the schedule is very out-dated.

President Dougherty said scheduling is a balancing act and that meetings go as long as they need to go to conduct our public business. He said the agenda is a challenge, and that we try to avoid agendizing things we shouldn't, but we do have to give the public access, so he does try to push things along as much as possible.

Ms. Lombard asked if there is more work that board members could do between meetings to ease the meeting schedule, but Ms. Fuller said it's hard because of the Brown Act: all board discussion and votes have to be public.

Mr. Dougherty raised a question about maintaining quorums at monthly meetings, and asked if people would come if we increased our schedule. Mr. Gresham noted that meeting attendance is an obligation of the office.

Director Owen Smith asked if we could conduct more of our business in committees, and Mr. Dougherty said the Land Use Committee is doing a lot but that people still want to discuss the specific issues at our board meetings and we need to provide that free and equal public access. He also reminded people that committees can't take board action, they can only make recommendations to the board, which must then take the final action. He said that we are doing things "long" right now, but not wrong.

Ad Hoc Land Use Committee

BRE Wilshire/La Brea Development – Director Elizabeth Fuller reported that the next public hearing on this project, with the City Planning Commission, will be held on August 13. She said our zoning suggestions on the project were rejected by the developers and City Council office, but there have been productive talks between the developers and residents on traffic mitigation. Director John Gresham asked if there would be a cul de sac placed on Sycamore Ave., south of the development entrance, and Ms. Fuller said it's on her personal wish list, but they've been told it's not likely the City would approve it.

Director Rudy Gintel said stakeholder Jack Humphreville sent out an interesting letter about this project and asked Mr. Humphreville if he would explain his positions. Mr. Humphreville said he asked the City to require the developers to cease and desist work on the project if they violate any conditions set during the pre-construction phase, and that the developers provide a full financial disclosure of the value of the entitlements they're receiving from the City.

Director James Wolf said he's not sure how that would be accomplished, since the City has never embraced such requirements. Mr. Humphreville noted that the developer's other recent project, at 5600 Wilshire Blvd., has required all sorts of lengthy street closures and other inconveniences, making it clear that they don't care about the

neighbors.

Director Rudy Gintel said he doesn't see how we can force a private corporation like BRE to disclose anything they don't want to. He said he does think we can still fight the zoning changes, but isn't sure what else we can do.

Alternate Director Patty Lombard said the most important thing we can do is support the neighbors, and Ms. Fuller said the best way to do that is to come to the August 13 hearing and voice that support. Director Jane Usher asked Ms. Fuller to send out a bullet pointed reminder including the hearing date, the reasons behind the objections and what would be reasonable instead. She said we need letters from every member organization in the GWNC area. Mr. Wolf added that the key issues haven't changed through many revisions of the project over the past few years.

Larchmont Grill – Mark D'Onofrio, owner of the Larchmont Grill (who presented his application for a CUP to sell a full line of alcoholic beverages at the restaurant at our last meeting), said he has met with the local neighborhood association, as recommended by the GWNC at our last meeting, and got signatures supporting his application from all 25 people present at that meeting. Alternate Director Charles D'Atri said the Larchmont Village Neighborhood Association also voted its unanimous support for the application, and said he would provide a letter to that effect for our files.

President Dougherty asked if the liquor sales would be on-site only, with no package sales, and Mr. D'Onofrio said yes.

Director John Gresham said the restaurant owners came to the GWNC Land Use Committee a couple of months ago, have demonstrated that they're good neighbors and said he has heard nothing but good things about the restaurant. He said the only thing our LUC asked was that the owners' go to the neighborhood association, which they have now done. And since they received unanimous support from that group, he moved we support the application. Alternate Director Patty Lombard seconded the motion.

A stakeholder in the audience agreed, saying he'd like to be able to order a drink with dinner at the restaurant. Director Jane Usher said she, too, supports the application, but would like to add to the resolution that we would oppose any takeout liquor privileges. Mr. Gresham agreed with that addition and proposed a new motion: that we support the application as proposed, with no reconfiguration or addition to the restaurant's bar space, other than what would be required by the department of Alcoholic Beverage Control or the dept. of Health and Safety, and that we would oppose any requests in the future for off-site liquor sales privileges.

Mr. Wolf said the owners have already stated they won't alter the current bar configuration. Director Martha Schuur said she has no problem with reconfigurations of anything but the bar. Mr. D'Atri said that part of the reason the LVNA supports the project is that the owners have proven to be good neighbors, proven responsive to neighborhood issues...and that the facility is a converted house...so there's really no

room for a big physical expansion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Mobil Station (4605 W. Beverly Blvd.) -- Director James Wolf reported that at a public hearing on June 18, the file for this case was left open so the applicants could do more community outreach. The neighbors say they weren't consulted before the hearing, but the owners' representatives now report they are on the agenda for the July meeting of the St. Andrews Square Neighborhood Association. Mr. Wolf further reported that the GWNC Land Use Committee has recommended opposing the application, but the Zoning Administration file is only open until July 31, so our Board needs to take action today.

Director Patty Lombard moved that we oppose the application, barring any additional support from the SASNA. Director Jane Usher said she'd make a stronger motion, since there is a lot of neighborhood opposition to this project and we don't need to defer to SASNA.

Director John Gresham said the applicants have stated they have a lot of "neighborhood" support, but it has all been in the form of signatures of customers at the gas station. Director Owen Smith asked what the recommendation was from our Land Use Committee, and Mr. Wolf said the LUC recommends opposing the application. Mr. Smith said we should support the committee.

Director Patti Carroll said the LAPD vice department and City Council District 4 office have both also stated their opposition. Alternate Director Patty Lombard moved that we support the Land Use Committee's recommendation and oppose the CUP application. Director Mike Genewick said the Windsor Square Association has also sent a letter opposing the application, and the owners' representatives did not contact that group either. Director Owen Smith seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

See's Candies Parking Lot (132 N. Manhattan Pl.) – *[Note: Director Patti Carroll recused herself from this discussion because she owns property nearby.]* Architects James Gomez and Jay Chun introduced their plans for remodeling a mini-mall where the newly landmarked original home of See's Candies is located. They confirmed that the See's building itself will be preserved and restored, and said the adjacent mini-mall will be improved with spaces for a new restaurant and other retail businesses. They said there are 29 parking spaces for the 12 businesses on the site, but they've also acquired an adjacent lot behind the property, at 132 S. Manhattan Pl., which they would like to use for additional parking (which is not required by city codes).

The representatives said the GWNC Land Use Committee recommended that they do more community outreach on this plan, and they met with neighbors during the July 4th weekend. They said they would like to address many of the neighbors' concerns, such as keeping the lot open to the community, and noted that the adjacent development will provide jobs and revenue to the community, in addition to getting rid of blight.

Director James Wolf asked about the adjacent properties on Manhattan Place, and Mr. Gomez said there is a multi-family house on one side, and an apartment building on the other.

Director John Gresham said there's another similar parking lot a block or so away, behind a hardware store. Alternate Director Mike Genewick said it's not identical, however, because there's an alley behind it, and apartments on both sides.

Mr. Gresham pointed out the tunnel or arch built into the mall property to allow access to the new lot and asked how many parking spaces the property would gain if that space were turned into parking instead. Mr. Gomez said it could hold no more than two spaces. But Mr. Gresham pointed out that a benefit of such a re-design would be keeping all of the business activity on the Western Ave. side of the block.

Mr. Gomez said the developers are willing to close off the Manhattan Pl. side of the lot and to use only Western Ave. for entrance and egress.

Alternate Director Patty Lombard said she drove by the location and saw that the that block on Manhattan Place clearly has a lot of challenges, so it's hard to imagine adding another one to the mix. She said she'd rather see the developers do something on Western and maintain the integrity of the Manhattan block.

Mr. Gomez said they have looked at other properties on Western for parking, but they're too far away from the proposed mini-mall and customers won't want to walk that far.

Mr. Wolf asked about the size of the Western Ave. parcels they have now, and the percentage of the property that See's occupies. Mr. Chun said there's a total of 12-14,000 square feet, and 9,000 feet of that is the See's building. Mr. Wolf asked if they're asking to encroach on the residential area for parking, and if they plan to use both Manhattan Place and the tunnel/arch through the building on Western to access that lot. Mr. Chun said yes to both. Mr. Wolf said this board generally doesn't approve of commercial encroachment on residential property, and asked when the hearing will be on this proposal. Mr. Chun said it's scheduled for July 14.

Ruth Silveira, who lives in the neighborhood, said she's generally happy about the See's/mall project, but she can't support use of the Manhattan Pl. lot for parking. She said there is a parking problem on Western, but the answer isn't turning a residential lot into a parking lot. She also said the Callahan's Hardware parking lot is a good example of what can go wrong with this – the properties on either side of that lot are the worst kept in the neighborhood.

Stakeholder Henrietta Cosentino agreed with Ms. Silveira, saying she greatly appreciates the owners' vision for upgrading the mall, and that she'd love to see See's Candies come back to its original building. She said she'd do anything to help...except turning a residential lot into a parking lot. She said it doesn't matter how the deal is

sweetened... it's still "lipstick on a pig." She said it would set a bad precedent for the neighborhood, and that she urges opposition, fearing it will bring all the problems of Western Ave. to Manhattan Place. She said the lot in question is also next to a landmarked house, and that no matter what mitigations the developers provide, she would still oppose this use to protect the block. Ms. Cosentino said that 4 or 5 years ago, Center Bank wanted to do the same thing with a parking lot, and the neighbors opposed the application and fought it off. She said Callahan's Hardware is not a good example of a comparable use – that lot was vacant and paved for a long time, there's an alley buffer behind it, and the store closes at 5 p.m., unlike the businesses that would be using the new lot. Also, she said, there are a lot of alternatives to minimize the amount of car traffic at the site (like installing bike racks)...and that neighborhood association would be happy to work with the developers to find space on Western for construction of a public parking lot.

Stakeholder Deborah Willis said that while Manhattan Place is "challenged," it still has great potential for improvement if not further degraded, which this proposal would do.

Stakeholder Rory Cunningham, who lives on Manhattan Place, thanked the developers' representatives for meeting with the neighbors. He noted that the owners bought the property at the top of the recent market peak and respects that they need to earn as much money from the property as possible. But he said the See's monument status carries with it a grandfathered lack of required parking, which is a gift to the developers. Also, the "blighted" house they referred to, which now sits on the Manhattan Place property, is their responsibility as owners of the property – they're the ones who have let it sink into blighted condition.

Mr. Gomez said he thinks this is a great project and the current tenants of the commercial property say they need more parking. The house on the Manhattan Place lot was blighted when they purchased it and they don't want to put a lot of money into fixing it up when their plan is to demolish it.

Mr. Gresham said the GWNC board has acted consistently in issues of commercial intrusion into residential areas. He said every neighborhood in our area has had this issue. The only reason to need more parking for this project, he said, is if the 12 current tenants would become 24...so we should oppose this request.

Alternate Director Charles D'Atri said that whatever position we do take on the parking lot, we should note that there is enthusiastic support for the development and the proposed approach to the historic building, and we definitely want to communicate that landmark status for See's Candies is a "win." But he also moved that we oppose the application for the parking lot.

Director Elizabeth Fuller clarified that we are only being asked to weigh in on the parking lot issue, and we don't have to deal with other issues related to the development itself. She said we can say that we oppose the parking lot, but we do support or even

“enthusiastically” support the development on Western.

Mr. D’Atri said it’s important to help convince See’s Candies to come back to the site, and that we express that to others. But Mr. Wolf said we need to focus on the issue that’s currently before the City land use body, which is just the parking lot, and we shouldn’t muddy the waters to the body we want to impress. He said we do have the option to take action on the second issue separately.

Alternate Director Mike Genewick reminded everyone that the GWNC’s boundary ends at the lot line behind the Manhattan Place property, and we don’t include the See’s site itself. Mr. Wolf said this was a good point. The parking lot parcel is within our area and the development is not, which is another good reason to separate our actions on the two sites.

Mr. D’Atri withdrew his original motion. Mr. Gresham noted that our boundaries may not include the See’s properties, but our sphere of influence does. The Western Ave. property is adjacent to our area, and definitely within our sphere of influence. He moved that we oppose the CUP for the Manhattan Place parking lot. Alternate Director Patty Lombard seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously.

Mr. Genewick suggested that the applicants talk to the Community Redevelopment Agency about creating more parking on Western Ave., and suggested they could build a structure that would serve the whole area. Ms. Lombard also suggested that they coordinate with the St. Andrews Square Neighborhood Association on the See’s restoration, and come back to us for support and input as those plans progress. Mr. Chun said they are currently re-working their plans for the building. He added that many businesses are leaving the area because of the lack of parking, and that there will have to be cooperation between businesses and residents to find a solution.

Duplex Variance (822 N. Sycamore) – Property owner Charlie Shahnaian distributed a folder of materials outlining his request to legalize an existing third dwelling unit on his duplex property. The property currently contains a two-unit building with another studio unit in the back yard. Mr. Shahnaian said the unit has been occupied since before he owned the property, and that he was unaware the third unit was illegal when he purchased it. He said he is willing to add a covered carport that would be required to legalize the unit, which will remove one car from the street. He also presented letters from all eight of his adjacent neighbors, supporting the request.

Mr. Shahnaian said he was asked by the GWNC Land Use Committee at a recent meeting to contact the Melrose Neighborhood Association for input, but when he called them, they had no meetings scheduled. He said the person he spoke to on the phone said the organization would neither support nor oppose the request.

Director Martha Schuur asked if any changes will be necessary to the inside of the unit to legalize it, and Mr. Shahnaian said he won’t know until there’s been a full inspection, but he thinks it is up to code (and he’s willing to bring it up to code if it isn’t

now).

Alternate Director Mike Genewick said the Land Use Committee supported the application, and moved that the board support the application to legalize the unit and add one of Mr. Shahnaian's two carport configurations. After Mr. Shahnaian said he would let the City pick which carport he should build, Director Rudy Gintel seconded the motion...and it passed unanimously.

Conversion of "Ad Hoc" Land Use Committee to "Standing" Status -- Director James Wolf said we have been talking about this and now need a Board decision on whether or not to make the change. President Dougherty noted that if the committee does become a standing committee, it will need its own secretary to create agendas and minutes in compliance with the Brown Act.

Director John Gresham asked what the benefits are of a standing committee, and Director Elizabeth Fuller said that an "ad hoc" committee is supposed to deal with only one short-term issue and then dissolve. But Land Use is an ongoing topic which shouldn't rightly be dealt with on an ad hoc basis. Also, she said, "ad hoc" committees cannot have more than 30% of the Board members on them, and our Land Use Committee has half of our members on it.

Director Martha Schuur, playing "devil's advocate," asked why, if the Land Use Committee hears an issue, the Board has to hear it as well. President Dougherty said formalizing the committee will probably give it more courage to make stronger recommendations to the board...but the board members do seem to want to be able to discuss the issues before they vote on them.

Mr. Wolf said that in a better process, developers would always make their presentations to the LUC first, and the committee would then work with them before coming back to the full Board with its recommendations. But, he said, we often get trapped by short-notice hearings coming up, which is something even monthly meetings wouldn't always help with.

Alternate Director Patty Lombard said we also need to be able to tell developers to talk to neighbors before we vote on something, and Mr. Wolf said the City could help with that, but the developers often play "dumb" and say they don't know who to talk to.

Mr. Gresham proposed we hire an office assistant to do the Land Use Committee's agendas and minutes. President Dougherty said we can't hire an assistant without an office for them to work in, but Ms. Lombard said we could probably work around that. She moved that we create a standing Land Use Committee, and hire an assistant as soon as possible to do the agendas, notices and minutes. Director Owen Smith seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

DWP Oversight Committee

DWP Oversight representative Jack Humphreville said water rates are projected to rise 28% this year, and we're also going into shortage-year rates. Tier I is going up 25% and Tier 2 is going up 45%. He said power rates are going up an average of 19%, due to an increase in basic rates, rate restructuring (summer tiering), and trying to uncap the ECAF, which they want to increase by 20%.

He said the other item of interest is the issue of a ratepayer's advocate. Nick Patsouris proposed it in October, but it was shot down. Since then, we've had Measure B, rate increases and other developments. We also have not seen a new solar plan yet, but the Mayor still wants to get rid of coal by 2020. We need a ratepayers' advocate to oversee all of these issues. We're not sure how to do it, but we're getting recommendations from Neighborhood Councils. We will run into flak from IBEW and other unions, but we'll come back in two months with a better thought-out proposal.

Director John Gresham asked if the DWP has a residential solar plan. Mr. Humphreville said it does not, and there's only state funding at this point.

Ad Hoc Outreach Committee

Director Margy Hudson reported that we have finally paid our designer for our new logo, which was published in our latest ad in the Larchmont Chronicle. The next step is to pay her deposit so she can start work on our website design.

[Director Jane Usher left the meeting at 11:00 p.m.]

Ms. Hudson said Alternate Director Mary Rajswing has been researching neighborhood council streetlight banners, and passed out photos of banners some other NCs have posted in their areas. We have learned we could have banners on up to 199 poles. The city-approved vendor does the artwork, installation and removal. The banners are posted for about three months, and you do need a City Council motion to approve the posting. The cost for the maximum number of banners would be about \$13,000, but even if we did half that many it would still be good publicity for us.

Alternate Director Patty Lombard said that if we do buy the banners, the posting should coincide with our election season.

Director John Gresham suggested placement on Olympic Blvd., in addition to Wilshire and other streets previously mentioned. Ms. Hudson said we could do that. Ms. Lombard said it would be nice to have our website ready by then as well.

Alternate Director Mike Genewick said he thinks all such banners are just "blight" in the neighborhood.

Moving on, Director Elizabeth Fuller said she was approached by someone on the Miracle Mile Chamber of Commerce, asking whether the GWNC would be interested in partnering with the Mid-City West Neighborhood Council to co-sponsor the quarterly La

Brea Walk (an expanded version of the Miracle Mile Art Walk, focusing on businesses along La Brea Ave.). Chris Denison, an MCWNC board member and Marketing Director for the Art Walk, said the total cost of the quarterly events is only about \$600 each, since many services are donated and much advertising is done online at no cost. He asked if we'd like to split that cost during the months that the event is centered on La Brea, which would come to a total of \$1,500-1,800 per year.

He said our GWNC logo would be used in the ads, which reach 250,000 people per month. Director John Gresham said that in addition to the publicity, it would be a good way to show cooperation between neighborhood councils. Director Elizabeth Fuller said we currently have \$5,000 in our budget for advertising and sponsorships, and there are more funds available to move into that category if we choose.

Director Owen Smith asked what the length of our commitment would be, and what our Outreach Committee thinks of the idea. Mr. Denison said we could make a one-year commitment, and Ms. Fuller said she discussed it with the Outreach Committee, which liked the idea. Mr. Smith moved that we agree to co-sponsor the event, at a cost up to \$1,800 per year. Director Martha Schuur seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Board Member Comments/New Business

Director Owen Smith said he didn't bring presentation materials tonight, but neighbors in Brookside would like to make some landscaping improvements at Memorial Library, including re-planting with drought-tolerant plants. He said the project will cost about \$10,000 and neighbors have committed to doing the work.

Alternate Director Patty Lombard said she has seen the design plans and suggested this project might be a good candidate for our new grant program. President Dougherty said we should probably establish a formal submission period for grant applications and noted that a grant of \$10,000 would require a formal presentation with drawings, a line-item budget and other items. He asked Mr. Smith if he'd be ready to make such a presentation at our September meeting and Mr. Smith said he would.

Ms. Lombard suggested Mr. Smith look at how things were done at Robert Burns Park. Mr. Dougherty noted that we have not yet established how we will evaluate and approve grant funding, but said we still have time to set those guidelines and that we will schedule a meeting of our Funding Guidelines Committee.

Moving on, Director Patti Carroll said that tomorrow at 8:30 a.m., the City Planning Commission will be hearing comments on proposed amendments to the City's Cultural Heritage Ordinance. Stakeholder Rory Cunningham said the Office of Historic Resources has rewritten guidelines for Cultural and Historic Monuments, but a group of about 100 downtown business owners have "hijacked" the process and gutted the new draft by asking that more owners of commercial properties be included on the committee, and that building interiors be excluded from the protections of landmark status. Ms.

Carroll asked what we can do about this, and Mr. Cunningham asked that we mount a huge letter-writing campaign. Director Elizabeth Fuller asked if there will be a decision rendered at tomorrow's hearing, or if this session will just begin the discussion. Mr. Cunningham said they are supposed to rule on the new draft tomorrow, but he doesn't know for sure if that will happen.

Public Comments

Rhonda Guess, a journalism professor at Los Angeles Community College introduced a group of her students who work on the school's 80-year-old newspaper, "The Collegian." Ms. Guess said that a big challenge during the summer is to get students ready for a trip to an Austin, TX symposium and competition for student journalists. She said the newspaper is distributed in the GWNC area and covers our community, and asked if we could help fund the students' hotel and travel costs for the trip.

President Dougherty explained that we can't vote on this request, since it wasn't agendized in advance, and that it's probably not the kind of request DONE would allow us to fund, though he offered to check on that point. He invited Ms. Guess to leave her contact information so he could get back to her and said that if we are allowed to fund such things, we can agendize it for a vote at a later date.

Director Patti Carroll said she appreciates the students' energy and suggested they might be able to help us in other ways. Alternate Director Patty Lombard suggested our Outreach Committee talk to them, and Mr. Dougherty thanked them all for coming.

Announcements and Adjournment

Director Patti Carroll announced that the "Taste of Larchmont" event will be held on August 23. President Dougherty announced that the next GWNC board meeting will be held on September 9.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Fuller
Secretary