

Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council



Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council General Meeting

March 12, 2008

Approved by the Board
as amended 05-14-08

MINUTES

A duly noticed meeting of the Board of Directors of the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council (“GWNC”) was held on Wednesday, March 12, 2008, at the Ebell of Los Angeles, 743 South Lucerne Avenue. President Charles called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

The Secretary, Elizabeth Fuller, called the roll. Board of Directors members in attendance at the roll call were: Yigal Arens, Patti Carroll, Charles Dougherty, Elizabeth Fuller, John Gresham, Alison Hannon, Margaret Hudson, Alex Jones-Moreno, Patricia Lombard (alt. Shar Penfold), Mary Rajswing, Martha Schuur, Rudolph Gintel (alt. Jolene Snett), Jane Usher, Robert Wishart and James Wolf. Board Member Moon Chung arrived at 7:20 p.m. Board Members Sam Cunningham, Jane Gilman, and Russell Sherman were absent and not represented by an alternate.

The Secretary stated that a quorum was present.

Reading of the Minutes

The Secretary presented the Minutes of the previous meeting, which had been distributed to Directors by e-mail and posted on the Council’s *greaterwilshire.org* web site. Additional copies were distributed at the meeting. Board Member John Gresham noted that Metro representative David Meiger’s name was misspelled and requested that on page 10, “Mr. Gresham said that it’s been reported over and over” be changed to “Mr. Gresham said that it’s been reported by Mr. Meiger and restated over and over.”

He also requested that the following text be inserted at the top of page 12:

“Mr. Gresham also referred to properties sinking around the Wilshire and Western stations as the result of dewatering, specifically the Wiltern Theater, and that in his experience during the 1990s, once funding is in place, MTA/Metro staff have said anything necessary to move their project forward.”

Director Mary Rajswing requested that on page 3, “none of these three criteria are in place” be changed to “none of these three criteria is in place.” Also, on page 7, “Mr.

Welborne, who as lived” be changed to “Mr. Welborne, who has lived”...and that a closing parentheses be added after “a Santa Monica line.”

Ms. Rajswing also asked that the following be added on page 14, after “will be planting trees along the La Brea business corridor between Third St. and...”:

“...Wilshire Blvd. GNWC’s other planting partner, KYCC (Koreatown Youth Community Center), has identified 15 locations between 8th and Olympic for a potential 27 new trees.”

Director Jane Usher moved that the minutes be approved as amended. Director Margy Hudson seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Russell Sherman was not present, but President Charlie Dougherty noted that our remaining account balance, as of March 1, was \$110,199.18.

President’s Report

President Charles Dougherty introduced new Brookside Director Owen Smith. Alternate Board Member Patty Lombard moved that he be approved and seated. Director Margy Hudson seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously and Mr. Dougherty welcomed Mr. Smith to the Board. *[Mr. Smith left the meeting at 7:20 p.m.]*

In compliance with a request from DONE, President Dougherty asked that we nominate five Directors to be allowed to file Community Impact Statements with the City. He suggested our four officers (Charlie Dougherty, James Wolf, Elizabeth Fuller and Russell Sherman) and Margy Hudson, head of our Ad Hoc Special Projects and Ad Hoc Outreach Committees. Director Rob Wishart moved that we approve the nominees and Director Jane Usher seconded the motion. It was approved unanimously.

Ad Hoc Bylaws Committee

Director Jane Usher reported that the copies of the bylaws revisions we had ordered did not arrive in time for the meeting, although the revisions had been distributed to all Board Members via e-mail several days earlier. She said there are three revisions being presented:

1. The definition of “stakeholder” was changed to conform to DONE’s new language.
2. Our election cycle and frequency have been changed as a result of the City Clerk taking over the Neighborhood Council election process and giving us a specific window in which to conduct elections. (Our next election will take place between April and June of 2010.)
3. Cleanup of the language defining the boundary between Brookside and

Sycamore Square (a descriptive change only; there is no dispute over the actual boundary).

Stakeholder John Welborne complimented the Ad Hoc Bylaws Committee on dealing with the minutiae of the changes and suggested – since all of the changes are technical and there is no controversy – that the Board go ahead and approve them, even without paper copies to distribute.

Director John Gresham agreed and moved that we accept the changes as made. Director Margy Hudson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

After the vote, Ms. Usher said this round of bylaws changes was much easier than others we've made in the past. She thanked our DONE contact, Betty Wong Oyama, for making the requirements and necessary language "crystal clear."

Ad Hoc Special Projects Committee

Because CD4 Field Deputy Nikki Ezhari was unable to attend the meeting as planned (to report on the Quimby Funds audit), Director Margy Hudson asked that we move our scheduled review of the Robert Burns Park improvement project to May 14. She also invited everyone to attend the groundbreaking ceremony at the park tomorrow.

Ad Hoc Funding Guidelines Committee

President Dougherty reported that this committee, formed at our last meeting, has not been able to meet yet to define our criteria for funding community projects. He noted, however, that an issue has come up that can serve as a test case, and because of its timeline can't wait until our May meeting for discussion. He suggested that we deal with it at this meeting, as if this were a meeting of the Ad Hoc Funding Guidelines Committee.

Director Elizabeth Fuller presented the project, which she is coordinating with Wilshire Crest School and the Sycamore Square Neighborhood Association. The groups are planning a Big Sunday event, she said, which will involve re-landscaping two large beds along the front of the school, on Olympic Blvd., between Sycamore and Mansfield Avenues. Ms. Fuller said City Council Member Tom La Bonge's office had offered to provide funding and plants for the project, which has an estimated cost of \$5,000...but their sources fell through and now the project is scrambling to secure replacement funding before the May 4 project date.

Director John Gresham asked what the money would be used for, and Ms. Fuller said it would go to purchase plants, mulch, tools and other supplies for the project. Director Mary Rajswing asked if they would be approaching other sources, such as a local hardware store, for donations...and if there is irrigation at the site to help maintain the garden once it's planted. Ms. Fuller answered yes to both questions.

Alternate Director Patricia Lombard said that a few key guidelines for any

projects we fund should be that they are in our neighborhood, represent a partnership between community organization, and provide some sort of permanent improvement. She said this project does have those elements, so it would both set a good precedent and help to define our funding guidelines, if we fund it.

Mr. Gresham said it would be nice to define “an amount not to exceed” for funding the project, and asked if other services – such as the landscape design, are being donated. Ms. Fuller said they are. Mr. Dougherty said he’d entertain motions on the project, and asked how much of it we’d like to fund.

Mr. Gresham said it would also be nice, if we fund it, if it could be advertised, with banners, etc., as a GWNC project. Ms. Fuller said they’d be happy to say the project was funded or sponsored by the GWNC in any publicity. Ms. Lombard asked if the council has ever funded a project before, and was told that we did vote to give some money to the Hollywood Beautification Team for tree planting. Mr. Gresham said funding the Wilshire Crest project would be a good idea because it will encourage us to allocate more funds for neighborhood projects. Director Yigal Arens noted that our job is to encourage neighborhoods and stakeholder groups to fund projects like this.

Vice President James Wolf cautioned that the purpose of a budget committee is to allocate blocks of funds and then use them for the purposes for which they were designated... and since we haven’t done that yet, funding this project might be putting the cart before the horse. Mr. Gresham said that discussing this project does help us to define our guidelines. Ms. Rajswing agreed that including the GWNC in the project’s publicity would be essential, and said there are also Community Beautification Grants available for projects like these. Ms. Fuller said the school will be applying for a Community Beautification Grant for another garden project later this year, but this particular project happens before the grant application deadline, so that’s not an option here.

Director Jane Usher said that if the Council receives \$50,000 a year, about half of that amount should be spent on outreach and overhead, and the rest on community projects. She said she liked the funding criteria outlined by Ms. Lombard, and would add that we should never fund 100% of any project, because there’s value in asking a project to find other partners in addition to the GWNC. Ms. Lombard was asked to repeat her list of project funding criteria and she reiterated:

- Projects that are collaborative efforts among neighbors or neighborhood groups
- Projects that provide a permanent improvement for the neighborhood
- The involved parties commit to maintaining the improvement
- Projects funded should be from various locations around the GWNC area
- Projects that represent a unique need (one-time as opposed to ongoing funding)

She made a motion to fund 80% of the Wilshire Crest project.

Mr. Gresham added the caveat that the GWNC be named an official sponsor of the event. Ms. Hudson said the funding should be 80% of the *actual* costs, and reminded Ms. Fuller that a GWNC banner that could be used to advertise our participation on event day has been stored at former Director Roy Forbes' house.

Mr. Gresham asked if the amount funded should be stated as 80% or \$4,000, and what would happen if the project doesn't spend the full amount we commit. Ms. Lombard said the intent is to give the project 80% of the stated budget, which would be \$4,000. Ms. Usher suggested we specify 80% of actual costs (including both out-of-pocket expenses and in-kind donations), not to exceed \$4,000.

Director Rob Wishart seconded the motion, and Mr. Dougherty opened it up to public comment.

Stakeholder Dr. Mary Elizabeth Hargrow, a neighbor of the school, said her intent was to speak up in favor of supporting the Wilshire Crest project, but since the Board seems to have already decided to fund it, she would just like to congratulate and thank the board for that decision.

Director Allison Hannon asked if there would be an opportunity to place a commemorative plaque, noting the GWNC's support, at the project site, but Ms. Lombard said that we don't want to burden the project with requirements. Ms. Hannon asked if this should be part of our requirements for funding, and Ms. Lombard agreed that it is part of our mission to raise our profile by participating in projects like this. Mr. Gresham noted, however, that the LAUSD is very hard to work with, and said getting into a partnership with a school on any level is good.

Director Yigal Arens asked how we will verify that 20% of the project's costs come from other sources. He also said the motion on the table seems to be a very complex one that attempts to set future policy, and asked if that's the right place for policy designations.

Ms. Usher suggested amending the motion to say that we are funding the project because it fits a certain list of criteria we've defined, and that we'd like to set a precedent of funding things that meet these criteria. President Dougherty said that creating a precedent is a good idea and he doesn't see any harm in doing that. Mr. Gresham agreed that this approach creates a "skeleton" for the Ad Hoc Funding Guidelines committee to work with in the future, and Mr. Arens asked if we are "providing funds because the project meets these criteria"...and how we will verify the amounts spent. Ms. Usher said we can ask for receipts, because we can't reimburse without receipts.

Ms. Fuller said the project will need some funds up front, because they have to buy materials before the event day. But Betty Wong Oyama, our DONE representative, said the GWNC cannot provide grants or up-front money, and cannot reimburse anyone for money already spent. Instead, she said, we can only pay vendor invoices, use our check card, or use petty cash.

Director Patty Lombard asked if the project's nursery could submit an invoice for the materials, and Ms. Oyama said yes...and that if we need a check expedited, to contact her. Ms. Fuller asked how other neighborhood councils have funded projects, and Mr. Dougherty asked if there are any precedents. Ms. Oyama said materials could be purchased with our credit card, but if we give her an invoice she will investigate ways to get it paid.

Ms. Hudson noted that at our Emergency Preparedness Fair two years ago, we had to fill out paperwork for each vendor, get it signed by the GWNC president and treasurer, and then submit it to DONE. She said the turnaround time for payment depended on how fast the paperwork was submitted.

Ms. Usher noted that the mechanics of the payment could be worked out by Ms. Fuller and the treasurer and that the question before us is simply whether or not to approve the expenditure. She said she trusts all the parties involved, and if they fail to work within the DONE requirements, we'll learn from their failure.

At this point, Ms. Lombard re-read her motion:

“That we fund the Wilshire Crest School Big Sunday beautification project for 80% of the actual cost, not to exceed \$4,000. This project meets our following criteria:

- *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.”*

The motion carried unanimously. Mr. Dougherty concluded by saying he would still like to schedule a real meeting of the Ad Hoc Funding Guidelines committee.

Million Trees LA Project

Director Mary Rajswing said there are still trees available for our area, and if anyone wants one, they can go to our website or the Million Trees site to submit a request. She said the team has been going down La Brea Ave., between 3rd and Wilshire and from 8th St. to Olympic, to offer trees to the businesses...but getting people to take the trees has been harder than she thought. Still, she said, she did get commitments for seven trees in a row on La Brea between 8th and Olympic...and she's not going to give up on other businesses on that stretch. She also said that five neighborhoods which requested trees have had the locations marked, that the Hollywood Beautification Team is breaking ground next month for its new “green” building on Cherokee, and that she's talking to John Burroughs School about placing trees there.

Traffic Committee Report

President Dougherty said that because Treasurer Russell Sherman was unable to be here tonight, we need to postpone discussion of stakeholder Joan Taylor's request to support a change in funding for senior citizen taxi coupon books.

Ms. Taylor thanked the Council for this courtesy and restated her desire to double the \$7 per week taxi tickets for seniors and the disabled. She said she learned just today that the County has cut funds for other senior and disabled transportation programs. She said she hopes the board will support her proposal, as the Mid-City West Council has done, because a second \$84 taxi coupon book costs much less than a van program. Mr. Dougherty promised this issue will be agendized at our next meeting in May.

Ad Hoc Outreach Committee Report

Director Margy Hudson thanked the members of this committee and asked Director Yigal Arens to report on the status of our website re-design project. Mr. Arens said we have purchased several more "gwnc" domains, and now own gwnc.org, gwnc.us and gwnc.info...and are keeping an eye on gwnc.com and gwnc.net in case they become available.

He also said we've been interviewing website designers and discussing with them the site's design, logo design, ease of website use and maintenance, updates, mailing lists and other features. Our goals for the site, he said, are to make outreach easier and to build a cost-effective way to communicate with and accept input from stakeholders. We also want to establish a brand/image for the GWNC. He said Director Elizabeth Fuller located two qualified candidates, Steven Schmerler (SAS Design) and Laura Quick (QDesign). The committee met with both candidates and found them both competent, but unanimously preferred Ms. Quick. Mr. Schmerler has done websites for several other neighborhood councils and has formed a company and developed a site template exclusively for NCs. He could plug our information and photos into that template, at a cost of about \$10,000. The advantage would be that we could fit our information quickly into his template...and the disadvantage would be the same (so it might not be as original or fit our needs as well as something custom designed). Ms. Quick has very good design skills, artistic sense and references, he said, and could also do our logo design and photography. The disadvantage is that she has never worked with a Neighborhood Council before.

Mr. Arens made the following motion:

"Having reviewed the report and recommendations of the ad Hoc Outreach Committee, chaired by Margaret Hudson, regarding two proposals it evaluated for redesign of the GWNC website, the Board authorizes the Outreach Committee to engage QDesign of Sylmar, California, for this project. It further authorizes the Outreach Committee to negotiate the cost of the website redesign

with QDesign, and to commit to an expenditure of no more than \$6,000.”

Director John Gresham noted that his neighborhood association's site has had ongoing problems with maintenance and asked if Ms. Quick would be able to train us to do updates ourselves or provide a service contract under which she could do the updates. Mr. Arens said the committee is well aware of this problem and asked both candidates and their references about it. All the references were satisfied with the way in which both designers provided for site maintenance. He said we don't intend to have an ongoing maintenance contract, but that we have asked that the site have a built-in method for "non-technical" people to maintain it.

Alternate Director Patricia Lombard said that's what her neighborhood association does with its website. You don't pay much for infrastructure, she said, but you do pay for design, which is what people care about.

A stakeholder asked if a wiki – which anyone can add to easily – might be better than a standard website for the GWNC, but Ms. Fuller said that's essentially what our Drupal-based site is now, and in the last three years she's the only one who's ever attempted to add anything to it...so it hasn't worked for us.

Mr. Arens repeated his motion, and Ms. Lombard seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Moving on to the topic of guest speakers for future GWNC board meetings, Ms. Hudson said that the goal of the Outreach Committee is to increase the awareness of the GWNC, and that we do tend to draw larger crowds when we have guest speakers. She announced that Los Angeles City Planning Director Gail Goldberg has agreed to make a presentation and take questions from stakeholders at our next meeting, on May 14. To book Ms. Goldberg for this meeting, however, we had to agree to involve all our surrounding Neighborhood Councils, and they all will submit a list of questions for Ms. Goldberg to address. For our July meeting, Ms. Hudson said we have booked a speaker from the Department of Public Works, who will talk about potholes, street lighting, sidewalks and other issues. She said our September and November meetings are still open, and that we're considering speakers from the LAUSD and LAPD.

When we do have guest speakers, Ms. Hudson said, we need to advertise so our stakeholders know about them, and she proposed increasing our Larchmont Chronicle ads from ¼ to ½ page. She moved that we pay for a ½ page ad in the next two issues of the Chronicle to publicize the May meeting with Ms. Goldberg. Director John Gresham asked how much this would cost, and stakeholder John Welborne said it would probably be less than \$1,000. Director Elizabeth Fuller asked if we should increase the ad size for just two months (for the May meeting), or for four months (looking forward to the July meeting as well). Both Ms. Hudson and President Dougherty said we should just concentrate on the May meeting for now, and discuss advertising for July at the May meeting. Director Mary Rajswing asked if we should also use the larger ad in April to promote the Wilshire Crest project we just voted to support, but Ms. Hudson said there

would probably be too much information about the May meeting to include, and we should concentrate on that. Director Patti Carroll asked if the Outreach Committee would accept input on the discussion topics for May, and Ms. Hudson said they would welcome any input. She repeated her motion that we pay for ½ page ads in the next two issues of the Larchmont Chronicle, and the motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Hudson wrapped up her report by noting that we've been asking all our directors to sign up for our new GWNC e-mail news list, and said that unless any directors or alternates who have not already subscribed specifically opt out, we will subscribe them.

DWP Oversight Committee

Jack Humphreville, the GWNC liaison to the DWP Oversight Committee, reported that the DWP has passed a motion that no action be taken on proposed rate increases until an IEA survey is completed. This motion will be reviewed at a committee meeting on Monday, and at the City Council meeting on Wednesday. Mr. Humphreville said the Oversight Committee is very adamant about the survey, and that we need answers on pass-through revenues and why multi-year increases are necessary. He said he has talked to the Oversight representatives at most of the other Neighborhood Councils, and they have all approved a resolution asking that the survey be completed in a timely manner. The full text of the motion is:

The Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council supports the Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils/LADWP Memorandum of Understanding Oversight Committee Resolution Regarding Proposed LADWP Rate Actions for 2—09-2010.

BE IT RESOLVED that the NC/LADWP Oversight Committee requests that the City Council ensure the expeditious completion of said IEA Survey AND that the City Council not approve any LADWP rate increase actions until the information and recommendations of the IEA Survey can be considered by the Mayor, Controller, City Council and general public so as to allow all to make informed decisions.

Director John Gresham congratulated Mr. Humphreville on continuing to carry out his diligent effort in keeping up with the DWP and moved that we approve the motion. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

Public Comments

Stakeholder Joel Lava reported that he has been meeting with every Neighborhood Council in LA, at the request of the City Council, to set up workshops and gauge interest in the issue of publicly financed elections. He said he would be interested in doing a workshop in our area, which could be a joint effort with the Mid-City West Neighborhood Council, if we're interested. He asked if we could appoint someone to be

his liaison, and stressed that the workshops are not advocacy, but just for the purpose of seeking opinions that he will collect and bring back to the City Council. President Dougherty asked if any Board Members were interested in being the liaison for this project, and when no one volunteered, Mr. Dougherty said he would work on finding someone and that we definitely would be interested in doing a joint workshop with the Mid-City West Council.

Stakeholder Myrna Gintel, representing the Windsor Square Association and the Hancock Park Historical Society, announced the upcoming Windsor Square/Hancock Park Garden Party, which will take place on Sunday, April 20, from noon to 4:00 p.m. She said there would be six gardens on the tour, along with a reception, silent auction, raffle and food. Check-in for the event will be at 501 S. Rossmore, and there is a \$50 charitable donation. She passed out promotional cards for the event, and said the money raised would be used to create a sensory garden at the Frances Blend School, the only school for the visually impaired in our area. She asked that the GWNC help publicize the event through e-mail and word of mouth. Director Patti Carroll asked if there was any interest in the GWNC advertising in the garden tour book, and Ms. Gintel passed the book around for people to look at.

Stakeholder Karen Gilman thanked the GWNC for the letter we voted in November to write, which would express our general concerns about the cumulative impacts of development, and which could be shown to developers planning new projects in our area. She also said that she has just learned that filing notices for all developments must be sent to the Neighborhood Council, and President Dougherty confirmed that we do get them. Ms. Gilman thanked the Council for its knowledge and service.

Stakeholder Robert Reiss, an engineer who lives in Hancock Park and represents homeowners near John Burroughs Middle School, said the school plans to install a large electronic blinking marquee (16' x 8') on a post in front of the school. He said he feels this sign is unnecessary and noted that the current sign was put up many years ago without permits, HPOZ consideration or consultation with the neighborhood...and he fears the same thing will happen again. He said the school has said they have the necessary approvals to install the sign, but the residents on McCadden Place feel the sign would be hazardous to traffic (which is already slow there) and object vehemently. He also said the school raised \$40,000 for the sign, which would be better used for student safety and educational purposes.

President Dougherty asked if the Hancock Park Homeowners' Association has weighed in on the matter, and Mr. Reiss said they had a meeting about it and have spoken to the City Council office. Mr. Dougherty said they are doing the right thing by taking those steps. Mr. Reiss pointed out that the school is in an HPOZ, which regulates changes and additions to properties, but Mr. Dougherty said schools are exempt from many city zoning regulations. Mr. Dougherty said again that the City Council office is the best place to go with the complaint, but Director Jane Usher said that's not true, since the LAUSD operates under its own rules, not those of the City. Vice President James Wolf said the HPHA is looking into the situation, but the school ignored that group when

the last signboard went up 20 years ago, and they (and the GWNC) will probably be met with the same response this time. He suggested that Mr. Reiss talk with the school district representative for this area, and try to negotiate limits on the sign's hours of operation.

Mr. Reiss read the LAUSD requirements for the installation of power equipment on school property, but Ms. Usher said that while we are sympathetic to his point of view, he should be talking to the LAUSD, which alone has the power to do something about the issue. She suggested he get neighbors to sign a petition and send it to Dr. Brewer (the school Superintendent), as well as schedule a meeting with the local school board representative. Director Mary Rajswing said the school has claimed that City Council Member Tom La Bonge's office has approved the sign location, but Ms. Usher said Mr. La Bonge has no jurisdiction over school property and people should not believe this claim.

A member of the audience commented that Mr. La Bonge's office has actually paid for part of the sign, which is improperly located in an HPOZ, but Ms. Usher reiterated that the school is exempt from City Zoning (and HPOZ) regulations. Director John Gresham said there have been similar problems in his neighborhood, and that it might be a good idea to publicize the issue as much as possible, since bad publicity is bad for the LAUSD. He seconded the petition idea. Mr. Dougherty said the discussion needed to move on, and stakeholder Claire Reiss closed by saying that the school principal has said the \$40,000 raised for the sign can only be used for that purpose... which makes no sense since the school is short of books and supplies.

Stakeholder Margaret Sowma reported that the City finally held a hearing on the previously reported modifications at 610 S. Van Ness and told the owners to remove all unpermitted additions. She said the owners of the property filled a dumpster, but then stopped, and you still can't see the original structure of the house underneath the modifications. She asked what else can be done, and Director Margy Hudson suggested she call Nikki Ezhari, the new Field Deputy for City Council District 4. President Dougherty agreed, saying this is an enforcement issue.

Stakeholder Lee Goldberg, who lives on Gower, introduced the Neighborhood Council Director of Animal Welfare (DAW) program, said that each Neighborhood Council is allowed to appoint a Director of Animal Welfare to deal with animal-related issues (such as raising awareness of adopting animals from shelters), and expressed interested in being appointed to that position. Ms. Goldberg said there are 25-30 DAWs in the LA area. President Dougherty asked her to send him an e-mail about the program and said we may be able to put it on our agenda for a board action in May.

Stakeholder John Welborne said he thinks Mr. Reiss has a very compelling issue (the electronic sign at John Burroughs Middle School), and that he thinks the GWNC should get involved.

Board Member Comments/New Business

Director Rob Wishart said he will talk to Vice President James Wolf tomorrow to get started on the development letter requested by Karen Gilman.

Director Margy Hudson announced the availability of Proposition K funds for Dept. of Recreation & Parks projects.

Director Patti Carroll noted that Alternate Director Erick Garcia has moved out of the Greater Wilshire area, and has resigned his position. She also announced and passed out flyers for the upcoming Club Manhattan event, a fundraiser for preservation in St. Andrews Square.

Director John Gresham made three announcements. First, that the Wilshire Park Association has passed resolutions on the proposed Wilshire and Crenshaw transit lines, which he promised to forward to our Board Members. Second, he said there have been two meetings on the new LAPD Olympic Division, and that the LAPD has agreed to take a new look at the boundary criteria for the Division. (He is in favor of moving the boundary to match the Neighborhood Council boundary, which ends at Western.) Finally, he said that he agrees with Karen Gilman that we need a formal statement of our concern about the cumulative effects of development in our area, and would like this to be a discussion item at our next meeting.

[Board Members Jane Usher and Yigal Arens left the meeting at 9:40 p.m.]

Ad Hoc Land Use and Zoning Committee Report

A. 728 S. Plymouth – Stakeholder Holly Holyk noted that the neighborhood in which this project has been proposed has instituted an Interim Control Ordinance (ICO) because it is at the “tipping point” and needs to step back and figure out what people want it to look like. She said many single family residences are being destroyed, which is destroying the fabric of the neighborhood. She also said that as it becomes more and more a neighborhood of apartments, the neighbors are harder to organize and the neighborhood is losing its long-established sense of community. Finally, She noted all the recent talk from City officials about “smart growth” and mixed use, and said this neighborhood already has those things and it would be a shame to destroy the mix by removing single family homes.

Stakeholder Allison Sapunor passed out photos of the homes that would be demolished for the project, which she said are “contributing structures” to the overall neighborhood character, and urged the GWNC Board to support the neighborhood, which she said is “under assault by developers.”

Stakeholder Clyde Lieberman said Windsor Village feels like a model for urban villages in Los Angeles: diverse, unusual, multicultural and multiracial.

He noted the number of neighbors who are “willing to stay out late to protest this” project, and said many people are working together on the survey needed for an HPOZ in the area. He said he’s been coming to GWNC meetings for the last six months, learning how the process works.

Stakeholder Polly Chu said the endangered homes are beautiful buildings, even if they’re not specifically designated as historic. She also said she walked the neighborhood with a Santa Monica city planner, who said that - in Santa Monica - the structures would be “preserved in a minute.”

Stakeholder Miriam Flynn said she is concerned about the city zoning laws being watered down, and that every time that happens, stress levels go up.

Stakeholder John McPherson, who had planned to comment on the topic, said that his points have already been made and he would yield in the interest of time.

Stakeholder Olive Kearney said she realizes people are talking about saving buildings, but we also need to consider the people in those buildings who are being displaced.

Stakeholder Laurie Kaufman said the proposed project pits strangers against a community with a shared vision and pride. She said she is not generally opposed to development, but it should be in appropriate areas, such as the Wilshire Corridor. She also said the project architect told the Design Review Board that the new residences would have a beautiful view of Windsor Village...but the current residents would also like to enjoy their view...of both new and old structures.

Stakeholder Victoria Bascoy reported there are signs throughout the neighborhood saying, “Save Windsor Village” and asked the GWNC Board to “do the right thing” and support their cause.

Stakeholder Janrie Cason said that a workman at her house yesterday asked about a person across the street, and was surprised that she knew the neighbor’s name. She said she is glad the GWNC is here to listen to the neighbors and offered an “emotional plea” to preserve the neighbor-to-neighbor intimacy of the neighborhood.

Stakeholder Candace Modrell, who had planned to speak on this topic, also deferred her comments.

President Charles Dougherty, who is also the president of the Windsor Village Community Association, said “these are my neighbors and I’m proud they’re my neighbors.” He said he was disappointed that Mr. Simons, the

developer, was not here to discuss the project, and noted that the developers did submit their permit applications before the ICO went into effect. Still, he said, the neighbors are upset that the “spirit” of the ICO is being “trampled.” He noted that the Council can’t discuss the matter in too much detail without the other side present, but said the neighbors would appreciate a motion in support of the ICO.

Director Margy Hudson made a motion to support the Windsor Village ICO and HPOZ. Director Rob Wishart seconded it. Director John Gresham asked if this motion needed to be agendized before we could act on it, but President Dougherty said we have had many other issues that led to unagendized board actions, and he called the question. The motion passed unanimously.

B. 427 S. Gramercy - There were no speakers present on this item, so it was not discussed.

C. 525 S. Van Ness – President Dougherty said that as with the 728 S. Plymouth project, no developers were present to address this topic.

Stakeholder Frank Badami, the block captain for the 500 block of S. Van Ness, said the owner and developers of the property want to build two more 4,000 square foot houses behind the main house at 525 S. Van Ness, along with a new road that would extend from Van Ness to the new houses. He passed out pictures of the property and said the developers are asking to subdivide the land and request zoning variances. He also passed around a petition against the project, signed by neighbors, along with 60 letters that are on file with the Planning Department. He said the project would set a precedent that would “ruin” the neighborhood, and reported that an attorney who handled the Scottish Rite Temple case is representing the neighbors. The project also brings up HPOZ issues, he said, since an existing wall would have to come down to build the new street. He said the project must be stopped, that he believes the neighbors will beat it...and that he hopes the GWNC will support the neighbors and pass a resolution against the project.

Director Mike Genewick, the president of the Windsor Square Association, said that group has passed a resolution against the project. The estate in question was built in 1924 and he believes the new development would be in conflict with the area’s HPOZ and would set a bad precedent.

Stakeholder Gretchen Fourticq passed out additional pictures of the homes and lots adjacent to the property, saying there are many emotional pleas being made about the project, but she also wants to make a technical plea: the old alley between 525 Van Ness and its neighbors had been vacated, but now the owners want to claim it, and the orientation of the new homes would provide only a 5-foot clearance between the neighbors’ back yard and the new house.

She said she has checked the Wilshire Community Plan and which states that the park-like atmosphere of the neighborhood should be protected...and she doesn't want to see any variances granted. This is a legal issue, she said, because the plan contains several references to protecting the area, and she asked why the Planning Office often expedites variances when they specifically contract the established Plan.

Stakeholder Eliot Marbury, who has lived at 531 S. Van Ness for 12 years, just south of the proposed development, said the new private road is a very bad idea – it takes up the width of the yard between the existing house and his fence. He asked the Board Members to imagine trash trucks passing through the narrow expanse every week, along with mail, water, UPS and other vehicles. He said the property needs to be brought back up to code and to the neighborhood's standards, and that he welcomes the new neighbors but opposes this development.

Director Margy Hudson called the parcel in question “an amazing piece of property” and said the key point is that the development would be precedent-setting. She said the neighborhood has worked for 8 years on its HPOZ and this project would “violate” all of that work.

Director Martha Schuur asked if there is language in the HPOZ about the percentage of land that can be developed, but Ms. Hudson said there is no such requirement in Windsor Square.

Director John Gresham said there is precedent for subdividing lots, but only on the width of the lot, not the depth. Usually, he said, all the resulting lots do have street frontage.

Alternate Director Patty Lombard said that when she heard about this project, she wrote a letter to the City. She said there are several properties in her neighborhood, Fremont Place, which could be similarly subdivided and this project would set a bad precedent. She added that she doesn't see the public good in new 4,000 square foot houses, and that she would like to see more discussion and examination of the issue.

Vice President James Wolf said that when Gail Goldberg was hired as LA City Planning Director, she gave a presentation to a full auditorium at the LA Zoo about the hierarchy of plans that govern the City. He said that anything done in the city has to comply with the General Plan, but also in our area we have the Wilshire Community Plan, which talks about the characteristics of land use in the Wilshire area and is more specific than the General Plan. Each document, he said, narrows the field...but although that is the stated intent of the Planning Department, they don't seem to be embracing the rules of the code. Over and over, he said, we see projects looking for special consideration for side yards, lot size and other details. This proposal, he said,

seems to contradict every intent of the Wilshire Plan, both in spirit and letter...and for that reason, the GWNC might want to make a statement about it.

Director John Gresham moved that we support the letter and spirit of the Windsor Square HPOZ. Director Margy Hudson presented a more detailed motion:

RESOLVED, that the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council of the City of Los Angeles, after careful consideration of the requested Parcel Map and requested zoning adjustments to allow the construction of additional houses in the existing backyard of the historic property at 521-525 S. Van Ness Avenue, hereby objects to the approval of any such Parcel Map or the granting of any such Zoning Administrator Adjustment in furtherance of the proposed subdivision; and

RESOLVED FURTHER, that the Deputy Advisory Agency and Zoning Administrator be informed that it is the Council's position that what is proposed is grossly out of character with the existing community; will be harmful to the existing, City-adopted Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) in the area; is contrary to the long-established plan of development for our Greater Wilshire community; and is contrary to the relevant subdivision and environmental protection laws – and that the applications before the City therefore should be denied.

Mr. Gresham withdrew his resolution and seconded Ms. Hudson's.

Stakeholder Margaret Sowma noted this property is only half a block from her home, and asked why the Board is not giving her the same support on the issue of the property at 610 S. Van Ness. Vice President Wolf said he would see what we can do about the enforcement issue at that property.

Stakeholder Frank Badami said the hearing officer in this case has left the file open and is still collecting public comments. Mr. Wolf said we will take advantage of the window and file our opinion.

President Dougherty called the question and the motion passed unanimously.

Stakeholder Karen Gilman said it would be nice if the general statement about development the GWNC has promised to create could include a “regarding: _____” line, so it could be used in specific cases at different addresses.

D. Inclusion of North Larchmont in New Height Restrictions – Director Robert Wishart made the following motion:

The GWNC Board urges City Council Member Tom La Bonge to include North Larchmont Boulevard from Beverly Boulevard to Melrose Ave in any height restrictions being considered for buildings on Larchmont Boulevard from First St. to Beverly Boulevard.

Director Patti Carroll seconded the motion.

Mr. Wishart said the City Council is considering height restrictions for Larchmont Boulevard and that he would like to encourage Mr. La Bonge to extend those restrictions from Beverly to Melrose as well.

Director John Gresham asked what the current height limits are for that stretch of the street and Mr. Wishart said 45 feet. Mr. Gresham asked if this includes the new apartment building going up, and Mr. Wishart said it will be 45 feet tall. Vice President James Wolf said there are some exceptions to the current limits, such as elevator shafts (unlike the Park Mile Specific Plan, which forbids such exceptions in that area). He asked for a clarification of the motion, asking if Mr. Wishart is saying that whatever limits be adopted between First and Beverly also be extended north to Melrose, or if he's asking for a specific height limit. President Dougherty asked if the fear is that there will be high-rise development between Beverly and Melrose, and Mr. Wishart said yes. Mr. Dougherty asked if there's a chance that the current 45-foot limit would be lifted, and Mr. Wishart said he doesn't know, but that he sees value in assuring that any protections adopted extend all the way north to Melrose.

Alternate Director Patty Lombard noted that the GWNC had a committee to look at the whole Larchmont development issue, which met with Mr. La Bonge's staff and was working to figure out an appropriate vision for the whole area. She said, though, that North and South Larchmont are different in character, and present different opportunities for development and protection, so we may need to do more work to figure out a vision for the North portion of the street.

Mr. Wolf agreed that there are other issues to look at north of Beverly, and said some things do apply only to the south, so it would be difficult to enact the same kinds of restrictions on the north end of the street. He said that perhaps we should consider a subcommittee to look at the options for the full length of Larchmont and report back to the Board with recommendations.

Ms. Lombard said we do have an opportunity to address the Larchmont issue and we should take it. Director Patti Carroll said that we need to understand the immediacy of the problem, and that any new building could have an impact on the whole district. She said there has been a large turnover recently of properties on upper Larchmont, and there is more that needs to be explored in terms of protections...but our City Council office doesn't see the immediacy of the need to do that.

Ms. Lombard said that's why the GWNC Board approved the expenditure of hiring a planner to look at the Larchmont issues, and she suggested we act soon on that idea. Director John Gresham asked if our Larchmont committee has been meeting actively, and Ms. Lombard said they had been, but got stuck on the planner issue. Mr. Gresham asked if the committee has been working with Mr. Wishart and Jared Abrams (Mr. Wishart's Alternate), and suggested they do so. Mr. Wishart further noted that Larchmont Village Neighborhood Association cannot act on the North Larchmont area, which is in the Melrose district.

Vice President Wolf said Mr. Wishart has requested the same treatment for North Larchmont as Lower Larchmont, but there are Q conditions on the lower half of the street that don't apply to the upper half. He asked if the motion should be reworded to include a broader range of restrictions than just height, but Mr. Wishart said that because of the issue before the City Council at this point, it's only necessary to request height limits now, and we can deal with other issues in the future, as part of an ongoing process.

Alternate Director Rudy Gintel said he can support the idea of height restrictions, but that lowering the limit from 45 feet to 33 (the limit on Lower Larchmont) would be premature.

Stakeholder Karen Gilman asked if the area was already zoned for commercial use, and Director Margy Hudson said it is. Mr. Wolf reminded everyone that the commercial zoning is not under debate. Ms. Gilman said the height restrictions are a good idea, because a development boom is going to happen...so it would be a good idea to address the concerns of neighbors and do something about it now.

Director Patti Carroll said businesses are shifting from south to north Larchmont and that we are going to see changes on that part of the street. Mr. Wolf asked if we should call the question and ask for a show of hands. Ms. Lombard said it would be better for us to develop a comprehensive plan for Larchmont, and that we have only "one shot" to do so. She said the Larchmont committee could be reconstituted and continue its work. Mr. Wolf said the committee brought us a series of motions, including the one to hire a planner, and that it is time to get a planner involved and look at the differences and similarities between the northern and southern ends of the street.

Director Mary Rajswing asked if there are any time pressures for this issue, and Ms. Hudson said the height limits for the southern part of Larchmont are on the City Council agenda. Ms. Lombard noted, though, that a decision on the subject is probably not imminent. Director John Gresham said the situation could change quickly, though, and we could face a variance request at our next meeting.

Mr. Dougherty asked for a show of hands on the motion. Seven Board Members were in favor and seven opposed. Since the motion did was neither approved nor defeated, Mr. Gresham asked if we should defer action on the subject. Ms. Carroll said the problem is the City Council doesn't take the issue of North Larchmont seriously, and Ms. Hudson said developers do, however, and are "drooling over it." Mr. Wolf asked if Mr. Wishart would consider withdrawing the motion, and Mr. Wishart said he would...but that he was disappointed with this response to the first issue his neighborhood has brought before the Council. Mr. Dougherty promised that we would reconstitute the Larchmont committee and include Jared Abrams (Mr. Wishart's Alternate) in those discussions.

Announcements and Adjournment

President Dougherty announced that our next meeting will be held on May 14. The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Fuller
Secretary