

Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council



Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council General Meeting

September 26, 2007

Approved by the board
as amended on 11/14/07

MINUTES

A duly noticed meeting of the Board of Directors of the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council (“GWNC”) was held on Wednesday, September 26, 2007, at the Ebell of Los Angeles, 743 South Lucerne Avenue. Charlie Dougherty, President of the Council, called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

The Secretary, Elizabeth Fuller, called the roll. Board of Directors members in attendance were: Yigal Arens, Patti Carroll, Moon Chung, Erick Garcia (alt. Sam Cunningham), Charles Dougherty, Elizabeth Fuller, Jane Gilman, John Gresham, Alison Hannon, Margaret Hudson, Mike Genewick (alt. Alex Jones-Moreno), Mary Rajswing, Thomas Roe, Martha Schuur, Russell Sherman, Rudy Gintel (alt. Jolene Snett), Robert Wishart and James Wolf. Board members Roy Forbes, Shar Penfold and Jane Usher were absent and not represented by an alternate.

The Secretary stated that a quorum was present.

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. Director Russell Sherman requested that three changes be made to the traffic report on page 9:

Original: “Left turn arrows have also been installed at Wilshire and Highland, and at Wilshire and Western. Arrows at 3rd and La Brea will be coming soon.”

Proposed replacement: “Left turn arrows have been installed at Wilshire/Highland, Wilshire/Western and La Brea/3rd. Arrows at La Brea and Beverly are coming soon.”

Original: “circular pattern”

Proposed replacement: “circulation pattern”

Original: “For example, if north/south arterial traffic doesn’t use Highland Ave., where will it go...and if it does go there, how will we handle the increased volume?”

Proposed replacement: “For example, is Highland an arterial street for North/South traffic? If not, where do we want the traffic to go? If it (traffic) is to go there (Highland), how do we handle the increased volume?”

Director Thomas Roe moved that the Minutes be accepted as amended and the motion was seconded. There were no objections, and the Minutes were approved as amended.

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Russell Sherman passed out copies of a proposed budget for 2007-2008, explaining that funds have been allocated to give us the “most flexibility possible.” President Charlie Dougherty noted that this budget isn’t an official distribution of funds, but something required by DONE to demonstrate that we have a general plan for expenditures. Director John Gresham asked if ongoing expenses are represented in this breakdown, and Mr. Sherman said we currently have none except for the rental of the Ebell for our meetings. Mr. Gresham asked about office space, and Mr. Sherman noted that we’ve budgeted \$18,000, as DONE recommends. Mr. Gresham moved to approve the budget. The motion was seconded by Director Patti Carroll, and it carried unanimously.

President’s Report

President Charlie Dougherty brought up the issue of appointing alternate board members for several seats that currently lack them.

First, he noted that Director Roy Forbes (Area 1) has resigned from his seat on the board, but his alternate, Jan Wieringa, has declined to be Mr. Forbes’ permanent replacement. Instead, Mr. Dougherty said, Ms. Wieringa will also resign, so we can appoint a new full-time representative (probably Brookside president Owen Smith) to this seat, and Ms. Wieringa can be re-appointed as his alternate.

Next, Mr. Dougherty named four people who have agreed to fill other vacancies for alternates: Jared Abrams (Area 7), Joan Jakubowski (Area 11), Erick Garcia (Area 12), and Gail Minogue (Area 13). Mr. Abrams, Ms. Jakubowski and Mr. Garcia rose in the audience and briefly introduced themselves, then Director John Gresham gave a brief introduction of Ms. Minogue, who was not present. Director Jane Gilman moved that we approve the new alternates, Director Margaret Hudson seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously. (At 7:30 p.m., Mr. Garcia took his seat to replace absent board member Sam Cunningham).

Moving on to the two funding requests on the agenda, President Dougherty noted

that both requests were withdrawn shortly before the meeting, but said they provided a good reason to open a discussion on how to create guidelines for spending our discretionary funds. This is especially important, he said, because people are starting to ask him for money – often to match funds provided by our City Council office - for various neighborhood projects. Mr. Dougherty said he'd like to assign an ad hoc committee to come up with guidelines for the use of discretionary funds, and asked that our current treasurer, Russell Sherman, and our past treasurer, Susan O'Connell, both be part of the committee.

Mr. Dougherty also distributed a letter about funding guidelines, submitted by Director Jane Usher, and asked that everyone take a few minutes to read it:

September 26, 2007

Dear President Dougherty and Board Members,

Again, my apologies for the scheduling conflict that has me speaking on a land use panel at USC this evening, instead of working with you on the issues that affect Greater Wilshire. In an effort to be of some assistance in my absence, I am writing concerning the two funding requests that appear on our GWNC agenda. 1. Funding Guidelines. It seems timely for the GWNC to prepare, endorse, and ultimately publish a set of guidelines for those who seek funding from us. This will bring the right level of transparency and even-handedness to the process. Guidelines will also force us to be thoughtful about our policies. Since we work through a committee system, I suggest that we create an ad hoc committee on the topic of Funding Guidelines. The life span of this committee should not exceed six months.

The committee should: a) seek models from DONE (if any exist); b) prepare a draft set of guidelines for discussion at our next GWNC meeting in November; and c) bring a final set of guidelines to our January GWNC meeting for adoption.

2. Issues to be Addressed. Here is a starter list of topics for our Ad Hoc Funding Guidelines Committee to consider as they prepare draft Guidelines:

- Overall GWNC budget and operating expenses*
- Timetable for reversion of GWNC funds to the City*
- Annual budget for GWNC sponsored projects*
- Annual budget for awarding to outside funding requests*
- Annual timeline for receiving and acting on funding requests*
- Emergency funding requests*
- Forms and format for funding requests*
- Applicant requirements (no individuals?)*
- Project requirements (see my thoughts on this below)*
- Matching requirements*
- Achieving geographic parity within the GWNC*

In my view, we should think seriously about funding ONLY those requests that will lead to long-term physical improvements to the GWNC's public spaces. This

ensures that all can enjoy our projects. It also means that our legacy will be tangible, for the benefit of not only ourselves but those who come after us. Thanks for considering my thoughts.

Sincerely,

Jane Ellison Usher

Mr. Dougherty said Ms. Usher's suggestions were "a good starting point," and encouraged the new committee to set a finite time for its work, due to the urgency of the issue.

Alternate Director Mike Genewick suggested the committee contact our various neighborhood associations for advice, noting that they've been fielding funding requests and developing funding guidelines longer than the Neighborhood Council. Director Yigal Arens asked if this kind of expenditure is in our newly-approved budget, and treasurer Russell Sherman said it's included in the "Community Improvement" category. Director John Gresham agreed that it's good for both our past and present treasurers to participate in the committee, since they've both gone through DONE training, and President Dougherty noted that each of them received a different version of the training, which broadens their perspective even more. Mr. Dougherty asked if Directors John Gresham, Elizabeth Fuller, Yigal Arens and Margy Hudson, and alternate Mike Genewick, would also serve on the committee, and all accepted. Director Elizabeth Fuller moved that we form an ad hoc committee to create guidelines for funding neighborhood projects, with the committee's work to last no more than six months. Director Moon Chung seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Million Trees Project Report

Director Mary Rajswing thanked Director Robert Wishart for giving this committee's report at our last meeting, and acknowledged the other committee members, Alison Hannon, Jane Gilman, and Alex Jones-Moreno. Ms. Rajswing said the committee will sponsor three booths at the Larchmont Fair on October 28, two of which will be staffed by representatives of the Hollywood Beautification Team, which will give away 200 free 1-gallon trees to Fair attendees. She said our committee members will also be walking through the Fair to publicize the booth, and we'll have balloons, canopies and chairs at the booths, for a total cost of just over \$1,000.

Next, Ms. Rajswing passed out a handout that explains how to get free trees from the City, and reported that the committee is also working with several of our neighborhoods (including St. Andrews Square, La Brea-Hancock, Melrose and Brookside) on tree projects.

Sharyn Romano, from the Hollywood Beautification Team, was scheduled to make a further presentation on this subject, but hadn't yet arrived, so Ms. Rajswing reported that Ms. Romano has been coming up with other good ideas for tree planting, such as concentrating on our area's busy business streets, which have lots of areas with no trees. She said the Hollywood Beautification Team has grant money available to cut

cement and create tree wells, and they can also help send us out “armed and dangerous” with good arguments for tree planting. Finally, she said that many other Neighborhood Councils are donating money to various tree-planting partners, and we should discuss this...as well as consider our own planting event, perhaps at a public school.

Director John Gresham asked if Ms. Romano could help to get some new trees on La Brea Ave., and Ms. Rajswing said yes.

Director Margaret Hudson asked if they’ve considered putting tags on the trees they give away, obligating recipients to plant them, and Ms. Rajswing explained that people who get the trees have to go through a five minute “adoption” process, and commit to planting them, when they receive the trees. Ms. Hudson also said a big problem is keeping trees watered properly after they’re planted, and Ms. Rajswing said they’re trying to identify point people for watering in each neighborhood, through the neighborhood associations. Ms. Hudson noted that the Windsor Square Association has sent out a number of e-mail reminders to water new trees, through its block captains.

In response to a question about the diversity of new trees, Ms. Rajswing said it’s a good idea to collect neighbors’ requests and coordinate the kinds of trees that get planted. Alternate Mike Genewick asked if there’s a city master plan for planting parkway trees, and who’s handling the tree selections. Ms. Rajswing said Million Trees LA is coordinating tree selections, and will help direct people to the correct trees for their locations. Mr. Genewick also noted that trees randomly given away at events like the Larchmont Fair could result in a “hodgepodge” that would play havoc with any master plans.

Director Patti Carroll asked how far in advance people can be told what kind of tree they’ll be getting, and Ms. Rajswing said she didn’t know, but could ask. Then Director Russell Sherman noted that the city isn’t giving away parkway trees, because you need a city permit to plant them. Director Thomas Roe asked if you can plant the free trees on private or public property, and Ms. Rajswing said you can receive up to seven trees, for either public or private land. Mr. Genewick asked whether parkway trees planted on commercial streets would be placed in tree wells, and Ms. Rajswing said yes, and that she could confirm that with Ms. Romano.

[Note: Still waiting for Ms. Romano to arrive, President Dougherty moved on to a couple of announcements from guests in the audience.]

Betty Wong Oyama, our new DONE Project Coordinator. She left a stack of business cards, and invited people to contact her, but noted that she might be switched to a different position by the first of the new year. Ms. Wong said she was the first project coordinator for our Council before it was certified, and that she’s happy to be back. She also announced the final report from the city’s Neighborhood Council Review Commission, a 75-page document that will be used to reorganize DONE to better serve Neighborhood Councils. In addition, she asked for two volunteers from our Council to attend the Mayor’s Budget Day on October 14, and promoted the Congress of

Neighborhoods, to be held on October 27 at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

The second speaker from the audience was Carolyn Ramsay, Field Director for City Councilman Tom La Bonge. Ms. Ramsay reported on several area events and issues:

- Plans have been drawn up for improvements at Robert Burns Park, at Beverly and Van Ness, which will be presented to a neighborhood committee on October 12.
- There will be a community meeting to encourage neighborhood participation near Western Ave. The meeting will be hosted by GWNC Director Moon Chung.
- Tom La Bonge has initiated a “Green Paths to School” project, which aims to create green approaches around public schools...and he’d like to get all of our neighborhoods involved.
- The owner of 610 Van Ness Ave. is being arraigned tomorrow on zoning and building violations – a case which has been very long in getting to court.
- Tom LaBonge hosted a bike-riding event on 4th St. this summer, which was a lot of fun. There will be another ride in the Valley in October, and another event in this part of town at some point in the future.
- Tom LaBonge has also issued a statement on the subject of building inspectors who arrived at Yavneh Academy on Yom Kippur.
- There was a community meeting on crime at 3rd St. School last week, where a major topic of discussion was a recent Plymouth Ave. shooting. (The incident was the result of a drug deal gone bad, and did not involve any neighborhood residents. The victim died and the shooter has not been caught.) A summary of the meeting is available, if anyone’s interested in learning more.

Ad Hoc Outreach Committee Report

Director Margaret Hudson, chair of the Ad Hoc Outreach Committee, introduced the members of her committee: Thomas Roe, Yigal Arens, Jolene Snett, Joan Jakubowski, Elizabeth Fuller, and John McIntyre. She said that since the committee was formed at our July meeting, she has been studying outreach efforts and websites of other Neighborhood Councils. Director Elizabeth Fuller said that she would like get our website redesigned, to make it more attractive, better organized to present the kinds of information we’d like to provide, and more user-friendly. She also recommended acquiring additional variants of our domain name (we currently own greaterwilshire.com, greaterwilshire.org and greaterwilshire.net), but that several desirable ones (gwnc.org, gwnc.come and gwnc.net) are currently unavailable. Director John Gresham asked if we should use another variant, such as “gwnc2001,” but Ms. Fuller said incorporating dates in URLs tends to give a “dated” (i.e. non-current) impression. Alternate Erick Garcia asked how people will know we have a website, and Ms. Hudson said that publicizing it will be part of our overall outreach efforts. Ms. Fuller made a motion that the Outreach Committee be allowed to solicit proposals and bids for a website re-design, with the understanding that we will come back to the Board with a recommended candidate and

budget for the project at a later date. Director Jane Gilman seconded the motion. President Dougherty invited discussion, and Mr. Gresham noted that the Wilshire Park Association went through three designers when re-doing its website, and cautioned that we be careful to find someone who can work with our needs and create a site that will be easy to update after the designer is no longer involved. President Dougherty called for a vote on Ms. Fuller's motion, and it passed unanimously.

Ms. Hudson also reported that because many of our stakeholders do not have internet access, we also need a reliable phone number. Director Yigal Arens recommended to the Outreach Committee that we use an online service called GrandCentral.com, which provides free phone numbers that can be forwarded to any telephone or voicemail, and which provides a web interface for accessing and forwarding voice mail messages. Ms. Fuller set up a test account and phone number at GrandCentral.com, and it seems to work very efficiently. Director John Gresham asked if the phone number is toll free, and Ms. Fuller said the area code is 424, a new overlay number being used throughout the Los Angeles area. Ms. Hudson made a motion that we set up a permanent GWNC phone number through the GrandCentral.com service. Alternate Erick Garcia asked if there's a limit on the length of messages that can be left. Mr. Arens urged all who are curious to visit the GrandCentral.com website and try it, noting there's a lot of flexibility in its capabilities. President Dougherty asked what the cost would be, and Ms. Fuller said there is no cost, it's a free service. Ms Hudson repeated her motion to set up the GWNC phone number through GrandCentral.com and Ms. Fuller seconded it.

Director Jane Gilman asked if it would take too much time for one of our Board Members to respond to the voice mail messages we'd get this way, and Mr. Gresham asked if this duty could be transferred to an office assistant, if we get one at some point. Ms. Fuller explained that whichever person we designate (probably her, for now) will get an e-mail notification every time there's a new voice mail message, and that it takes very little time to log in to the website, listen to the message, and either respond or forward the message to a more appropriate person. President Dougherty said that, in the past, he's received no more than one message per day when we've had phone service, and Mr. Gresham said he only gets about one every six months. Mr. Garcia said we do need a way for people to be able to leave messages about their concerns, and this sounds like a "wonderful idea." President Dougherty called the question, and the motion was re-read. It passed unanimously.

Moving on to the subject of formally advertising the GWNC, Director Hudson noted that Director Jane Gilman publishes an ad each month in the Larchmont Chronicle, and that we're also investigating advertising in the Hollywood Independent and the Jewish Journal. Alternate Joan Jakubowski, who has been researching advertising rates for those publications, said the Hollywood Independent charges \$750 for a 1/8-page ad, while the Jewish Journal charges \$415 per week, but the more weeks you buy, the cheaper it gets. Alternate Rudy Gintel said those prices sound too high, based on his experience, and Ms. Hudson offered to circulate a rate sheet. President Dougherty noted that this is just a committee report, and the Board is not being asked to take any action or

approve any advertising plans yet. Director John Gresham asked who in the room receives the Hollywood Independent every week, and Alternate Mike Genewick asked how many people who receive it actually read it. Ms. Jakubowski said the paper's stated circulation is 60,000, and their readership is reported as 200,000. Mr. Genewick estimated the paper's readership at about "1%" of its circulation, and Director Jane Gilman said neither paper (the Independent or the Jewish Journal) is well read within the GWNC's geographic boundaries. She suggested flyers may be a better way for us to advertise. Director Mary Rajswing suggested the Korean Times and Korean Daily News might also be good advertising venues, and Director Patti Carroll suggested church and temple newsletters. President Dougherty noted that St. Brendan's newsletter is widely read among our stakeholders. Director Martha Schuur asked if we could do targeted mailings to people in the zip codes in our area. Alternate Erick Garcia asked if any publications will give us free space as a public service, but Ms. Hudson said she has asked and all have said no.

Moving on to the subject of creating a GWNC stakeholder mailing list, and whether or not we'd have to make such a list public, Director Hudson introduced Alternate John McIntyre, who reported that the City Attorney has recently issued a finding that Neighborhood Councils may decline to disclose their databases, when they're created in a such a way that participants may reasonably expect the privacy of their data will be maintained. This means, he said, that we can collect names for a mailing list, as long as we promise subscribers that we will not give their data to third parties. President Dougherty asked if we can thus guarantee stakeholders that their information won't be published, and DONE representative Betty Wong said that if a stakeholder submits a request for our data, it should go to her, and she can refuse. Director Yigal Arens asked how we can establish the expectation of privacy, and Ms. Wong said we can have the City Attorney help with the wording. Director John Gresham noted that we've long been told that any database we create would be public information, so this is a big step forward and he's glad to see the policy has evolved.

Director Hudson reported that the Hollywood United Neighborhood Council runs a YahooGroups mailing list, and sends out seven or eight messages per week, about things like mudslides, street closures, events, etc. She said we could start with a YahooGroup list (where Yahoo technically owns the subscriber list, not us), and then create our own database later. She said she and Director Jane Gilman have been collecting names and contact information for all of our area neighborhood associations, and we could also push e-mail to them to send out in their areas.

On the subject of GWNC office space, President Dougherty said that in the past, we have "tried mightily" to secure office space for the GWNC, but negotiations have always failed because the City won't alter the lease terms we must require. He asked Ms. Wong if this policy has changed yet, and she invited him to forward the terms in question to her, so she can have DONE's contract person look at it and see if there's any way around the problematic language. Director John Gresham asked if other Neighborhood Councils have office space, and Ms. Wong said the Wilshire Center-Koreatown Neighborhood Council does, and at least one other is in the process of securing an office.

Director Hudson asked if ADA requirements are another barrier to finding appropriate space, and President Dougherty said those requirements are “do-able,” though they do cut down the number of our potential choices to some degree. He said the most troublesome issue is that the City wouldn’t strike a “slavery clause” from its contract, and Ms. Wong invited him to send her details about our proposed location. Mr. Dougherty said we’ve already lost that possibility, but would like to open a dialogue on the subject, and Ms. Wong said there may also be some workarounds, such as using our own funds, not City money, to pay for office space. We might also be able to pay an office assistant as a “1099” (freelance) consultant, and thus pay more than the City would allow for a direct employee. Director John Gresham noted that the Neighborhood Council Alliance, which meets every two months, may also be able to help with issues like this, and is definitely willing to try. He offered to e-mail their contact information to Mr. Dougherty.

Ms. Hudson distributed draft copies of a publicity flyer her committee has prepared. Director Thomas Roe said the committee wanted a flyer that could be sent to everyone in our area, to say that we exist and explain how to contact us. He asked, however, whether we should have just one flyer for our whole area, or do separate flyers for different neighborhoods. Director Yigal Arens said we took the idea and made it more generic. Director Martha Schuur said the draft looked good, and suggested adding a map of our area to the back side. Director John Gresham said he supports the flyer idea, and asked if it would be distributed by the Walking Man service or in some other way. He also noted that we got a great response from a similar flyer a few years ago, before the Council was certified. Mr. Arens asked where he could get the map, and President Dougherty asked if DONE would have one. DONE representative Betty Wong said they would, and Ms. Hudson said the committee could add the map and then come back to the Council with estimates for printing and distribution.

Ms. Hudson also brought up the idea of creating and distributing reusable cloth shopping bags, printed with our name and logo. She said some Neighborhood Councils have done these (and some include maps, phone numbers and website information as well), and give them away at area stores. She said they would cost around \$5,000 to print. Director Martha Schuur asked if the bags could be distributed at the Larchmont Fair, but President Dougherty said we wouldn’t be able to approve the expenditure in time. Director Mary Rajswing asked if this was true for the flyer as well, and President Dougherty said yes. Director John Gresham made a formal motion that we develop an informational flyer, print 10,000 of them and distribute them at the Larchmont Fair. President Dougherty noted that we have approved our budget, which contains a line item for outreach, so we might not have to wait until the next meeting to approve this expenditure. Ms. Hudson asked Mr. Arens if he could get the flyer ready in time to distribute at the Oct. 28 Fair, and he said we’d have to discuss the details. President Dougherty asked Treasurer Russell Sherman if we approve the motion whether funds to pay for the flyer could come from our city-provided debit card, and Mr. Sherman said yes. Mr. Dougherty said that, in that case, we can make a motion to go ahead with the flyer. Ms. Hudson offered to ask West LA Print (our printing vendor) how many flyers we can get for \$1,000, and Ms. Schuur recommended that we print 1,000 color copies.

Ms. Wong said she could have DONE make the copies, for free, so Director Gresham made a new motion to ask DONE to print 1,000 copies of the flyer for us to distribute at the Larchmont Fair. Ms. Schuur seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

[Note: At this point, Director Margaret Hudson left the meeting.]

Traffic Committee Report

Director Russell Sherman, chairman of the Traffic Committee, reported that he received a call from a resident of the Hollywood Senior Center, who said the Center has long had access to two \$.50 van rides for its residents, but they're considering changing the program to provide only one taxi instead. He asked if any Board members had any information about this issue, but no one did.

Mr. Sherman also reported that the new traffic committee just recently had its first meeting. Director Jane Gilman said the committee members know there are a lot of traffic problems in our area, and are going to be adding various issues to their agenda, such as a discussion of what developers' responsibilities are to provide traffic mitigations at both large development sites (e.g. Wilshire/La Brea) and small projects, too. Director John Gresham noted that a big topic at a recent meeting of the Wilshire Homeowners' Alliance was the cumulative impact on local infrastructure and the lack of apparent concern for this issue by the city.

Mr. Sherman said that at our last Board meeting, we talked about putting big buildings on lots adjacent to single-family homes, without including traffic mitigation in their plans, and he'd like us to make it a policy that any project we consider that increases density has to pay \$1 per square foot into a traffic mitigation fund. Vice President James Wolf said the Neighborhood Council doesn't have the power to do that, and Director John Gresham asked where the money would go. Mr. Sherman said that during the Avalon Bay project on Wilshire Blvd., the developer paid money into a DOT escrow fund, and it was later used to fund speed humps for the neighborhood. Director Martha Schuur asked what kind of oversight there'd be for such a fund, and Mr. Sherman said that for the Avalon Bay project, a neighborhood committee worked with the DOT. President Dougherty encouraged Mr. Sherman to explore this idea, and to talk to Director Jane Usher about it. He also commented that the point about oversight is a good one, noting that we'd need to be assured we'd be able to see the books.

Alternate Director Mike Genewick asked if the Traffic Committee is looking for projects or concerns to address, and said one of his personal pet peeves is that people are making illegal U-turns through the division in the Larchmont median, and he's afraid someone's going to get hurt. Director John Gresham asked if such turns are illegal there and, if so, why the prohibition isn't being enforced. Director Jane Gilman offered to bring the issue up at a meeting of the Larchmont Boulevard Association. Mr. Genewick said there should be signs and barriers there, to prevent cars from making such turns.

Director Patti Carroll asked if she and other Directors can contact Mr. Sherman if there's a traffic problem or issue in their neighborhoods, and he said yes.

Ad Hoc Land Use and Zoning Committee Report

Vice President James Wolf, head of the Ad Hoc Land Use and Zoning Committee, distributed a printout of a recent list of applications from the city's Early Notification System, and a notice about the upcoming (Nov. 15) Wilshire Corridor Forum. He said the Forum will provide a look at development along one distinctive boulevard, that these kinds of gatherings can change policy, and we should consider joining with other Neighborhood Councils in discussions about development along Wilshire Boulevard. Director John Gresham agreed that the Forum will be an important event, saying developers have commented recently that they'd like to see a continuation of Wilshire Center-style development go through the Park Mile area to Miracle Mile...so we'll have to fight that if we want to maintain our quality of life.

Mr. Wolf said he extended an invitation to this meeting to the people from Sonic Automotive, who have proposed building a Beverly Hills BMW service center on the site of the current Bob's Big Boy restaurant. The Sonic representatives replied that they're "still exploring the feasibility" of such a project, but nothing further.

Director Mary Rajswing asked if anyone contacted stakeholder Mee Y. Chang, who discussed her problems with La Boca Restaurant at our last meeting, and Mr. Wolf said he did, but she declined to discuss the issue further.

Public Comments

Lucille Saunders, from the Melrose Neighborhood Association (which covers the area between Fairfax and Wilcox, Willoughby and Rosewood, except for the portion of that territory that falls within Hancock Park), shared her Association's newsletter, and announced their next meeting, which will be held on October 7 at Poinsettia Park. Director John Gresham complimented the newsletter, saying it is "something we might want to grow up to produce." Alternate Erick Garcia asked if we could have free advertising space in the newsletter, but Ms. Saunders said they're going to be selling ad space, and she'd have to talk to her board about it. She went on to note that her Association, too, struggles with "quality of life" issues, such as the La Brea Gateway project being developed at 915 N. La Brea (formerly the old KCOP-TV studios). Director Thomas Roe asked how the newsletter is distributed, and she said their block captains hand some out, and Walking Man delivers some. Mr. Gresham complimented Ms. Saunders' well-organized presentation, and President Dougherty asked how many families live in the Melrose area. Ms. Saunders said the population is 20,000 and socially and demographically "religiously diverse," with lots of both owners and renters.

Stakeholder Karen Gilman, who spoke at the Council's July 11 meeting about a development near her home in Larchmont Village, said she's been following several development issues, and her biggest concern is that she'd like the GWNC to have a

dedicated land use committee, not just an ad hoc committee. President Dougherty explained that the Committee is ongoing, and was established as “ad hoc” only for procedural reasons having to do with notification requirements and the Brown Act.

Moving on to other concerns, Ms. Gilman said a decision has not been rendered yet on the condominium project she spoke about at the last meeting. She recently received a report on the historical significance of the structures to be removed (they’ve been deemed not worthy of protection), and she’s now awaiting the findings of a required soil study. Also, she said she fears the City is not reacting to the cumulative effect of development in the area, which she feels is very important. Instead, she feels the City is acting counter to its stated goals in its published “Do Good Planning” documents – because many projects that do create a cumulative impact are being approved.

Ms. Gilman said she’d also like to know what the city’s definition of “liquifaction” is, saying “what we come up with is always different,” and questioned why the city uses a definition based on federal USGS data. Finally, she asked how Windsor Village is doing with its efforts to downsize zoning designations in certain areas, and President Dougherty said the effort is only just beginning, so there’s no progress to report...but it would affect only streets zoned higher than R1. Ms. Gilman said she’s very interested in this tactic, because she’s contemplating similar action for Elmwood Ave.

President Dougherty noted that “cumulative impact” is a term that “really gets to the heart of the matter,” and said the only answer is to control growth – just one big building could be a tipping point for a neighborhood. Ms. Gilman says that ¼ of the block in question has already been developed with condominiums, so the City has been approving more projects and saying nothing to protect the rest of the block.

Alternate Mike Genewick said one problem is the City wants more and higher density housing right now, so fighting it seems to be a losing battle. Ms. Gilman said the Mayor has been quoted as wanting to see high rises from the ocean to downtown on Wilshire Boulevard. Tom La Bonge has opposed this, but has been outvoted. “So much of what developers value will be gone if all these developments are approved,” she said.

Lucille Saunders commented that developers don’t want to maintain historical districts, they want to maximize their profits. She asked if people can appeal the Van Ness project. Ms. Gilman said they’re “gearing up” to hire a lawyer to do that, because it puts them in a better position to negotiate with developers.

Board Member Comments/New Business

Director John Gresham referred back to the earlier Million Trees discussion and said it’s a good idea to talk to businesses on commercial streets. He also asked if there’s a penalty for taking out street trees, and Director Martha Schuur said there’s not if the tree is replaced.

Mr. Gresham also urged everyone to read and weigh in on the 912 Commission's report on neighborhood councils, saying "every neighborhood should make a statement and forward it to the City Council." He distributed copies and asked that this be considered at our next meeting.

DWP Rate Action

Jack Humphreville, the GWNC representative to the DWP Oversight Committee, reported that in June, the DWP gave a rate increase recommendation of 3% for water in 2008 and 2009, and another increase for power. He said the oversight committee recommends NOT recommending the rate increase – because of issues with the efficiency of the DWP, and because the way the increase is being presented is misleading. The increases are really higher than phrased, he said, and the impact is bigger. Further, he feels various recommendations were not followed by the DWP, and labor costs are out of control. The Board of Commissioners is meeting on October, he said, and will probably approve the increase, but the oversight committee is trying to get agendized in all neighborhood councils to ask them for a resolution such as, "We the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council join other Neighborhood Councils to support the position of the Oversight Committee in not recommending the rate increase."

Director John Gresham noted that Neighborhood Councils have helped to fight rate increases in the past. Mr. Humphreville said this is true, and Neighborhood councils have been "instrumental" in working down base increases. President Dougherty asked Mr. Humphreville whether rates need to be changed at all, or whether this is just not the way to do it. Mr. Humphreville said there are no recommendations, but there is a need for money at the DWP – their reliability factor has slipped a bit, and they do need funds for people and infrastructure. The question is how to make the department respond to the rate payers, and the politics of this are "massive."

Alternate Mike Genewick said no one mentions taxes on top of the rate increases, and Mr. Humphreville agreed, but said "the DWP doesn't agree with you or me." Director Yigal Arens noted that a rate increase of 2.3%, even with a 10% tax, is still a 2.3% increase. and Director John Gresham asked if Laura Chick has done the audit yet. Mr. Humphreville said she's getting around to it – every five years they have to do an audit of the city charter.

Mr. Genewick made the motion Mr. Humphreville requested, and Mr. Gresham seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Announcements and Adjournment

Director John Gresham announced that the annual Tar Fest would be held at in Miracle Mile from October 4th through 7th.

Director Martha Schuur asked if the GWNC is planning to re-design its logo, and Director Elizabeth Fuller said that would be part of the work done by the website

designer we hire.

Director Patti Carroll said the St. Andrews Square neighborhood will hold a yard sale on Saturday, October 27, to benefit the local Library.

Director Jane Gilman announced the Windsor Square home tour on October 7, which starts at 620 S. Irving. Tickets are available on the day of the event.

President Dougherty said our next meeting will be held on Wednesday, November 14.

Director Mike Genewick said the Windsor Square annual meeting will be held on November 13.

Director John Gresham said it would be nice if we could announce our meetings to more people – perhaps by going to the neighborhood associations and telling them to let people in their areas know. President Dougherty said that when we discuss major issues at our meetings, more people do attend, and our Outreach Committee will be addressing that concern.

Director Patti Carroll made a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Fuller
Secretary