

Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council



Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council General Meeting

September 13, 2006

Approved by the Board,
as corrected, on 11/08/06

MINUTES

A duly noticed meeting of the Board of Directors of the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council (“GWNC”) was held on Wednesday, September 13, 2006, at The Ebell of Los Angeles, 4400 Wilshire Boulevard. Charles Dougherty, President of the Council, called the meeting to order at 7:14 p.m.

The Secretary called the roll, and Board of Directors members in attendance were: Yigal Arens, Carolyn Bennett, Chickie Byrne, Arnold Castaneda, Moon Chung, Cindy Chvatal, Charles Dougherty, Larry Eisenberg, Roy Forbes, Elizabeth Fuller, Tom Gibbons, Jane Gilman, Rudolph Gintel, Margaret Hudson, Lisa Hutchins, Susan O’Connell, Mary Rajswing, Thomas Roe, Ruth Silveira, Jolene Snett, Baruch Twersky, Jane Usher, Robert Wishart, James Wolf, and Gary Zeiss. The following absent Director was represented by her Alternate (noted in parentheses): Arlin Low (Frances McFall). Directors Shemaya Mandelbaum, Norman Murdoch, Van Dyke Parks, Michael Rosenberg, and John A. Woodward III were absent and were not represented by an Alternate.

The Secretary stated that 26 of the 31 Directors were represented in person or by an Alternate at the beginning of the meeting and that a quorum was present.

The Secretary stated that the Minutes of the Council’s General Meeting of July 12, 2006, had been distributed to Directors by e-mail and had been posted on the Council’s *greaterwilshire.org* web site. Additional copies were distributed at the meeting. She also noted that Director Michael Rosenberg wanted it indicated in the Minutes that he had called to inform her that he would be absent from this evening’s meeting. Next, upon a Motion made from the floor and adopted without objection, reading of the Minutes was waived. The Minutes were approved with corrections requested by Director Liz Fuller concerning a project reviewed at the July meeting (revising the language at the bottom of Page 9 to read: “In response to a question about how this project differs from one the GWNC Board voted to approve at our last meeting, Liz Fuller noted that the building to be torn down does have a distinctive 1950s character, is not a depressed property or in a distressed block or neighborhood, and tearing it down will displace a significant number of tenants.”) and with a typographical correction suggested by

Director Yigal Arens.

Treasurer's Report and Initial Organization

Treasurer Susan O'Connell reported that the only recent expenses had related to photocopying and advertising in connection with outreach efforts.

Public Comments

The President asked if there were any Public Comments from Stakeholders, and Stakeholder Kay Bernard, of 260 South Sycamore Avenue, addressed the Board to report on the activity subsequent to the GWNC's action at its last meeting at which the Board did not vote in favor of supporting Tentative Tract Map approval for an 18-unit condominium project proposed to replace the Sycamore Avenue apartment building where Ms. Bernard now lives. Ms. Bernard again thanked the Board for supporting the tenants in their opposition to the demolition of the building and its replacement with a condominium building. She stated that she and her neighbors attended the July 26, 2006, meeting of the Deputy Advisory Agency that reviews and approves (or disapproves) Tentative Tracts. Ms. Bernard and her neighbors testified as to the action of the GWNC and the GWNC's vote against the proposal. Ms. Bernard said the Tentative Map subsequently was approved by the Deputy Advisory Agency, with no mention whatsoever of the position of the GWNC.

Mr. Michael Wolf introduced himself, saying it was the first time he has attended a GWNC General Meeting. Mr. Michael Wolf indicated he lives at the edge of the Wilshire District, in the Hollywood area. He expressed concern about the West Hollywood Food Coalition's homeless feeding service near the corner of Sycamore and Romaine. He said it results in an environment of drug and alcohol use and sleeping in neighbors' yards. Mr. Michael Wolf said he has been in contact with Councilman Jack Weiss and Ted Lanneret, the operator of the service, but to no avail.

Director Roy Forbes suggested to Mr. Michael Wolf that he might seek the involvement of one of the local governments' Dispute Resolution Services.

Ms. Joan Taylor, a Stakeholder in the neighboring Mid-City West Neighborhood Council, expressed concern about taxi coupon book prices.

GWNC Stakeholder John Welborne offered the Board what he described as an attractive election outreach flyer from the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC) and passed the document to Director Forbes. He presented a Daily News article describing the Mayor's thrust on planning programs, suggesting this is a very relevant issue for the GWNC. Mr. Welborne also reported on the recent Mayor's Budget Meeting held on a Saturday for neighborhood council representatives. Mr. Welborne said it appeared that he and Ms. Margaret Sowma were the only two GWNC Stakeholders

attending. Mr. Welborne said the Mayor is very interested in neighborhood council leaders' input into the budget preparation process. Mr. Welborne gave the GWNC officers copies of the Mayor's Budget Survey, and Mr. Welborne said that members of the Board of Directors and Stakeholders also could give their input online.

A representative of Assemblymember Karen Bass introduced herself and distributed the Assemblymember's business cards, noting that their office stands ready to assist the GWNC and other councils.

Board Member Comments / New Business

President Dougherty thanked the Stakeholders and others for their comments and asked if there were any Board Member Comments. Mr. Forbes noted that he had found a stray rabbit and would be happy to have it claimed.

Traffic Committee Report

President Dougherty said there were Stakeholders present who wished to discuss traffic issues, so he would move the *Ad Hoc* Zoning and Land Use Committee matters and Election Committee matters to later in the Agenda and proceed with the remaining Agenda items first.

Director Larry Eisenberg, as chair of the *Ad Hoc* Traffic Committee, indicated there were Gower Street residents who wish to express concerns about parking on their block. Lorena Miller and her husband moved to their house in the block of Gower Street between First Street and Beverly Boulevard in December of 2005. They discovered that portions of the street, which is limited to 2-hour parking during business hours, regularly gets filled with the cars of Larchmont shoppers, including yoga studio attendees. Her husband has spoken with neighbors about obtaining permit parking for their block so the residents and their employees and visitors may park for longer than two hours. In investigating this matter with the City's Department of Transportation ("City DOT"), it was learned that the City traditionally has wanted permit parking petition requests to come from much larger areas, perhaps 6-to-8 blocks. However, the Gower neighbors have learned that City DOT will be changing this policy in December to allow smaller areas to request permit parking. Ms. Miller said she is seeking a GWNC letter of support for the efforts of her block.

Director Roy Forbes offered a Motion that the GWNC support permit parking for the block of Gower Street between First Street and Beverly Boulevard, so long as two-hour parking remains available there for non-permit holders. Director Cindy Chvatal seconded the Motion. Mr. Forbes re-stated the Motion as follows: "Following the recommendation of its *Ad Hoc* Traffic Committee, the Board of Directors of the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council directs its officers to provide a letter of support for permit parking for residents of the 100 and 200 portions of North Gower Street, provided

that 2-hour parking continue to be allowed for non-permit-holders.” President Dougherty asked if there were any discussion on Mr. Forbes’ Motion. There being no further discussion, he called the question, and the Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Eisenberg said there were no further traffic matters to bring before the Board, and President Dougherty moved to the next Agenda item.

Special Projects Committee Report – Emergency Preparedness

Director Margy Hudson, chair of the *Ad Hoc* Special Projects Committee, thanked the Board for approval of the Emergency Preparedness Outreach budget submitted to the Board by Special Projects Committee member and Director Ruth Silveira at the last Board meeting. Ms. Hudson described in detail the first big Emergency Preparedness outreach event, which will feature ten Emergency Preparedness-related GWNC booths at the October 29th Larchmont Family Fair. She expects this effort to reach 4000 to 6000 people in the community, perhaps more. Ms. Hudson distributed a sign-up sheet for Directors to volunteer to staff these tables, and almost all Directors and Alternates present were able to arrange their schedules so they could volunteer to participate.

There were numerous questions and suggestions from Board members. Director Gary Zeiss suggested there be coordination with all the schools that typically participate in the fair, and Directors Eisenberg, Forbes, and Snett agreed to help with outreach to the schools. Director Tom Gibbons suggested there be information about what the GWNC does and alerting neighbors to the upcoming March election and promoting the GWNC web site. President Dougherty and Vice President Cindy Chvatal said they would work on that idea.

Director Chickie Byrne said that an enormous amount of effort and planning has gone into this outreach effort and that Margy Hudson, especially, should be thanked. Ms. Hudson said the credit is due to her fine committee, including, Lisa Hutchins, Gary Gilbert, and Ruth Silveira. There was a round of applause for them all.

Liaison Committee Report

Director Roy Forbes, as chair of the Liaison Committee, reported on a recent meeting with Council District 4 representatives at City Hall concerning the recurrent problems associated with power service from the Department of Water and Power. Attending the meeting with Director Forbes were Directors Cindy Chvatal and Chickie Byrne. Mr. Forbes indicated that the Council staff said they “are on the case” and that the problems experienced most recently really had been “the perfect storm” where everything bad happened at the same time. Lisa Sarno, Director of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, had also indicated to Director Forbes that other neighborhoods in the City have been experiencing similar power supply problems.

Mr. Forbes then asked Alternate John Gresham to report on the ongoing discussions concerning the proposed western boundary of the new 20th Police Division. As originally proposed by LAPD staff, the boundary would cut through three GWNC neighborhoods: Larchmont Village, Windsor Square, and Wilshire Park. This proposed boundary would leave the GWNC straddling the boundary between the existing Wilshire Division and the new 20th Division.

Mr. Gresham reported that, pursuant to the direction of the Board at the last meeting, he and others from the GWNC community, including Director Carolyn Bennett and Stakeholders Liz Morehead and Larry Guzin, had met with Eric Lillo of the LAPD and discussed the issues and hurdles involved. Mr. Gresham noted that the adjacent Wilshire Center-Koreatown Neighborhood Council (“WCKNC”) leaders also want their council to be in a single LAPD reporting district.

Mr. Gresham suggested that the Board should go on record that the LAPD’s proposed division boundary be moved easterly so it will coincide with the GWNC eastern boundary. President Dougherty made a Motion to that effect, and the Motion was seconded by Director Byrne. The President called for discussion.

Stakeholder John Welborne said extensive research and discussion had gone into this issue and he urged the Board’s adoption of the Motion.

Director Jane Usher asked Mr. Gresham if the boundary shown on the maps he provided was correct, and he said “yes.” Director Eisenberg asked if the proposed change of boundary would have any impact on resource allocations, and Mr. Gresham said “no.” Mr. Zeiss inquired as to the location of the new LAPD station, and Mr. Gresham said it is under construction at Vermont Avenue and Eleventh Street, the site of the former American Red Cross Blood Donation Center. Director Forbes noted that the change we are advocating would still leave 10-12 properties on Wilton Place in the adjacent LAPD division, and Director Usher observed that absolute perfection will never be possible, especially given the way BONC long ago approved the WCKNC western boundary.

Following this discussion, the question was called, and the Motion that the LAPD’s proposed division boundary be moved easterly so it will coincide with the GWNC eastern boundary carried unanimously.

Director Ruth Silveira next reported on a neighborhood meeting held on September 7th with representatives of the Library Department, including City Librarian Fontayne Holmes. The Department is reviewing its Branch Facilities Plan. In this initial exploration with community groups, one of the possibilities suggested by the Library Department is the closure of the historic Wilshire Branch Library in the Saint Andrews Square neighborhood. Ms. Silveira said the neighborhood is very upset about such an idea, and she also noted that City Librarian Holmes did note that there had been no support received for the idea of closing the Wilshire Branch. Ms. Holmes was quoted as

saying that these are only the most preliminary discussions of possible approaches for dealing with the public's continuing demand for library services.

Director Chickie Byrne moved that the GWNC go on record as opposing any closure of the historic Wilshire Branch Library. Director Cindy Chvatal seconded the Motion, and President Dougherty called for further discussion.

Stakeholder John Welborne supported the Motion and advised that a GWNC letter reporting such a Board action to City Librarian Fontayne Holmes would be a valuable contribution to the Library Department's evaluation of the options. Stakeholder Patti Carroll, from the Saint Andrews Square Neighborhood Association, reported attending the Library Department meeting and learning that nine existing branches potentially could be affected and that six of them are historic buildings, including Wilshire Branch.

President Dougherty noted that his family has made use of the Wilshire Branch, a sentiment echoed by a number of Directors. Director Carolyn Bennett stated that she uses the Branch because there always seems to be adequate street parking available in the neighborhood. Director Arens asked why the City was considering closing the Branch and whether it was because the Branch is too small? Director Usher replied that this is just a master planning process underway with respect to all the City's libraries. The Library Department created various criteria and judged the existing service in relation to those criteria. Now is the time for the community to give its feedback.

Director Gary Zeiss asked if expansion of the Branch were needed or possible. Director Jane Gilman said that, if expansion were to be a desire, the Library Department probably wants to avoid destroying adjacent single-family houses. Director Silveira said there really is too much unknown at this time, but that she feels it is the time to take a stand. Following this discussion, the question was called, and the Motion that GWNC go on record as opposing any closure of the historic Wilshire Branch Library was adopted on a vote of 25 Directors in favor of the Motion and 1 Director opposed. Ms. Usher suggested it would be useful to post something on the GWNC web site to alert neighbors about this issue.

(At this point, 8:30 p.m., Director Baruch Twersky excused himself and left the meeting, and his Alternate, John Gresham, took his chair.)

Liaison Committee Chair Forbes said a final matter related to the Brookside neighborhood seeking formal City recognition of its community name. The City now requires neighborhood council approval of such efforts. Mr. Forbes moved that the GWNC endorse the efforts of Brookside, and Director Carolyn Bennett seconded the Motion. President Dougherty asked if there were further discussion and, there being none, called the question. The Motion to endorse Brookside's name recognition by the City carried unanimously.

Election Committee Report

Roy Forbes reminded the Board that Election Procedures had been developed over the spring and summer by the Election Committee, comprised of himself and Gary Gilbert, Jane Usher, and Jan Wieringa. At the last General Meeting, the Board of the GWNC adopted the Election Procedures after discussion and some amendments. As a result the next, and second, GWNC Election of Directors and Alternates is scheduled for Wednesday, March 14, 2007.

Mr. Forbes indicated that the Board-adopted Election Procedures had been timely-filed with DONE for its staff's concurrence. However, DONE did not review the Election Procedures according to the required DONE schedule. Now, however, matters seem to be back on track. Mr. Forbes introduced Mr. Melvin Cañas, GWNC's new DONE Project Coordinator.

Mr. Cañas related how he has worked with DONE for five years and that he has been coordinating with neighborhood councils in the Central and Northeast areas of the City. He looks forward to working with our council. He indicated that everything still appears on schedule for the March election. He noted that his initial review of the GWNC file indicates that only a portion of the Bylaws may have been approved by DONE earlier in the year, a matter he is discussing with his supervisor, Jonathan Martinez.

At this point, Director Jane Usher, chair of the *Ad Hoc* Bylaws Committee, rose to state emphatically that there had been a complete and exhaustive process and that DONE had approved the new Bylaws in their entirety. Mr. Cañas agreed that he had not seen the entire file and that he would review this matter further. He said he would continue working with Mr. Forbes so the final Election Procedures could be approved by the GWNC Board in November – to keep everything on track for the March election.

Ad Hoc Zoning and Land Use Committee Reports and Possible Board Actions

(At this point, 9:07 p.m., Director Jane Usher excused herself because she is a member of the City Planning Commission, and she left the meeting, as did Directors Tom Gibbons and Carolyn Bennett. Ms. Usher's Alternate, William MacNeil, took her chair.)

Jim Wolf, Chair of the *Ad Hoc* Zoning and Land Use Committee, commented that there would be a single project presented to the Board this evening.

751 – 757 South Windsor Boulevard: Mr. Wolf noted that this project had been discussed at the recent meeting of the Park Mile Design Review Board (in whose jurisdiction are projects located between Highland Avenue and Wilton Place, from Sixth to Eighth Streets). At that meeting, the project developers and their advocate, Mr. King Woods, were given feedback by the Board, and the applicants agreed to re-work their

proposal. Basically, the owners wish to demolish two adjacent single-family homes and build a condominium project on the property. This is allowed by existing zoning (that goes back fifty or more years). Mr. Wolf suggested that the GWNC might take an action in support of the Design Review Board members' view that the project as originally proposed would not be supported by the Design Review Board.

Several Stakeholders neighboring the project described how another apartment or condominium building recently had been built on the site of a former single-family house in the same block on Windsor Boulevard and that the new building was noticeably inconsistent with the architecture of the neighborhood. It was noted that higher-density development would have impacts on the adjacent blocks zoned for single-family use only. President Dougherty, a resident of the neighborhood, said residents wondered whether there were traffic studies evaluating the capacities of the streets in question.

Stakeholder John Welborne recounted the community process involved in the 1978 – 1981 preparation of the Park Mile Specific Plan (“PMSP”), which includes the blocks in question. He noted that the Planning Department did complete environmental reviews at the time of preparation and adoption of the PMSP, but he also noted that the Plan did not change the existing zoning for the areas in question. The multiple-family zoning, generally north of Francis Avenue to just south of Wilshire Boulevard, has been part of the City's zoning and community plans since the late 1940s or early 1950s. Indeed, there are some very attractive and desirable multiple-family buildings that date back to those years, he said. He added that there are some additional “Q” conditions that apply in the area, adopted subsequent to the PMSP to further restrict the designs and setbacks of new multiple-family buildings.

Stakeholder Stephan Sapunor stated that Stakeholders in the area are hopeful the Design Review Board will work as hard as possible to get the project as compatible as possible with the neighborhood, and that he agrees it would be appropriate for the GWNC to support such efforts.

Mr. Wolf offered a Motion that the GWNC support the position of, and the instructions given by, the Park Mile Design Review Board to the applicants for project approval for a building at 751 – 757 South Windsor Boulevard when the Design Review Board's objections to the applicant's public presentation were provided to the applicant, along with the instruction for the applicant to redesign the project and to return to the Design Review Board for further review thereafter. Director Jolene Snett seconded the Motion. President Dougherty called for further discussion.

Director Gary Zeiss noted that the Minutes of the last meeting reported on the issue raised concerning the GWNC's role in reviewing and commenting on matters before the Park Mile Design Review Board. Is this case one that will still be around when the GWNC Board next meets in two months? Director Larry Eisenberg agreed that it is important to understand what, exactly, is the GWNC's role in such cases.

John Welborne indicated that there is a distinction between the GWNC and the PMDRB and their roles, just as there is a distinction between the GWNC and the Deputy Advisory Agency, the Zoning Administrator, or any other City entity charged with review and decision-making authority over land use issues. Those bodies have such authority; the GWNC does not. However, the GWNC, as a broad-based reflection of stakeholders of a community, certainly can provide a thoughtful and useful opinion to those other bodies – whether they choose to agree with the GWNC’s opinion or not.

Director Jolene Snett suggested that the real issue with this particular case is that it is just another example of excellent single-family houses being replaced with higher-density multiple-family housing. She suggested that residents should seek the support of Michael Bai and the Tenth Council District office for establishing a moratorium on demolitions until the matter can be reviewed. Director Chickie Byrne suggested that the best immediate step would be to vote in favor of Jim Wolf’s Motion now before the Board. John Gresham commented that there are other potential projects needing monitoring in this vicinity.

There being no further discussion, the President called the question on the Motion made by Mr. Wolf and seconded by Ms. Snett to support the position of the Park Mile Design Review Board regarding 751 – 757 South Windsor Boulevard. The President said he would conduct a roll call vote on the Motion. The Motion carried unanimously, with all 23 Directors present voting in favor and one Director (Mr. Eisenberg) temporarily out of the room at the time the vote was taken.

(At this point, 9:55 p.m., Director Chickie Byrne excused herself and left the meeting.)

Mr. Wolf brought up the subject discussed at some length at the end of the last meeting – the GWNC having a “Policy Defining Committee” to evaluate what involvement does the GWNC wish to have in connection with evaluation and comment upon land use issues. Mr. Wolf suggested the committee could have two parts: one to review immediate issues and one to deal with long-range issues. Mr. Gresham volunteered to help with such efforts. Director Ruth Silveira observed that recent experiences, such as the GWNC’s vote in support of the project at 140 South Gramercy Place prior to the neighbors reviewing that project, were upsetting to her and that clearer policies certainly would be helpful. Others who offered to work with Mr. Wolf and Mr. Gresham on this effort were Directors Fuller, Arens, Zeiss, and Castaneda. Treasurer Susan O’Connell observed that the Outreach Committee also should be involved in the effort to maximize Stakeholder input.

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Announcements

President Dougherty reminded Board members that the next regular bi-monthly meeting of the GWNC will be on Wednesday, November 8, 2006, at 7:00 p.m. However, the meeting will be at a location OTHER THAN the Ebell, such location to be announced prior to the meeting.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 10:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jane Gilman
Secretary