

Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council



Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council General Meeting

July 9, 2008

Approved by the board
as written, on 09/10/08

MINUTES

A duly noticed meeting of the Board of Directors of the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council ("GWNC") was held on Wednesday, July 7, 2008, at the Ebell of Los Angeles, 743 South Lucerne Avenue. Vice President James Wolf called the meeting to order at 7:16 p.m.

The Secretary, Elizabeth Fuller, called the roll. Board of Directors members in attendance at the roll call were: Yigal Arens, Charles Bergson, John McIntyre (alt. Charles Dougherty), Elizabeth Fuller, Jane Gilman, Alison Hannon, Margaret Hudson, Alex Jones-Moreno, Mary Rajswing, Martha Schuur, Tom Rubinson (alt. Russell Sherman), Rudy Gintel (alt. Jolene Snett), Cindy Chvatal (alt. Jane Usher), and James Wolf. Board Members Moon Chung and Patti Carroll arrived at 7:22 and 7:23 p.m., respectively. Directors Sam Cunningham, John Gresham, Shar Penfold, Owen Smith and Rob Wishart were absent and not represented by an alternate.

The Secretary stated that a quorum was present.

Featured Presentation

Director Margaret Hudson introduced special guest Julie Gutman, from the Department of Public Works, who in turn introduced her associate, Richard Lee, from the DPW's Office of Public Affairs, and invited stakeholders to contact either of them if they have any kind of Public Works questions or problems. Ms. Gutman said her department manages \$500 million in contracts each year, and oversees all kinds of public projects for the Police, Sanitation and Street Lighting departments, as well as the Bureau of Street Services. In a brief overview, Ms. Gutman said the Bureau of Street Services deals with alleys, roads, street trees, medians, illegal dumping, enforcement of land use ordinances, and movement of oversize loads on city streets. She said 7.37 miles of city streets have been resurfaced this year in the GWNC area, 145,950 square feet of blacktop have been poured and 3,230 potholes have been fixed. The City's goal is to respond to pothole repair requests within 24 hours (except on heavy rain days). She also recommended that people report storm-related emergencies to the City's 311 information line, and pointed

out other helpful phone numbers in a Frequently Asked Questions pamphlet that she distributed.

According to Ms. Gutman, Public Works this year trimmed more than 2,300 trees, removed 159 stumps, removed more than 1,000 cubic yards of debris, constructed 20 ADA-compliant ramps, performed sidewalk replacement and repairs, installed a left turn lane at Wilshire and Highland. The Bureau of Street Lighting, she said, is responsible for the engineering, construction, design and maintenance of streetlights, as well as repairs, specifications and estimates. She said Paula Daniels is the Commissioner in charge of Street Lighting and people can also call Jim Quigly at (213) 847-1459 if they need additional lights in their neighborhood. If street lights go out, it's best to call 311. One frequent question is "how can I get lights on my block?" There are two ways: either request a simple, utilitarian light on an existing utility pole...or request a new assessment for a new light on a new pole. The full installation cost for a new light is about \$3,400, plus \$70 per year. In addition to calling Jim Quigley, people can go to <http://www.lacity.org/bsl> for more information about street lighting.

Ms. Gutman said the Bureau of Engineering and Department of Sanitation work hand in hand. Engineering sets the features and standards for all new development, including issuing permits. Sanitation is responsible for refuse collection and recycling services, e-waste disposal, hazardous waste collection, and collection of urban runoff. They also perform regular maintenance of catch basins three times a year. She said that last year, during the neighborhood flooding, they cleaned the storm drains and want to keep such backups from happening again. If people do have a clogged storm drain, they should call 311. If there's no response within 24 hours, she invited people to call her at (213) 978-0253 or Richard Lee at (213) 978-0324.

Mr. Lee also passed out DPW service request forms, so anyone with an immediate problem could take one home and fill it out.

Moving on to questions and answers, Alternate Board Member Margaret Sowma said the City left a notice on her apartment building, telling residents that the street was going to be repaired and cars would have to be moved before 6 a.m. on a specific day. But then the work wasn't done on that day...and the City worked instead on a street two blocks away, where many of the residents of her street had parked. As a result, many cars were towed...and her street (Van Ness, between Wilton and 6th) still hasn't been repaired. Ms. Gutman invited Ms. Sowma to contact her about the problem.

Stakeholder Matias Cavallin asked what steps Los Angeles is taking to ensure that we're saving as much energy as possible, and whether we're using the most energy-efficient street lights bulbs possible. Ms. Gutman said she couldn't give a detailed answer, but that she does want to make Los Angeles the cleanest and greenest city possible. She said the Department is looking at both budgetary and environmental savings options, and will get back to Mr. Cavallin with more information.

Alternate Board Member Michael Rosenberg said the DPW has been doing sidewalk work on 3rd and 6th Streets, ripping up and replacing good sidewalks while others in bad shape are not being repaired. He also said there are several corners without the required corner ramps, and when he requested action on this from the CD4 office more than a year ago, he was told there's no money. So it's frustrating now to see sidewalk work going on...but not the kind that's really needed. Ms. Gutman took his name and phone number, and offered to get back to him to talk further about the problems.

Pam Woods, a stakeholder who lives at the corner of 5th and Van Ness, said overgrown ficus trees on the parkway in front of her house are creating a security problem – people park their cars there and conduct illicit business. There have also been robberies there, and grass won't grow. She said she has called to have the trees trimmed, but the work has been minor and hasn't helped. Also, it's been three years since any trimming at all was done. Ms. Gutman took her name and gave her a service request form to fill out.

Stakeholder Jack Humphreville asked why the City doesn't use independent contractors, who are often cheaper than City laborers for things like street and sidewalk repairs. Ms. Gutman said the City's policy has been that it's faster and more efficient to use City employees, and there are also lots of compliance and standards issues involved. Mr. Humphreville said costs of \$15 per square foot in the 50/50 sidewalk repair program – touted as a bargain to residents – are still higher than most independent contractors would charge for the same work. Ms. Gutman invited Mr. Humphreville to write up his assessment of this issue and promised to get back to him for further discussion.

Stakeholder Vickie Bascoy complained that speed bumps promised for her section of 8th Street have never been installed, but Ms. Gutman said that's a Department of Transportation (not Public Works) issue, and gave her the contact information for the DOT.

Another stakeholder complained that blue recycling bins are collected on Tuesdays from apartments in her area, but are serviced for single-family homes on Fridays. She asked why the collections can't be done on the same day, and Ms. Gutman said she didn't know the answer, but could find out and get back to her.

Director Margy Hudson presented two questions submitted in advance by stakeholders. First, Phillip Miller, of the Wilshire Ebell, heard that this section of Wilshire Boulevard will be re-paved soon, and wants to know if that's true. Ms. Gutman said she doesn't know, but Renee Weitzer, from City Council Member Tom La Bonge's office, said it's an MTA/DOT project, and will be done in 2009.

In the second stakeholder question read by Ms. Hudson, she asked about the status of the 50/50 sidewalk repair program. Mr. Lee said the program closed on July 1, when the funding ceiling was reached and it was temporarily suspended for the current fiscal year. He did note, however, that City Council Districts do submit priority lists for

street and sidewalk work in their areas each fiscal year, so that may be a way to have a particularly urgent problem dealt with. Ms. Gutman agreed, saying we have wonderful Council offices in the GWNC area, and that we should definitely contact them for help with sidewalk issues.

Director Mary Rajswing reported that although the GWNC has an “intrepid” tree committee, many local businesses are resisting the offers of free trees, often because they’re afraid the trees will never be trimmed by the City. She asked what the official schedule is for trimming trees, and how people can speed up the process and guarantee service. Ms. Gutman said she didn’t know the answer, but offered to get back to Ms. Rajswing and encouraged her to inform the DPW of any specific problems so they can deal with them. Nikki Ezhari, Field Deputy for City Council Member Tom La Bonge, said the official trimming cycle is every 7 years, not every 10 years, as has been reported.

Director Margy Hudson thanked Ms. Gutman and Mr. Lee for their time, and encouraged stakeholders to take home the cards and brochures distributed by the guests.

Reading of the Minutes

The Secretary read the Minutes of the previous meeting, which had been distributed to Directors by e-mail and posted on the Council’s *greaterwilshire.org* website. Ms. Fuller also noted several corrections that had been submitted by Directors before the meeting:

- p. 4, “they cannot can’t build” changed to “they cannot build”
- p. 5, “She said the a developer” changed to “She said the developer”
- p. 5, “Ed Hung” changed to “Ed Hunt”
- p. 5, “voices as lout as we can” changed to “voices as loud as we can”
- p. 6, “funding for similar operation” changed to “funding for a similar operation”
- p. 8, “work to change tem” changed to “work to change them”
- p. 10, “Yolie Sheridan” changed to “Yolie Moreno” (in two places)
- p. 11, “Yolie Sheridan” changed to “Yolie Moreno”
- p. 12, “Myra Gintel” changed to “Myrna Gintel”
- p. 13, “our deputy” changed to “our ‘deputy’” and “(on La Brea)” inserted after “West Bethel Church”
- p. 14, “consider entitlements for a new projects” changed to “considers entitlements for new projects,” and “important to actually attend” changed to “important actually to attend”

The Minutes were approved as amended.

Treasurer’s Report

Because Treasurer Russell Sherman was not present, there was no treasurer's report. Mr. Wolf said our financial information would be available, as usual, on the DONE website and at our next meeting. He also noted that Mr. Sherman has expressed his desire to resign the Treasurer position and that we are seeking volunteers from the Board to be considered for the position. If anyone is interested in taking over the Treasurer duties, they should contact GWNC President Charlie Dougherty.

President's Report

Mr. Wolf welcomed Charles Bergson, formerly the Alternate representative for Citrus Square, to the Director position for that seat, replacing Tom Roe, who has resigned.

Lee Goldberg, who had contacted the GWNC a few months ago about being appointed as our Director of Animal Welfare (DAW), reintroduced herself, saying she has lived in Windsor Square for five years, and is an attorney and animal advocate. She said the DAW program, which is endorsed by the Los Angeles Department of Animal Services, enables each Neighborhood Council to have a DAW to address animal issues in their area. She said the GWNC area's biggest animal issues are the dumping of unwanted dogs, and compliance with spay and neuter ordinances. She said the DAW program is very flexible, and allows people to address animal issues in whatever ways possible. If appointed, she would work with the Council to determine which issues or events were most important, and she would also set up booths at local fairs and events, as well as take stakeholder questions about strays, dead animals, and other animal-related issues. She said the LA Animal Services website has a DAW link for more information, and that 30 Neighborhood Councils have appointed DAWs.

Director Jane Gilman asked what specific things would be under her jurisdiction as DAW, and if they would include reporting mistreatment of animals in the GWNC area. Ms. Goldberg said she wouldn't create any sort of policy statements, but would act as an information source, helping point stakeholders to resources and alternatives available to them.

Director Gilman asked how people would contact Ms. Goldberg, and she suggested a link on the GWNC website.

A stakeholder asked about Ms. Goldberg's positions on no-kill shelters and Tom La Bonge. Ms. Goldberg said she didn't know what Tom La Bonge has to do with animal issues, but said that Ed Boks, Director of Los Angeles Animal Services, has made it his goal to make Los Angeles a "no kill" city, through education and other efforts. She said she thinks it's a good goal, and that she personally has rescued dogs that were about to be euthanized at shelters.

Director Jim Wolf asked about the City's animal-related policies, and whether the DAW position would extend to non-domestic animals such as birds. Ms. Goldberg said

that people have found illegal birds and even chickens in Los Angeles, and that she would be willing to do more research on that subject. She said the DAW position would cover all animals, but that in our area she would probably be dealing mostly with cats and dogs. As for city animal policies, she said there are many, including how long to keep animals in shelters, adoptions and adoption requirements, and no-kill solutions. She also noted that the DAW does not represent Animal Services, but simply encourages stakeholders to become more active and educated in animal-related issues.

Mr. Wolf asked which city body proposed adding DAWs to Neighborhood Councils, and Ms. Goldberg said that Dr. Charlotte Laws, an animal activist, came up with the idea, which was endorsed by Ed Boks. Mr. Wolf asked if any City Council members also advocated the program, but Ms. Goldberg said she didn't know.

Director Mary Rajswing asked how many contacts Ms. Goldberg would expect each month, and Ms. Goldberg says it differs from Council to Council, depending on stakeholders in a given area and their level of caring and involvement. She said some councils, such as Atwater Village, also sponsor spay and neuter clinics.

Director Jane Gilman noted that in the past, some "very militant" animal rights groups have "harassed" our neighborhood and asked what kinds of groups Ms. Goldberg belongs to. Ms. Goldberg said she belongs to the Humane Society and ASPCA, but does not endorse or advocate for more militant groups.

Director Yigal Arens asked if Ms. Goldberg volunteers with any animal-related groups, and what kinds of tasks, goals and outreach she'd do if appointed to the DAW position. Ms. Goldberg said that she would like to address issues important to our stakeholders, with whom she's had limited contact so far but would like to learn more about. She said she has no aspirations beyond serving the stakeholders...though she'd love it if people would stop dumping unwanted dogs in the area.

Mr. Arens asked how she would survey stakeholders for their concerns and Ms. Goldberg said that she'd like to have a booth at neighborhood fairs and events, where she could also hand out spay/neuter information, shelter phone numbers and phone numbers for dead animal pick-up.

Renee Weitzer, from City Council Member Tom La Bonge's office, asked whether Ms. Goldberg, or Charlotte Laws, belongs to any animal rights organizations. Ms. Goldberg said she herself does not, and that she does not know about Ms. Laws. Ms. Weitzer asked if Ms. Goldberg knows the history of LA Animal Services, and Ms. Goldberg said she knows only that it's been controversial.

Stakeholder James Jakubowski asked if DAW appointees receive any training for the position, and whether there's some sort of charter to govern it, but Ms. Goldberg said there are no formal guidelines or training, just a broad mission statement. She said each position is ad hoc, and that DAWs may have assistants to help them.

A stakeholder asked if Ms. Goldberg would keep records of any calls and contacts she received, and Ms. Goldberg said she certainly could keep records of all her activities and events.

Director Margy Hudson noted that non-elected board members are subject to Brown Act rules, and that Ms. Goldberg would have to go through a training class. She said it would be good if Ms. Goldberg would write up exactly what she's proposing for the DAW position, including the kinds of communications and goals she'd be involved with, and come back to us with that in September. Ms. Goldberg said again that her goals would be based on stakeholder desires, that if there are any requirements for reporting, she'd be happy to follow them, and that she could write up a proposal.

Ms. Rajswing thanked Ms. Goldberg for stepping up and volunteering, noting that our Council needs more neighborhood contact and involvement. Director Charles Bergson moved to appoint Ms. Goldberg DAW for the GWNC. Alternate Director Cindy Chvatal seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously.

Ad Hoc Land Use and Zoning Committee

Vice President James Wolf noted that the Ad Hoc Land Use and Zoning Committee met a few weeks ago, and the main outcome of the meeting was to agree to seek more information on two of the items on our agenda tonight – the Wilshire/La Brea Development and Sonic/BMW. He noted, however, that the third item, 303 S. Highland, was not discussed at that meeting, and came up only after the Committee had met.

Wilshire/La Brea - Dave Powers, representing developer BRE, explained that a larger version of this project was presented last year, but since it has been scaled down a bit, they wanted to come back again. He introduced Daniel Gehman, from the architectural firm Thomas P. Cox, who explained that the current version of the development will be only 7 stories tall (instead of 18 in the previous version). He showed renderings of the various sides of the building, which will rise 135 feet at its highest point along Wilshire Blvd. (compared to 195 feet for the Clem O. Wilson building across the street). Features of the façade on that side are designed to “reference” the Wilson building. He also described the setbacks, landscaping and “sidewalk experience” for the project, which will include 45,000 square feet of retail space (8,000 of which will be food vendors and restaurants). There will be 562 apartments in the complex (down from 645 in the previous version), and 1,090 parking spaces.

Stakeholder Fred Pickel, president of the La Brea-Hancock Homeowners Association said he is concerned about overall density of the project. He noted that BRE is building another development a few blocks west on Wilshire, and said that if this project were the same density as that one, there would be only 300+ units. He also noted that the lots along the Sycamore side of the site are currently zoned [Q]C2-1, with the [Q] condition limiting them to R-2 density... which this proposal would significantly increase. Also, he said, if the densities are increased, it could set a precedent for other areas along

La Brea, so if the changes are allowed, we would need to fully consider and address all the issues involved.

Stakeholder Matias Cavallin asked about impacts on traffic along Wilshire and La Brea, especially during rush hours, and about plans for lowering the development's carbon footprint.

Mr. Powers said his company will have to submit plans for traffic routing during construction and those plans will have to be approved before construction can begin. Regarding sustainability, he said BRE is committed to creating a "green" building and this one will conform to LEED standards, including low-flow toilets, sinks and showers. He said that at BRE's other Wilshire Blvd. project, they've also added a reflective white roof, energy efficient appliances and other environmentally friendly measures.

Alternate Board Member Mike Genewick asked if someone could point out the driveway access points for the complex, and Mr. Gehman said there would be two entrances/exits for both retail and residential traffic: one on 8th street, and one on Sycamore, near Wilshire.

Stakeholder Dan Kegel said the sidewalk designs are visually attractive, but he's concerned there won't be enough space for both pedestrians and bicycles (which are allowed to travel on sidewalks). Mr. Gehman said he wasn't prepared to answer that question, but will consider it.

Alternate Board Member Michael Rosenberg thanked the developers for reducing the overall scale of the project, but said he's still concerned about parking and traffic, especially along 8th Street, which is very narrow. Also, he said the building looks "massive," and asked if its façade could be broken up with coves and other elements, especially along La Brea. Mr. Gehman said they will be required to widen both 8th Street and La Brea, and that they have heard other comments about the building's massing, which they will need to address.

Stakeholder Jack Humphreville asked about the overall cost, revenues, return on equity and lender for the project, and whether the public would be able to review the investment memorandum and a list of BRE's contributions to city officials. Mr. Powers said the overall cost would be about \$280 million, with a yield of 6 ½-7 ½%. He said there would be no bank financing, and that BRE is a public company and the project will be self-financed. He said he has attended several political fundraisers and given about \$500 to each of the candidates, both in City Council Member Tom La Bonge's area and other districts.

Stakeholder James Jakubowski asked for a breakdown of the apartment units and about allocation of the parking spaces. Mr. Powers said there would be studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units in the project, with 25-30% of the units having two bedrooms. He said there will be one parking space for each studio, one and a half spaces for each one-bedroom unit, and two spaces per two-bedroom unit, which is what city

codes require. He said there will be four spaces for every 1,000 square feet of retail space, which also meets city codes.

Stakeholder Rich Erickson, who lives across the street from the development site, asked if there will be a shadow study done. Mr. Gehman said there will be one included in the Draft Environmental Impact Report, which is currently in the works. BRE representative Dale Goldsmith said most of the shadows will fall to the north of the project, and that the EIR will probably be released sometime this summer, with a public comment period to follow. Mr. Erickson asked what city codes require for shadow impacts, and Mr. Goldsmith said they allow three hours of shadows in the winter and four in the summer, and the EIR will address both seasons.

Director Margy Hudson said that even with 1,090 spaces planned for 562 units, the reality is there will be more cars than that. She said she visits the area often, knows it's already difficult to park there and that people do often wind up parking on the nearby residential streets (which is a problem faced in many of our neighborhoods). She said she's also concerned about green space - our area doesn't have enough park space and needs more - and that she'd like to see them include a park with this project, similar to the one at the Courtyard development further west on Wilshire. Renee Weitzer, from City Council Member Tom La Bonge's office, noted that the neighborhood did have to give up a street to get that park, but Ms. Hudson said people in the new complex will have dogs that need to be walked, and kids who will need play space and play equipment, which are not planned for in the current design. She also asked if there will be solar panels on the building's roof and how traffic will be affected. She said she'd like to see the GWNC's Ad Hoc Land Use Committee set some goals for this project, and that Jack Humphreville should be nominated to be on the Land Use Committee.

Alternate Board Member Tom Rubinson said that he, too, is concerned about the project's density, and they will definitely need more than 1 ½ spaces per one-bedroom unit. He said tenants will have friends and significant others visiting or living with them, and that it would be "respectful" to include more parking than the city minimums. He also asked if any thought has been given to the nature of the retail establishments for the complex, saying that we don't want McDonald's, dry cleaners, etc., because they tend to homogenize the community. Finally, he asked if the developers have considered the likelihood of a Wilshire/La Brea subway stop and its effects, especially at the subterranean level.

Mr. Powers said he used to live in the area and understands the parking issues, so the developers are concerned about having too little parking. He also said that people who will live in the complex will want secure gated parking, but they've asked people at other existing buildings how much is enough and they say this is a good number. He said it's definitely the residential concerns, not retail concerns, that are driving this project, and that his preference is not to put chain retailers into the complex...though the market will drive those decisions. He did acknowledge that sit-down restaurants do add cache to such a project.

Ms. Hudson asked how many parking spaces will be reserved for retail customers, and Mr. Powers said 200, and they will be separated from the residential parking by gates. Ms. Hudson said that's definitely not enough, and Mr. Goldsmith said that if people don't think there's enough, they won't rent there, so it does "self-regulate."

Director Elizabeth Fuller asked what the population of the complex will be, and Mr. Powers said it will be mostly professionals and "creatives." Ms. Fuller clarified her question, saying there are about 1,200 people in the surrounding neighborhood, and it looks like this project will include about that same number – doubling the overall neighborhood population – in the space of one square block. She said she's also concerned about the lengthy number of zoning changes required for the project, especially increasing the allowed densities of the currently R-2 areas along Sycamore, and the effects on traffic, again especially along Sycamore. Mr. Goldsmith said there are lots of zoning changes required, because it's a big project, but a traffic study will be part of the EIR. He acknowledged there will be increased density along Sycamore, but said there will be a bit less along Wilshire and other portions of the complex.

Director Martha Schuur said that what often happens in such complexes is that employees are not allowed to park in the retail spaces, so they park on neighborhood streets. She asked if the developers are taking this into account, and Mr. Powers said he believes so. Ms. Schuur asked what other cities BRE has completed project in and Mr. Powers said their closest project, at 5600 Wilshire Blvd., is not open yet, but they do have operating developments in Pasadena (which doesn't really have enough parking) and Emeryville, as well as some others. Ms. Schuur said Emeryville is not the same kind of area as Wilshire and La Brea, but Mr. Powers said there's really not that big a difference between urban and suburban developments.

Alternate Director John McIntyre said he also doesn't feel there's enough parking planned for the building, and asked how many spaces will be designated for guest parking. Mr. Powers said there will be shared retail and guest parking, because the two kinds of traffic tend to come at different hours. Mr. McIntyre asked what the hours of the retail establishments will be and Mr. Powers said only restaurants will be open after 7 p.m. Mr. McIntyre also asked about the rents for the property, and Mr. Powers said they'll be similar to the rents at the 5600 Wilshire complex: studios in the \$2,000-2,100 range, two-bedrooms up to \$3,800 and one-bedrooms in the \$2,400-2,600 range.

Vice President James Wolf said there are some "pesky" city regulations on landscaping, and noted that BRE's renderings show lots of landscaping along the curb line. He asked how they plan to work with City Hall to make sure they can install the features they're showing. Mr. Gehman said the designers do "have a long way to go," with landscaping and agreed that it involves lots of City agencies, so it's an issue on which they could definitely use some support from the community. He said they hope to deliver "as much as humanly possible" of the features they're considering.

Mr. Wolf asked what "metal" of LEED certification they'll be seeking, and Mr. Gehman said that, in addition to the LEED standards, they're also looking at two other

point-based scoring systems, trying to choose the most relevant. He said, however, that at this point, they're aiming for silver LEED certification. Mr. Wolf asked when construction will start, and Mr. Powers said it depends on how long this process takes, but the goal is to start at the end of 2009, with about 34 months of construction planned. Mr. Wolf asked where the construction workers will park during that phase, and Mr. Powers said that at the 5600 Wilshire project, the workers had been shuttled to and from the parking lot at the Wilshire-La Brea site, so they'll plan something similar for this project. Finally, Mr. Wolf asked what benefits the developers were proposing to provide to the city and community to offset the privileges they're asking for, and Mr. Powers said they're currently talking to Renee Weitzer about such things.

Director Mary Rajswing asked where the developers will be widening La Brea, and Mr. Powers said it will be between 8th Street and Wilshire, with the addition of a right turn lane.

Director Martha Schuur asked if the 5600 Wilshire project is also silver LEED certified, and Mr. Powers said it is not, and that the final landscaping has not yet been installed there yet.

Director Patti Carroll asked if the developers have any projects in Koreatown, and if so, how large they are. Mr. Powers said they have three, all in the 100-unit range.

Renee Weitzer, representing City Council Member Tom La Bonge's office, said she appreciates that everyone has listened and commented on this project, that she and others take good notes, and that she has promised that the neighbors will have a meeting with the DOT after the EIR is released, to address traffic concerns. She said she will also be talking to the community about entitlements, noting that this is a very large project (and very few developments cover an entire city block). She said that she, too, shares concerns with the building's massing along La Brea, and that she is the "responsible person" within Mr. La Bonge's office. She said she worked on the development of the Grove, which also required lots of mitigations, but that she feels it's a good project, and that if you don't work closely with the developers, you don't get good projects.

Sonic/BMW -- Stakeholder Fred Pickel briefly reviewed the history of this project, saying that in 2007, Sonic (a North Carolina-based holding company that owns Beverly Hills BMW and many other automotive dealerships) presented an initial version of this project, which required several zoning changes. The neighbors protested those changes and Sonic decided not to fight, but came back this year with a new version of their plans, which would put the Beverly Hills BMW sales area on the current site of the Bob's Big Boy restaurant on Wilshire, and a new service center where the Ehlers Cadillac showroom currently sits.

[Director Charles Bergson left the meeting at 9:45 p.m.]

Mr. Pickel said the current Lou Ehlers building was designed by noted architect Stiles O. Clements, that BMW's new building will be out of character and scale for the

neighborhood, that BMW has rejected all suggestions for style modifications, and that the new design will be a “Euro box,” with no effort made at creating something that will fit in with the rest of the neighborhood’s 1920s art deco or Spanish-themed architecture. He said the company has refused design change requests from both neighbors and Renee Weitzer. He also noted that the Bob’s Big Boy will be torn down in August, perhaps sooner, and that demolition on the Ehlers building has already begun. He said that he has requested the La Brea-Hancock representative to make the following motion tonight:

Be it resolved that the Council objects to the proposed design of the Beverly Hills BMW / Sonic Automotive facilities on Wilshire on the basis of its design style relative to the community, its height profile, and its traffic impacts.

Be it further resolved that:

- *The Council requests that BMW NA and Sonic Automotive collaborate with the community to develop a design that matches the adjacent Miracle Mile, Avalon Bay, and USAA/Hollywood Reporter building styles, that is staged in rear height to reduce building shadow and apparent mass, and that they incorporate and financially support Wilshire medians and other controls to manage the associated neighborhood traffic.*
- *The Council supports the application by The La Brea – Hancock Homeowners’ Association for City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Landmark designation of the 1955 Stiles Clements-designed Ehlers Cadillac building at 5151-5171 Wilshire. The Council requests that, as soon as possible, the Los Angeles City Council adopt an appropriate motion to accept this application as complete, which will require current demolition activity to halt while the Historic-Cultural Landmark application is reviewed.*
- *The Council requests, given the zoning and planning history of the four lots to the immediate north of the 5151 Wilshire and 5171 Wilshire, that City of Los Angeles Planning and Department of Building and Safety should treat these transitional parking buffer lots with [Q]C2-1 zoning as “classified in the RW1 Zone or a more restrictive zone” in applying the requirements of the Transitional Height Ordinance. The Q condition on these lots specifies “The use of the property shall be limited to parking lots or residential development at the R1 density,” and the northern most two of the four lots were residential with a conditional use permit prohibiting automotive dealership parking use prior to earlier General Plan changes.*
- *The Council will assist The La Brea – Hancock Homeowner Association with consultant expenses for the Historic-Cultural Landmark application process up to \$1500, with the potential for additional support if needed and approved by the Council. This meets the Council’s general criterion:*

- *The project is a partnership with community organizations.*
- *The project will benefit our stakeholders.*
- *The project is a collaboration with local stakeholders.*
- *There is a commitment to maintaining the project in the future.*
- *We recognize the need to spread projects around the GWNC area.*
- *We see how the project can raise the profile of the GWNC.*
- *We see how the GWNC can fulfill a unique need.*

Mr. Pickel said the most important thing is negotiating a successful project, and that the neighborhood's only remaining lever in that process is seeking historical designation for the Ehlers building. Negotiating the height of the service center is also important.

Vice President James Wolf asked if the motion was meant to be "all or nothing," and Mr. Pickel said that if there are no objections from Board Members, he'd like to make just the single motion...but if there are objections, he's open to discussion. Alternate Board Member Tom Rubinson moved that the Board adopt the full motion as written. Director Elizabeth Fuller seconded it. Mr. Pickel noted that the La Brea Hancock Association has the official support of the neighboring Sycamore Square Neighborhood Association in this effort.

Stakeholder Michael Rosenberg complimented Mr. Pickel on his preparation and said the Board Members should support the motion.

Stakeholder Karen Gilman said the Larchmont Village Neighborhood Association, at its meeting last night, echoed all sentiments in the motion. She also said that it pays to reiterate concerns about building heights, and that the recent write-up in the Larchmont Chronicle was good. BMW's planned buildings are "monoliths," she said, and it helps for neighbors to band together. She said the LVNA officially supports the motion and that she can't stress enough that the buildings' heights and design are out of character for the neighborhood. Finally, she asked about the status of the Ehlers landmark application. After Mr. Pickel clarified the application timeline, Ms. Gilman said she doesn't know if there's any hope of stopping the wrecking ball at this point.

Director Margy Hudson suggested that Mr. Pickel call Ken Bernstein and Lambert Giessinger to facilitate the application process, but Mr. Pickel said Mr. Bernstein is on vacation, and the application has already been filed and city staff has accepted it for review.

Renee Weitzer, chief of staff for City Council Member Tom La Bonge, said that Sonic's original plan required conversion on two R-1 lots behind Bob's Big Boy, but when that zoning change was opposed, they changed the project and it is now "by right." She said they got a legal demolition permit for the Lou Ehlers building, but the Cultural Heritage Commission will review the landmark application on July 17. She said the City Council can stop the demolition with a motion (which has been written), but she doesn't think the Council will support it. She said Mr. La Bonge believes that landmark

applications should be submitted before development projects begin. She did note, however, that she has asked Sonic to redesign the buildings and has been turned down. She also said that it's hard to deal with a company in North Carolina, which doesn't care about the neighborhood.

Director Yigal Arens asked if Mr. Pickel's motion is asking for funds in addition to money spent already, and Mr. Pickel replied that \$400 has been spent (the retainer for the landmark consultant who prepared the application) and that the total cost of seeing a successful application through the Commission process is \$1,500, but there could be some additional costs after that process is complete.

Director Mary Rajswing asked whether Sonic has ever come to the GWNC to present its plans, and Mr. Wolf said that he has called them, but was always told their plans were in flux and they would be in touch after things were decided. Ms. Weitzer said Sonic did hold a series of community meetings, but felt they didn't have to schedule anything further since the project is now "by right."

Mr. Wolf asked if payments to the landmark consultant could be made via invoices, and Mr. Pickel said yes. Mr. Wolf called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously.

[At this point, Mr. Wolf allowed a Public Comment from a stakeholder, who needed to leave the meeting early.]

Public Comments

Stakeholder Joan Taylor asked that the GWNC Board send a letter she has drafted, asking for the immediate restoration of recently cut transit subsidies for senior citizens. She said seniors used to receive four free taxi rides per month, but the subsidy program was recently reduced, cutting 6,000 people out of the program. She asked the GWNC to write a letter to County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, asking for restoration of the program's full funding, and said the Mid-City West Neighborhood Council has already agreed to do this.

Director Patti Carroll asked if someone could read the letter out loud, and Director Martha Schuur asked if someone could clarify the request. Director Elizabeth Fuller said that at our last meeting, Ms. Taylor came to us with a request that the taxi coupon program be doubled, but since then the funding has been cut by half, and Ms. Taylor is now asking us to write in support of restoring the original funding.

Director Mary Rajswing moved that we send Ms. Taylor's letter, and Ms. Schuur seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

[Director Moon Chung and Alternate Director Tom Rubinson left the meeting at 10:15 p.m.]

Ad Hoc Land Use and Zoning Committee (Continued)

303 S. Highland – Michael Wright, a lawyer representing stakeholders who live near 303 S. Highland, distributed copies of a Los Angeles County property tax exemption application filed for a religious congregation located at 303 S. Highland Ave., noting that all buildings on the property are used solely for religious use, and there is no portion of the property used as a residence. He also cited a City of Los Angeles parcel report, which uses the code “church” to define the property, which includes a 6,500 square foot building and zero bedrooms. Mr. Wright said that such use is an “invasion of R1 property by non-residential use,” and that the property’s neighbors are suffering from noise, traffic and other effects. He asked that the GWNC write letters to the City Council District 4 office and the City Attorney, opposing an application the congregation has filed for a City of Los Angeles Conditional Use Permit for non-residential use of the property. He said that if successful, such a variance could be “devastating” to the Hancock Park neighborhood.

Alternate Board Member Michael Rosenberg recommended that the GWNC invite the congregation’s rabbis and attorneys to speak at a GWNC meeting, asking that we take action on the CUP application only after such a presentation and not at this time.

Director Jane Gilman asked if someone could provide more specific information on the CUP application, and Alternate Director Rudy Gintel read from the application, dated May 29, 2008, saying the congregation is applying for a zoning variance to allow reduced parking at the location and daily prayer services at a “residence.”

Director Cindy Chvatal made a motion...

“...for the GWNC to oppose the Conditional Use Permit and zone variance requested in the land use permit application, Case #ZA-2008-2213 for 303 S. Highland Ave. The application refers to the address as a residence when in fact it is a house of worship in an R-1 zoned area and currently operating illegally.”

Alternate Board Member Rudy Gintel seconded the motion.

Director Yigal Arens asked if there were other documents we should mention in the motion, but Mr. Gintel said there was no need. The motion passed unanimously.

In a final Land Use, comment, stakeholder Karen Gilman thanked the GWNC for sending a letter about the Camerford Lofts project, saying a hearing was held the next day, and many neighbors attended.

Ad Hoc Funding Guidelines Committee

Stakeholder Kathleen Mulligan, from the Ridgewood-Wilton Neighborhood Association, distributed information about a greening project the neighborhood is planning. The project involves construction of two traffic medians on Wilton Place, which would be landscaped with drought-tolerant native plants and maintained by the community. The neighborhood is requesting funding from the GWNC for the permanent improvement, which is a collaborative effort with the Windsor Square-Hancock Park Historical Society (which has given a \$12,000 grant). Ms. Mulligan said it's important that elderly residents and others be able to walk the neighborhood safely, and the project will improve safety as well as contribute to the general health, green space and beauty of the neighborhood. She noted that the neighborhood west of Van Ness is very green, but much less so east of that street, and said this project will help improve that section. She said the project is modeled on the very successful Larchmont median, and the neighborhood has been holding fundraising events to help raise money. She said Carolyn Ramsay and Tom La Bonge's office have committed their support...and the neighborhood will also be applying for a Los Angeles Community Beautification Grant. The total project budget will be \$120,000.

Director Elizabeth Fuller asked how much money Ms. Mulligan is seeking from the GWNC and Ms. Mulligan said \$15,000.

Director Patti Carroll moved that we provide up to \$15,000 for the "Green Islands" project. Director Jane Gilman seconded the motion.

Director Martha Schuur asked what our annual budget is, and Director Margy Hudson said we have \$100,000. Vice President James Wolf said we also have some money carried over from our first year, but some we need to "use or lose," and the City Council is considering a 50% cut in funding for Neighborhood Councils.

Ms. Hudson said the project sounds fabulous, but asked if the applicants have looked into Quimby Funds as a potential funding source. Ms. Mulligan said they did, but were told by Mr. La Bonge's staff that medians don't qualify as a "park." Director Mary Rajswing asked if we ever got a report on the Quimby Funds audit from Mr. La Bonge's field deputy, Nikki Ezhari, but Ms. Mulligan said that Ms. Ezhari said this project didn't qualify because Quimby Funds can only be used for parks.

Ms. Fuller noted that the GWNC can only pay invoices submitted by contractors, and cannot make grants or provide any sort of up-front money or reimbursements for money already spent. She asked if this project could be paid via invoices and Ms. Mulligan said it could.

Vice President Wolf said that it does fit what we've attempted to do in the past, which is fund projects in which there is participation from other local organizations.

Director Mary Rajswing asked who the "community partners" are, and Ms.

Mulligan said they're working with a publicly funded community incubator that parents small non-profit organizations who aren't themselves 501c3 groups. She said they do, however, take a cut of the funds.

Mr. Wolf called for a vote, and the motion passed unanimously.

[Director Jane Gilman left the meeting at 10:52 p.m. The secretary noted that a quorum was no longer present.]

Ad Hoc Outreach Committee Report

Director Margy Hudson said she would like to continue running our larger ads for GWNC meetings in the Larchmont Chronicle, and that our September 10 guest speaker will be Andrew Adelman, head of the Department of Building and Safety, who will address enforcement issues brought up at our May meeting.

Ms. Hudson said we now have 133 subscribers to our GWNC e-mail news list, and we will soon sign a contract with the web designer we have chosen to re-do our website and design a new logo. She also noted that we have found two "perfect" office spaces, but DONE would not approve them because they were both sublets.

Million Trees Project

Director Mary Rajswing reported that the Larchmont Chronicle printed a picture of the new trees we planted along La Brea Ave. and around Wilshire Crest School. She said there will be more trees going in on Citrus Ave., but the weather is getting too hot for any more planting until fall.

DWP Oversight

DWP Oversight Representative Jack Humphreville said the Oversight Committee met with the DWP last Sunday and agreed that it could not be an advocate, and could only enforce the MOU. He said the DWP is putting up some hurdles in the process, and that he will come back in September with a list of significant issues. He will also be forming a separate "DWP Committee" to act as an advocacy group.

Public Comments

Mr. Humphreville announced a Bastille Day rally, on Monday, July 14, sponsored by Ron Kaye. He distributed fliers for the event and said more information is available at <http://www.ronkayela.com>

Vice President James Wolf announced, on behalf of a stakeholder, an upcoming fundraiser to benefit the Windsor Village HPOZ effort.

Board Member Comments

Director Patti Carroll distributed a letter of support for the Wilshire YMCA expansion project, and said that if anyone would like to send in similar letters of support, it would help a lot. She said letters must be submitted by July 15, and can be faxed to Kitty Gordillo at the YMCA, (323) 467-3026.

Director Margy Hudson announced the upcoming Wilshire Corridor Forum III. She also said she has contacted Survey LA about doing architectural surveys in the GWNC area, and will volunteer to be the point person for that effort.

Director Patti Carroll announced the July 21 Taste of Larchmont event, which will have a circus theme this year and will benefit Hope Net. Tickets are \$40.

Announcements and Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Fuller
Secretary