

# Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council



## Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council General Meeting

July 11, 2007

Approved by the board  
as amended 9/11/07

### MINUTES

A duly noticed meeting of the Board of Directors of the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council (“GWNC”) was held on Wednesday, July 11, 2007, at the Ebell of Los Angeles, 743 South Lucerne Avenue. James Wolf, Vice President of the Council, (filling in for President Charles Dougherty) called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

The Secretary, Elizabeth Fuller, called the roll. Board of Directors members in attendance were: Yigal Arens, Patti Carroll, Moon Chung, John McIntyre (alt. Charles Dougherty), Elizabeth Fuller, Jane Gilman, John Gresham, Alison Hannon, Margaret Hudson, Mike Genewick (alt. Alex Jones-Moreno), Shar Penfold, Clinton Oie (alt. Mary Rajswing), Thomas Roe, Russell Sherman, Jolene Snett, Jane Usher, Robert Wishart and James Wolf. Board members Sam Cunningham, Roy Forbes and Martha Schuur were absent.

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 Jane Usher requested that a change be made to the fourth paragraph on page 7 of the draft minutes:

**Original:** “Ms. Usher said the Committee believes that the hiring of an outside land use professional will help prevent the encroachment of individual neighbors’ and constituents’ (tenants, landlords, etc.) passionate views into the planning process. She added that about half a dozen of the “top professionals” in the city (many of whom live in the Greater Wilshire area) have already offered their services.”

**Proposed replacement:** “Ms Usher said the Committee believes that the hiring of an outside land use professional will enable us to identify the best land use solutions, balance the interests of all constituents, and diffuse individualized passions and pet peeves. She added that about half a dozen of the “top professionals” in the city (many of whom live in the Greater Wilshire area) have already offered their services.”

Director Patti Carroll also requested a change, to the first paragraph on page 3 of the Draft Minutes:

**Original:** “Director Patti Carroll said she heard, at a meeting of the Larchmont Village Neighborhood Association, that the City Attorney has said homeowners are responsible for all repairs out to the middle of their streets...but that if you report a problem, and get a city reference number for the complaint, you don’t have the same liability.

**Proposed Change:** “Director Patti Carroll said she heard at a meeting of the Larchmont Boulevard Neighborhood Association from the City Attorney that property owners are responsible for all repairs out to the middle of their streets. However, if you report a problem to the Bureau of Street Services and get a reference number for the complaint, the liability falls back on the city.”

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

#### President’s Report

Vice President James Wolf announced that there are still several vacancies for alternate Board Members and asked that everyone think about people who might be willing to accept appointments to those seats at our September meeting. Director Jane Usher asked if someone could circulate an e-mail noting which seats need alternate representatives and Mr. Wolf said that would be possible.

#### Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer Russell Sherman reported he has completed treasurer’s training through the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), all of our accounts have been transferred to him, and that he has been issued a purchase card for expenditures under \$1,000. He also said accounts are being set up for the Council at Kinko’s and Office Depot. Director Margaret Hudson asked if the purchase card is a credit or debit card, and Mr. Sherman explained that it’s a debit card issued by US Bank, and DONE deposits money into the account for us to use. Ms. Hudson noted that Kinko’s is 4-5 times more expensive than West LA Printing, the vendor we have used previously for copying, and said West LA also delivers. Mr. Sherman asked Ms. Hudson to e-mail him the contact information for West LA and said he’d look into using their services.

#### Public Comments

Alternate Board Member Margaret Sowma thanked Directors Margaret Hudson, Jane Usher and Charles Dougherty for following through on her previous complaints about the streetlights being out on a section of Wilshire Boulevard. She said the

contractor at the former Perino's site had apparently cut the power lines to the lights and they have now been repaired. "It took the Neighborhood Council to get to the bottom of it," she said.

Ms. Sowma also noted that construction on an apparently illegal building addition is still continuing at 610 Van Ness Ave. and the Department of Building and Safety is "doing nothing." Finally, she said that her purse was snatched recently on Wilshire Boulevard, at noon, and warned people to be aware of the potential for criminal activity "even in daytime."

Joshua Englander, from the office of Assembly Member Mike Feuer, introduced himself and invited all present to call his Assembly office if anyone needs anything he can help with. He left behind a handout and business cards with his contact information

Stakeholder Mee Y. Chang said she hasn't heard from anyone on the GWNC Land Use and Development Committee after complaining at the May meeting about noise and disturbances from La Boca restaurant. She requested a meeting with President Dougherty and said she is "not pleased" with her experiences with other members of the Council. Vice President Wolf asked if she can wait until President Dougherty returns to town, and Ms. Chang noted that it "always takes time." Mr. Wolf said he did receive a file from Carolyn Ramsay, the Field Deputy for City Council District 4, about the issue and introduced her in the audience. Ms. Ramsay said La Boca's use of the property does comply with its Conditional Use Permit, so this is a "behavioral issue." Ms. Chang asked why she wasn't told about this finding, and Mr. Wolf promised to "make sure you're in the loop," and offered to meet with her next week. Ms. Chang asked if she could have phone numbers for people on the Land Use Committee, and Mr. Wolf offered to contact her later tonight or tomorrow to set up a meeting.

Jesus Soto, director of the Hollywood Wilshire YMCA, introduced plans for a capital campaign and new addition to the YMCA's facility. He circulated a handout which outlined plans for new swimming pools and parking facilities to be built in the \$12 million project, and noted that the organization already has \$8 million of that amount committed. He said the new addition will be called the "Munger Family YMCA Facility," that the YMCA will have the funds to start construction by the end of this year and that the building should be done by spring of 2009.

Director John Gresham asked if the Directors could ask questions about this project. Vice President Wolf said that because this project was just brought to his attention yesterday, he couldn't put it on our agenda for tonight...but said we should do so for our next meeting, when we can learn more about the project, discuss it and ask questions.

Mr. Gresham asked what now stands on and next to the project site, and Mr. Soto answered that the property is currently occupied by portable classrooms for the YMCA's day camp program, and the lots next door are occupied by a Shell station and transitional housing. Mr. Wolf asked if the project site is the northwest corner of Third and Oxford,

which may be just outside of the GWNC service area. Mr. Soto confirmed that it is one block outside our boundaries, but invited people to contact him if they have any questions, noting "We're very excited" about it.

At this point, Paul Pagnone and Jerome Buckmelter, developers of a project on Rosewood Ave., asked if this was the correct time for them to speak, saying they weren't sure how to get on the agenda, or whether tonight's agenda was full. Director Jane Usher answered that our agenda is never "full," but that we do have advance notice requirements for items to be placed on the agenda. "The good news," she noted, "is that you're on the agenda" and asked them to wait until the Zoning and Land Use portion of the meeting.

#### Board Member Comments / New Business

Director Margaret Hudson asked how many board members and stakeholders have ever looked at the GWNC website, noting that it is currently one of only two community outreach efforts we're currently making (the other is an ad that Director Jane Gilman prints in the Larchmont Chronicle). Ms. Hudson noted that the Council needs to create a "significant outreach plan" to get the word out about what the Council is and what it does. She said she has looked at outreach efforts being made by other neighborhood councils and would like to form an ad hoc committee to work on this issue and develop an outreach plan. Directors Elizabeth Fuller and Jolene Snett volunteered for the committee, along with Alternate Board Member John McIntyre. Ms. Fuller also noted that Joan Jakubowski, a neighbor of hers who is interested in being appointed as the alternate to her seat, has also expressed interest in being part of this Committee.

Ms. Hudson said she has also recently participated in a Safety Summit with Director Jane Gilman. The event included the Assistant Head of the FBI and other terrorism and anti-gang authorities, who discussed preparedness for all types of emergencies. She said the experts said all residents need to be prepared and able to take care of themselves for up to 10 days in the event of a major disaster. She recalled a remark made last year, by City Council Member Tom La Bonge, who suggested that everyone think about emergency preparedness on the first Friday of each month. Ms. Hudson said she has been working on a Windsor Square committee to get the message out in that neighborhood, and just last week began sending out a "First Friday" e-mail for the Windsor Square block captains to distribute (last year, they distributed an emergency preparedness booklet). Ms. Hudson said she has a calendar for 11 more Friday messages, and advised the Neighborhood Council to execute a similar plan, saying we have a responsibility to advocate for preparedness for all our residents.

Director Jolene Snett noted that not all residents have e-mail and said it would be nice to get messages to people in other ways (such as flyers that contain an e-mail address) once or twice a year. Director Jane Gilman noted that the Council has committees working on other issues and asked if we can create an Emergency Preparedness Committee. Ms. Hudson says the issue has been taken on by the Special Projects Committee, and Ms. Gilman noted that it's "really important" to address this

issue. Director Shar Penfold asked if Ms. Hudson could e-mail her the information for distribution and Stakeholder Margaret Sowma asked if it could be given to block captains. Ms. Hudson said that's how it's being done in Windsor Square, and Stakeholder Liz Nankin noted that this system also works in Sycamore Square. She added that it's very important to get to know your neighbors (especially senior citizens) who may not have e-mail, and learn what information and help they may need. She also said that a booklet may be daunting to some residents, and a more effective presentation might be a checklist of resources and URLs, which could be sent to the presidents of our various neighborhood associations, for distribution via the block captains.

Director Jane Usher noted at this point that we seem to be marrying two issues here, which will come together naturally if our new Outreach Committee comes up with an annual plan of attack. Director Gilman asked if anyone can be on these committees, and Director Fuller noted there is a difference in membership requirements for ad hoc and standing committees. Ms. Usher noted that non-board members may participate in ad hoc committees, but to comply with Brown Act restrictions, they can't take action or vote. Vice President Wolf asked that we keep the Outreach and Emergency Preparedness committees separate for now, saying each will learn from the other and we don't need to take any specific actions tonight as long as we follow Ms. Usher's suggestions.

Director Hudson asked if the GWNC has an office yet, and when Mr. Wolf said no, she noted that if we do start creating databases or other valuable information, it should be stored on a GWNC computer, not someone's personal computer at home. Mr. Wolf said the office issue has not been forgotten, and that President Dougherty knows more about it and can update us when he returns. Ms. Usher noted that as the Outreach Committee "grows up," there will be a question of whether or not our database becomes public information (because we're a public body), and we may need to jump through a "procedural hoop" to keep people's contact information private. Director John Gresham said that in that case, we should encourage use of the neighborhood associations and let them forward e-mail to their members. He also asked if we can distribute flyers with opt-in e-mail invitations, and Ms. Usher said she can outline a procedure we can follow – "There is a way; it just has a little magic to it."

Director Robert Wishart asked about filling vacancies for alternate representatives to the board, noting that one of his neighbors, Jared Abrams, has asked to fill a seat, but that this issue isn't on the agenda tonight. He asked if we can vote on this, but Director Usher said we can't because it's not on the agenda. Our next meeting is on September 26, she said, and an e-mail needs to go out to the board asking for nominations, so the issue can be agendized in September. Mr. Wishart asked how we can make sure that happens and Vice President Wolf apologized for not being in a position to put it on this month's agenda. He said he will get it added to the agenda for our next meeting.

Ad Hoc Committee on Larchmont

Director Jane Usher said that at our last meeting we discussed a plan for all of Larchmont, approved a mission statement and guiding principles that include hiring a planner, and were told that the committee would come back for fuller authorization at this meeting. She said that since then, the Committee has been committed to reaching out to all property owners on Larchmont, and that 75-80 letters (four of which have been returned) have been sent out to them. In the mailings, which included a copy of the Committee's report, the owners were notified of the Committee's work and asked to contact the Committee if they'd like to participate...but there has been no response so far. Ms. Usher said another 150 letters have been sent to members of the Larchmont Boulevard Association, to reach all the business tenants on the street, but there have been no replies from them, either...although the Committee did meet with the head of the LBA.

At this point, Ms Usher introduced ad hoc committee members Steve Lewis and Patti Carroll to provide more information.

Mr. Lewis said the Committee's initial report has provoked "strong reactions" in both the LBA and the Business Improvement District, and that it has definitely "put the issues in play." In addition to the letters Ms. Usher mentioned, he said, he has spoken to others and is also happy to report that City Council member Tom La Bonge has taken a leadership role in the issue. Mr. Lewis said there are many opinions at this point, and the Committee is currently sorting through and identifying what is important to which groups of stakeholders. The most pressing issue on Lower Larchmont appears to be cleanliness and trash. There is a lack of funds for trash cleanup, which is symptomatic of other problems, but the Committee is committed to helping find a solution as a show of faith in uniting the various groups in the neighborhood. Everyone does agree, however, that things are in bad shape and getting worse. The LBA members currently share the cost of a trash contractor whose performance has been "spotty," but people are concerned there won't be other candidates because the trash pickup has to be done by hand. It's a great opportunity for the Neighborhood Council to get involved, he said, and it's part of a larger series of interesting issues that will be addressed as we move forward.

Director Patti Carroll passed out copies of a motion by the City Council office that authorizes the City Planning Committee to do a land use study for Larchmont. The City Council approved the motion, and the City has now provided two Planners to work on the project. Ms. Carroll noted that when the vote on this motion occurred, one issue that everyone on the Council seemed interested in was passing height restrictions as soon as possible. She said we've done some basic community outreach on this and are now going to the residents. The process will be very transparent and people definitely will be able to voice their opinions.

Alternate Director Mike Genewick asked if the Larchmont property owners have agreed to height restrictions, and Ms. Carroll said we're not at the point of a formal decision yet, but they have agreed in principle. She noted that when she left a meeting with Carolyn Ramsay and Renee Weitzer, from Tom La Bonge's office, everyone was

walking the Boulevard to look at the building heights. Mr. Genewick asked again whose consensus this was, and Ms. Carroll said the group included LBA members and others. Steven Lewis said there wasn't absolute agreement, but the "prevailing thought" was that we do need to talk about some restrictions on buildings. He stated again that there are a "tremendous" number of issues here and the committee's job is to eliminate the emotional factors and narrow things down. Finally, he added that the Neighborhood Council has the "chance to make a significant impact here" and said this project can be a "model for other such efforts in the city."

Director Robert Wishart noted that at the first Larchmont Boulevard meeting, someone said there is currently a 45-foot height restriction on buildings. Mr. Lewis said that's true, and the question now is whether to revisit and/or revise that restriction. Director Jane Usher added that the current restrictions of 45 feet "absolutely" will be enforced," but the objective is to figure out a coherent plan for both upper and lower Larchmont Boulevard. The goal is to create a strong sense of place and a unifying element for both ends of the street...though she acknowledged that a consensus will be "slow to evolve." Finally, she noted that she has "taken a step back" from this issue, because of her role as head of the City Planning Commission, and that Mr. Lewis, Ms. Carroll and Patty Lombard have taken over what is not going to be an easy job. "The question is can we improve on what we have and achieve something better?"

Director Jolene Snett asked where things stand on hiring a private planner for the project, and Mr. Lewis said we're still gathering information. Ms. Snett asked if the City has offered more planning help than was initially expected, and Mr. Lewis said yes, but there can be a big difference between what's offered and what's eventually delivered. Ms. Usher noted again that our Committee's activity has put this issue on the City's radar, and said it's very timely and in line with what is going on in other parts of the city.

Director Jane Gilman said the planner question is a good one, and asked whether we might wind up with "conflicting" planners – one from the GWNC and one from the City. Ms. Carroll said she doesn't know yet, and that we may not need our own planner after all, since the City Council office "has really stepped up to the plate." Mr. Lewis said his personal opinion is that it will eventually be a joint effort, and we need to see what the City planners come up with. The theory is that Larchmont Boulevard can't remain static or it will go downhill...but the jury is still out on the need for additional planning services. Finally, Director John Gresham noted for the record that we still haven't budgeted for a planner, just approved the concept of hiring one.

Director Jolene Snett said she heard recently that there are more storefront vacancies coming up Larchmont and asked if anyone has any further information. Director Usher said "much of what we hear is rumor," and the rumors are being filtered to Patti Carroll, who has the professional expertise to sort them out. Ms. Carroll noted that the Dipple Building (which houses the antique stores) has changed hands, and that another (which houses the Silver Lining) is about to close escrow. Director Jane Gilman said another business (a wine importer) has applied for a liquor license, but that it won't be a restaurant. Ms. Usher said the rumors have created a sense that things are changing

on the street, and asked that if anyone in the audience knows anything about businesses coming or going that they let us know. Alternate Director Cindy Chvatal said the photo shop owner told her he's leaving on September 1 because of higher rents, and that Blue Windows and the Silver Lining will also be closing. Also, she heard the hardware store was just sold again yesterday.

Director Usher said the good news here is the strong leadership being demonstrated by the City Council office, and that we have its staff to thank for putting this issue on the Planning Department's agenda. Director Jolene Snett said the current Q Conditions for the area address restaurants, and asked if they could also define uses for other properties – such as the hardware store – to provide some continuity when businesses leave. Carolyn Ramsay, Field Director for City Council Member Tom La Bonge, said that we're trying to find a way to create a mix of solutions, "like Q conditions, but better." But she noted that we "can't determine that level of specificity" and are "still mulling it over." One possibility, she said, is to limit chain stores, but we're just starting to explore that kind of solution and the planners are also starting to consider things like allowing mixed use buildings north of Beverly...as well as other ideas.

Director Jane Usher agreed with Ms. Ramsay's comments and said it's "impossible to prejudge" the outcome of this process, but it is something that's going on all over the city and "it's not rocket science." For example, there should be some unifying features in the public realm (such as trees, sidewalks, parking etc.), and there are some private realm tools – such as restrictions on "formula" retail stores – that can also be used. But there are still lots of questions, such as: do we need mixed use? should some buildings be all housing? And there are other issues such as parking structures, setbacks, height restrictions, and lot ties vs. individual shop fronts. There needs to be a balance and a general consensus, she said, on all of those things.

Steven Lewis noted that it's important not to come up with resolutions before we identify all the problems, and some people say Q conditions actually solve problems that don't exist (such as the restrictions on the number of restaurants). What we need, he said, is a comprehensive, cohesive plan for what should be, and then respond with solutions. Ms. Usher said that Q conditions are a kind of shorthand, which have worked pretty well to maintain a balance on the street. There are probably better tools out there, but we can't abandon Q conditions until we find solutions that are acceptable and adoptable, or we'll have "unfettered chaos."

Vice President James Wolf stated for the record that Larchmont Village is in City Council District 4, represented by Tom La Bonge, and noted that he's pleased Carolyn Ramsay, from Mr. La Bonge's office, was in attendance. He said this issue has been a demonstration that our Council offices can be very receptive to community needs and wants.

#### Million Trees Project

Director Robert Wishart reported that the Million Trees Committee held its first meeting on June 25, and came up with “more questions than answers.” He said the Committee will have a booth at the Larchmont Fair on October 21, and will be handing out seedlings and brochures. Also, all Directors who hold seats representing geographical areas should have received an e-mail asking for contacts in their neighborhoods who can help with tree planting. These notices will go out again in August. La Brea-Hancock will be one of the first two neighborhoods getting trees. Our Committee will be asking Million Trees LA for all the help we can get, and will hold another meeting in August.

### Traffic Committee Report

Director Russell Sherman reported that the Department of Transportation is doing a lot of work in the Wilshire area. Left turn arrows and cameras have been installed at Olympic and Highland. Left turn arrows have also been installed at Wilshire/Highland, Wilshire/Western and La Brea/3rd. Arrows at La Brea and Beverly will be coming soon. One big issue facing us is figuring out where all the traffic will go as population density increases in our area, especially along Wilshire Boulevard.

Director Yigal Arens wondered if people will pick other streets as Wilshire becomes more crowded. Mr. Sherman said the DOT has a “circulation pattern” of streets designated as either arterial or local, and we’ll need to decide which of our streets are which. 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? He said the DOT is encouraging work on these issues to be done at the Neighborhood Council level, so we’ll need volunteers for a Traffic Committee.

Vice President James Wolf urged “a number of people” to become very active on this committee. He noted that the DOT has a new director, and said he’s hopeful that change will bring other changes, and they’re asking us for input. He also said everyone is looking for solutions that benefit one area without hurting others, but the city has been “silent” so far and has just been putting signals and other controls “wherever they want.” He added that traffic is being encouraged to travel on residential streets, and said it will take lots of discussion to find solutions...so we’ll need the same kinds of interaction and dialogue we’re currently having on the Larchmont issue.

Director John Gresham noted that we’ll have to identify the problem areas before we can discuss solutions, and Director Sherman said it will be better to do that in a committee setting. He invited interested parties (especially stakeholders) to e-mail him if they’re interested in volunteering and participating. Mr. Sherman also noted that President Charles Dougherty has asked him to invite someone to speak to the GWNC on the issue of making Olympic and Pico one-way streets, but said he isn’t sure where the City Council stands on the issue. Carolyn Ramsay, Field Deputy for City Council Member Tom La Bonge, said Mr. La Bonge opposes the one-way designations, but the

issue is “still floating around.”

Director John Gresham noted that the new DOT Director, Gloria Jeffs, is opposed to the one-way pairing. On the other hand, a county study said it was a good idea...so if the City objects, it will probably be a “long, drawn-out battle.” Vice President Wolf said he’d like to think that if Mr. La Bonge opposes the change, the issue is dead...but we still need to “keep it on our radar.”

A member of the audience asked if there’s a plan to pave Wilshire Boulevard in the near future, and Director Sherman said yes, at least part of it. Ms. Ramsay added that there is some money for paving in the 2008 budget, and said Council Member La Bonge would like to re-pave all of Wilshire that runs through our district.

#### Ad Hoc Land Use and Zoning Committee Report

*[Note: To avoid a conflict of interest with her role as head of the City Planning Commission, Director Jane Usher left the meeting at 8:47 p.m., and her Alternate, Cindy Chvatal, took her seat.]*

#### Proposed Sonic/BMW Project on Wilshire

Director Elizabeth Fuller described the plans of Sonic Automotive, parent company of Beverly Hills BMW, to build a two-story BMW service center at 5050 Wilshire Blvd., the site now occupied by a Bob’s Big Boy restaurant. Ms. Fuller handed out a map showing the current zoning of the 11 lots Sonic has leased on the south side of the street (which also includes the current Lou Ehlers used car lot next to the Big Boy restaurant) and explained that several zoning changes would be needed to build the service center. The changes would involve re-zoning five lots from R1 and [Q]C2 (which allows only for housing or R1 or R3 housing, or parking lots) to C4, with variances to allow automotive repair. She said the Sycamore Neighborhood Association has taken a formal position against this development, and has sent letters to Sonic Automotive and our City Council office voicing that opposition. Also, three other neighborhood associations – Brookside, Hancock Park and Larchmont Village – have sent letters supporting Sycamore Square’s position.

Director Russell Sherman said the La Brea-Hancock Association, which represents the neighborhood just across Wilshire to the north of the proposed service center, also is opposed to the project, citing the lack of green space between the facility and adjacent housing as one reason for their opposition. Mr. Sherman said Sonic could, by right, expand the service center in the existing Lou Ehlers Cadillac dealership, on the north side of the street (which they have also leased), though their representatives have indicated they don’t want to do this.

Director Yigal Arens asked if this means Beverly Hills BMW would be moving from Beverly Hills to this site, and Ms. Fuller said yes.

Director John Gresham asked if Sonic has considered building a facility on La Brea instead, and Ms. Fuller said they have, but have rejected that idea. Mr. Gresham asked if the service center was an “industrial” use of the property, not just a commercial use, and Vice President Wolf said it is a type of industrial use, since they need variances to use strong hazardous materials at the site.

Stakeholder Barbara Henderson, a resident of Sycamore Square who lives across the street from the site, said Ms. Fuller has done a good job of describing Sycamore Square’s position, and hopes that the GWNC will support the neighborhood. She also said that she does consider the service center an “industrial” use, and that if you picture a large service bay door going up and down “200 times a day,” near neighboring homes, you can see why we don’t want this in our neighborhood. She added that the neighbors do realize this site will probably be developed in the near future, but said that they would like to see something “more appropriate to the neighborhood” built there.

Director Jolene Snett asked if anyone knows how many cars the current Ehlers service center, on the north side of Wilshire, services in a day, and Ms. Fuller said no. Ms. Snett asked if the neighborhood is in favor of Sonic further developing the existing service center on the north side of the street, and Ms. Fuller noted that most of any such development would be by right, so neighborhood support or opposition wouldn’t necessarily come into play. Director Russell Sherman said Sonic has asked the City to vacate Carling Way, behind the Ehlers property on the north side, which is a point of contention with neighbors, and that there has also been some debate about the amount of green space Sonic should provide between that property and the adjacent homes.

Vice President James Wolf noted that this project is currently “much under discussion,” that people are still in fact gathering mode, and there is still time to get representatives from Sonic to address the GWNC to provide more details.

Stakeholder Steven Lewis pointed out that Beverly Hills BMW is the second busiest BMW service center in Southern California, and said they tried to expand in Beverly Hills, but the neighbors resisted. He suggested that people opposed to the new service center on Wilshire contact BMW’s regional management, which is sensitive to community concerns and criticism.

Stakeholder Joe MacCrum said he heard a rumor that Sonic has gone directly to the mayor’s office to request approval, but Director Margy Hudson noted there will always have to be public hearings on a project of this sort. Carolyn Ramsay, Field Director for City Council Member Tom La Bonge, said the neighbors are opposed to the project, Tom La Bonge is opposed, and Sonic did talk to the Mayor’s Office. But, she said, Mr. La Bonge’s office also spoke with the Mayor’s Office, voicing the community response, and there has been no response so far from the Mayor’s representatives. She noted, however, that BMW seems quite determined to relocate to this part of town and suggested that it might be “to everyone’s benefit” if we can find them an alternate location that would suit their needs. Mr. Lewis responded that BMW’s locations are very

carefully determined by demographics, so we'd have to find out from BMW what kinds of locations they would consider.

Vice President Wolf noted that this is a very early dialogue still, and urged everyone to take a broad perspective. He said we meet every two months, and will be able to address all sides of the discussion. Finally, to wrap up, Ms. Fuller passed around a rendering of the proposed service center building.

Proposed Tentative Tract @5022-5036 Rosewood

Jerome Buckmelter, developer of a condominium project planned for 5022-5036 Rosewood, presented his company's plans for a 33-unit condominium building. He said the site – currently occupied by four single-family homes -- is zoned for R3 development, and is surrounded by other R3 properties. They do not need special permits or any zoning variances to build condominiums on the site, he said, but do need a tract map. He noted the property is on the south side of Rosewood, between Wilton and Van Ness. There are currently other apartment and condominium buildings around the site, with some of them (including a 42-unit building across the street) still under construction. There are also some smaller buildings, and the land slopes down to the neighbors behind. The entry to the new building will be on the western slope of the property, with subterranean parking dug into the hillside. Design details for the building are still being worked out, but parking will be both at grade and underground, because of the sloping lot.

Director Margy Hudson asked where visitor parking will be, and noted that parking tends to be very difficult on this block. Mr. Buckmelter said there will be two parking spaces per unit, and the equivalent of ¼ guest space. The building will also have a 15-foot setback and a full landscape plan will be developed.

Ms. Hudson asked if they've given any thought to reducing the number of units in the building, and Mr. Buckmelter said they could look at varying the size of the units, but don't want to reduce the size of the overall building. Ms. Hudson noted that if she lived in a single story house, and someone wanted to build a "monolithic" building next door, she wouldn't like the shadows from the new building. Mr. Buckmelter noted that the shadows will fall toward the street, not on adjacent buildings. He acknowledged that some shadows could fall on nearby houses...but said those houses may also soon fall to developers as well. "If I knew I was sitting on valuable R3 property," he said, "That would help me feel I have something of value, too." He noted that all four single-family homes to be demolished for this project are currently in escrow, and were built in the 1920s.

Director Jolene Snett asked if the building now being built across the street from this site is being built by the same developer, and if it is a mirror image of the project we're discussing. Mr. Buckmelter said only the slope is a mirror image, not the building design. Vice President James Wolfe repeated Mr. Buckmelter's description of the property's slope and how it will affect the appearance and garage position in the finished

building.

Stakeholder Karen Gilman, who lives at 4941 Elmwood Ave., directly behind the development, thanked several people for their “hard work” on this project, including Larchmont Village Neighborhood Association President Charles D’Atri and 4<sup>th</sup> District City Council assistant Doug Mensman, for speaking up at a public hearing, earlier today, about the building height, parking and traffic concerns relating to this project. Ms. Gilman also said they discussed the issue of historic value being lost in the area as old homes are taken for new developments. Ms. Gilman noted that she lives in a classic craftsman kit home, of which she’s only the third owner. She said traffic from this development will make walking in the neighborhood more difficult, especially for students from the nearby elementary school, which also has a program for visually impaired kids. She said the developers will be required to provide crossing guards and security guards for the school and said it’s important to know make sure this is being done. Also, she said there may be issues with the hillside and sloping lot, noting the hill has already failed once -- after which she was required to build a retaining wall and re-grade her lot toward the house (requiring the installation of a new drainage system). She asked that the GWNC consider issues such as erosion, liquification and drainage, especially because the same stream that runs above ground in the Brookside neighborhood runs underground through this neighborhood. She also noted that the development site will lose one old cedar tree, though the developers are considering adding larger replacement trees than originally specified. Finally, she reported that the public hearing official has kept the case file open for comments, and said she wants to make sure they get more input from the Neighborhood Council and others before any decisions are made.

Director Jolene Snett asked Ms. Gilman if she’s requesting anything specific from the GWNC, and Ms. Gilman said she’d like our support for the neighbors and at least our “guarded opposition” based on the loss of historic character, even if the development is “by right.” She would also like us to investigate her specific concerns – for example, why does the Zimas map system say there’s no liquification factor at this site “when we’ve been told the water table is so high”?

Alternate Director Mike Genewick asked if Ms. Gilman believes the development is too dense for this site, or has too many units...and Ms. Gilman noted that if they put 33 new families where there are now just four, it would represent a large increase in population for a neighborhood that’s “not meant to be that dense.” She also noted that raccoons and possums occupy the neighborhood, and expressed concern for their well-being as the human population grows.

Vice President James Wolf asked if anyone wanted to make a motion on the project, and Director Jane Gilman said it’s too soon yet to make a support or oppose decision without further study...but moved that our Land Use committee study the many issues raised here.

Vice President Wolf noted that the case file is only being held open for 30 days,

which doesn't give us enough time to table a decision until our next meeting. He lamented the absence of stakeholder John Welborne, who often provides expertise on such procedural matters, but said we should remember a time when we voted against a project where other R1 homes on R3 lots were being torn down for a new development, even though we agreed there might be a need for higher densities on these lots in the future. He noted, too, that as single family homes disappear from our neighborhoods, it has elevated neighbors' concerns, and asked if there's anything we can do at this meeting, or action we could take to go on record, even though there are no specific building designs to review yet.

Paul Pagnone, another member of the development team for this project, noted that the neighborhood is not predominantly single-family homes, and that they are the exception and not the rule, despite there being single family homes on these lots right now. He described other nearby multi-family buildings and said he feels strongly that this project will not have a negative impact on the neighbors. He said he's a native Angeleno, and is both concerned about traffic and very familiar with traffic problems. If this building were being built a block away, in either an R2 or R1 area, he said, the issues would be different. Also, other buildings being built on this block have less parking than this one, and his company will be widening the street, meeting city engineering requirements. He also noted that this site is not in a liquefaction zone, and that the developers have already completed a new storm drain project at a cost of \$200,000. He said they also did a study on historic value of the homes that will be torn down, and there were no concerns. Even the current owners of those homes support the project. Finally, he noted that they don't have a design for the building yet because they don't want simply to copy the one being built across the street.

Director Patti Carroll asked what the square footage of the building will be, and Mr. Pagnone said each unit will average 1,350 square feet, and will probably be priced in the "mid-\$600s."

Director Jolene Snett asked how this compares to the building under construction across the street, and Mr. Pagnone said it's similar. Those units will be 1,200-1,450 square feet, with two bedrooms, two bathrooms and formal dining rooms, and will sell for \$600,000-\$700,000.

Director John Gresham asked if anyone has inquired about including some "affordable" units, and Mr. Pagnone said they are not including any here. He noted there has been a problem with removing rent-controlled housing and replacing it with market value properties, but you can't just say that you can't tear down single family housing to build multi-family homes and that he really doesn't know where we can go on that issue.

Director Carroll said one of the real problems with the city is that some "ugly" rental units are too expensive to tear down and replace and that we're losing single family housing, which is a shame. Mr. Pagnone agreed with her and said he'd love to build an affordable building, but that land and construction costs are just too high right now. Director Jolene Snett noted that when the developers described other multi-family

buildings in the area, they noted that many are about 16 units...so it may be a problem that this building is 33 units – much larger. Mr. Pagnone said the 16-unit building is on one lot (with no space for parking on site), and this project will put 33 units on four lots, which is actually less dense. Most of the older buildings, he said, couldn't be built today because of modern density and parking requirements. Director Snett asked if they could build 6 units on one lot, 6 on another lot, etc., noting that a “monolithic” building does take away open space, trees, and light from the neighborhood. Mr. Pagnone said the new building will have green space and trees, and reiterated that he thinks it's appropriate for the area and that the city needs it.

Vice President Wolf noted again that the Council doesn't meet again for two months, that this isn't a singular development and that the “rule book is always being rewritten.” He asked again if anyone wanted to make a motion on the project and Director Russell Sherman moved that we support Ms. Gilman's request for study of the issues raised by the neighbors in the public hearing today. Mr. Wolf asked if Ms. Gilman could list those issues again, and Director Jolene Snett asked if we could amend the resolution to include sending a letter to the City, asking that all the issues raised be held in the utmost level of importance. Vice President Wolf said he'd like a public record of those issues, and Director Margy Hudson asked, too, if they could be repeated.

Director John Gresham asked if we could fit something into the resolution about the cumulative impact on neighborhood infrastructure and uses, as noted by Larchmont Village Neighborhood Association President Charles D'Atri at the public hearing. Vice President Wolf said we already have a motion on the table, and stressed the need for clarity in that motion.

At this point, stakeholder Karen Gilman re-listed for the record the issues that she and the neighbors are concerned about:

- height
- cumulative impact of increasing density
- setbacks
- landscaping
- loss of trees
- loss of historic value
- hillside erosion
- noise and privacy
- parking
- wildlife
- liquifaction

Also, she noted that there is a lot of R1 housing in the area, and there is no buffer between those houses and the encroaching R3 buildings, even though she believes city planners intended a “more gradual transition.”

Director Sherman's motion was seconded by Directors Moon Chung and Jolene Snett. Ms. Snett also noted that this is not a singular issue, so it would be instructive to

add to our letter to the City that we're interested in protecting single family neighborhoods that are not on major corridors. She said she would also love for the letter to reflect that this is a larger issue for our area, and that it's changing our neighborhoods forever.

Director John Gresham said there are also issues with the cumulative impact on our city's infrastructure, and Ms. Snett wondered if there could be some kind of "intermediary zoning." Director Margy Hudson noted that Windsor Square got so angry about encroaching density that they have down-zoned several parts of the neighborhood to prevent it.

Vice President James Wolf said there are vehicles to control density, and that there are categories that accommodate more than single-family housing, but not as large as the building being proposed here. He said the argument for those classifications was that certain neighborhoods resonate as low density, single family housing, with setbacks and side yard equivalent to single-family homes, and that multi-family buildings with that met those conditions were allowed by the city. He also brought up the concept of "lot-tying," saying zoning isn't the only answer, and there may be situations where regulating lot ties can help. For example, if you couldn't tie lots, you could only build four separate, smaller buildings on this parcel, not the large building that's being proposed now.

Alternate Director Mike Genewick suggested that because this project requires an environmental decision, our motion should be aimed at requiring an Environmental Impact Report addressing all the concerns that have been mentioned so far. Mr. Pagnone said a mitigated negative declaration has already been issued and that the City has said they do not need to do an EIR as long as the developers follow the conditions to mitigate a long list of potential problems. He said he sees our Council struggling with these issues, and that the best way to deal with them is to go to zoning and planning meetings to express the larger concerns, and not try to tackle the big issues on a project by project basis. He suggested that everyone attend the City's general planning meetings, and said the City is mandated to build new housing, which is what he's trying to do.

Vice President Wolf asked Director Snett if she felt her amendment was covered now, and she said it would be best to take it up in the ad hoc committee and do a separate letter on the issue, "since this keeps happening over and over."

Vice President Wolf noted that developers would like to know the rules and will abide by them, so we can take that to the City as a proactive direction to avoid things that are not appropriate. Ms. Snett withdrew her amendment to Mr. Sherman's motion, and Mr. Wolf called for a vote. Everyone was in favor, except for Director Genewick, and the motion carried.

Announcements & Adjournment

Director John Gresham noted that the Taste of Larchmont festival will be held on July 30, and Director Patti Carroll encouraged everyone to buy raffle tickets. Director John Gresham and Vice President James Wolf reminded everyone that our next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 26 (later than usual because of the Jewish holidays). Stakeholder Frances McCall asked for a moment's silence to honor the people being killed in Iraq and Afghanistan. After an appropriate interval, Director Jolene Snett made a motion to adjourn, and Director Yigal Arens seconded the motion. There were no objections, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Fuller  
Secretary