

# Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council



## Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council General Meeting

September 9, 2009

Approved by the Board,  
November 11, 2009

### MINUTES

#### Call to Order

A duly noticed meeting of the Board of Directors of the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council ("GWNC") was held on Wednesday, September 9, 2009, at the Ebell of Los Angeles, 743 South Lucerne Blvd. President Charles Dougherty called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m.

#### Roll Call

The Secretary, Elizabeth Fuller, called the roll. Board of Directors members in attendance at the roll call were: Patti Carroll, Charles Dougherty, Elizabeth Fuller, Jane Gilman, John Gresham, Frances McFall (alt. Alison Hannon), Margaret Hudson, Mike Genewick (alt. Alex Jones-Moreno), Clinton Oie, Shar Penfold, Martha Schuur, and Jane Usher. Director James Wolf joined the meeting at 7:48 p.m. Directors Jared Abrams, Yigal Arens, Charles Bergson, Moon Chung, Sam Cunningham, Rudy Gintel, Russell Sherman and Owen Smith were absent and not represented by an alternate.

The meeting proceeded with introductory presentations only until Mr. Wolf's arrival and the Secretary stated that a quorum was present as of 7:48 p.m.

#### Introductory Presentations

City Council Member Tom LaBonge provided brief updates on sinkholes in city streets and progress in plans to build the Wilshire Blvd. subway extension. Director John Gresham inquired about a 2010 public works project on Wilshire and Olympic Blvds., and Mr. La Bonge said they will be rebuilding the curb lanes, which have been destroyed by buses. Mr. La Bonge also said he supports the Q Conditions on Larchmont Blvd., and that he would love to build another park like Robert Burns Park, which is undergoing a major renovation.

Stakeholder Jack Humphreville said he's concerned about the city's budget deficit, including the city's pension plans. Mr. La Bonge said the City Council is looking at alternatives to save money, which may include more partnerships in running the city's

parks. Mr. Humphreville asked how Mr. La Bonge voted on the Letter of Consent, and Mr. La Bonge said he voted for it.

Stakeholder Rory Cunningham asked if Mr. La Bonge will support the current draft of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, and Mr. La Bonge said he's not sure yet and wants to look at it before deciding.

Mr. La Bonge passed out a brochure on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, and concluded by presenting a Certificate of Appreciation to Margy Hudson for her work on the Burns Park renovation project and the Proposition K park funds committee.

Haeyoung Kim, Field Representative for State Assembly Member Mike Feuer introduced herself, provided a newsletter and contact information from her office, and said they are current working on reforming the state budget process and a pilot program for breathalyzer-activated car ignitions. She said Mr. Feuer himself would like to attend a future GWNC meeting, perhaps in November.

#### Treasurer's Report

Acting Treasurer Elizabeth Fuller reported that DONE's financial website has not been updated in months, and they haven't returned her phone calls, so she doesn't have up-to-date information about our budget. Also, she reported more difficulties in finding a DONE-approved manner for purchasing the five GPS units we voted to provide to Fire Station 29. The main problem is that the total price of the units is slightly over our \$1,000 credit card limit, and most of the quotes and purchasing options we've received would require that we use a credit card to finalize the purchase.

#### President's Report

President Charlie Dougherty read off the list of Board Members and Alternates who have not yet completed DONE's required ethics training: Jared Abrams, Charles D'Atri, Charles Bergson, Moon Chung, Sam Cunningham, John McIntyre, Myrna Dwyer, Jane Gilman, Michael Rosenberg, Rudy Gintel, Alison Hannon, Frances McFall, Shar Penfold, Patricia Lombard, Russell Sherman, Tom Rubinson, Cindy Chvatal and Jennifore DeVore. Secretary Elizabeth Fuller reminded everyone that DONE may not allow people who have not taken the training to participate in Board votes, which could jeopardize our ability to constitute a quorum and conduct official business.

Mr. Dougherty reported that the next GWNC elections will be held on a Thursday in May, 2010. The first meeting of our new board after the elections will be in July. Mr. Dougherty also asked for a volunteer to attend the City's Election Outreach meeting on September 10, but there were no volunteers.

#### DWP Oversight Committee

DWP Liaison Jack Humphreville reported that the DWP eliminated the ECAF to help maintain its credit rating, but said it hasn't yet done any planning for renewable energy sources. He said the DWP has also passed tiered energy rates with significant increases, which is an "assault" on owners of single family residences and will have a significant impact on them. He said the City Council did intervene on this issue, and sent the increase proposal back to the DWP for reconsideration.

Mr. Humphreville reported that there will be a meeting tomorrow to discuss a new solar energy plan, but he's afraid the session will be long on talk and short on substance. As for infrastructure problems (like the sinkholes mentioned earlier by Mr. La Bonge), Mr. Humphreville said they're a sign of the lack of leadership at the DWP and no one really knows what's going on with the city's infrastructure.

Director John Gresham asked what the DWP board members' areas of expertise are and Mr. Humphreville said they're mostly lawyers and "politicos."

*[Director James Wolf joined the meeting at 7:48 p.m., bringing us to a quorum.]*

#### Featured Presentation

The Board Members, Alternates and stakeholders present viewed the city-provided DVD on Neighborhood Council Sexual Harassment Policy Training. Board members and alternates present for the training included: Carroll, Dougherty, Fuller, Dwyer, Gilman, Gresham, McFall, Hudson, Genewick, Oie, Penfold, Schuur, Chvatal, Wolf, Rajswing, Sowma, and Lombard.

#### Reading of the Minutes

Director John Gresham moved that the minutes of the July meeting be approved as written. Director Margy Hudson seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

#### President's Report (Cont'd)

With a quorum now present, President Dougherty introduced Myrna Dwyer, who has volunteered to fill the recently vacated position of Alternate Director for the Sycamore Square neighborhood. Director Elizabeth Fuller, who lives in Sycamore Square, reported that Ms. Dwyer grew up in the neighborhood and returned as an adult, so has a long history in the area. Director Jane Gilman moved that Ms. Dwyer be approved. Director Cindy Chvatal seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

#### Land Use Committee

Land Use Protocols - Committee President James Wolf reported that Director Jane Usher crafted a new set of protocols for the Land Use Committee, which the Committee recommends accepting, with the one small change of the word "guidelines" to replace the original "standards." Director Cindy Chvatal moved

that the protocols be accepted with the one recommended change. Director John Gresham seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

Larchmont Bungalow - 107 N. Larchmont – Director Cindy Chvatal reported that the property owner applied for a permit to open a new restaurant at this location, but because there are already more restaurants on this block than allowed by the neighborhood Q conditions, the City Council office held a meeting with the owners and nearby residents and the application was withdrawn. The business could only operate as a take-out at this location.

Director John Gresham asked if the business was operating yet, and Ms. Chvatal said it's currently under construction. Mr. Gresham asked if it is true that the parking area has been reconfigured as a patio, and Ms. Chavatal said yes, as the owners were anticipating opening as a restaurant. But they now say the patio won't be used for seating.

Revisions to City Cultural Heritage Ordinance – Sept. 10 Hearing – Stakeholder Rory Cunningham said that the Cultural Heritage Commission considered the revisions at its July meeting, but didn't reach a decision on the issue. Since then, the disagreeing parties have met and hammered out a new draft of the ordinance, but in the meantime, some downtown business owners changed their minds and no longer support the provisions of the document. He said there has been a huge letter-writing campaign, aimed mostly at the issue of protecting the interiors of historic buildings. The City's staff report recommends that interiors be included in historic designations unless they're specifically excluded, but the business owners would like to see that reversed. (The provision is not intended to be intrusive to private homeowners.) Other important changes in the revised ordinance include that owners must now be informed when someone files a landmark application for their property, that the number of commissioners needed to approve something will increase from five to seven, and all commissioners must be involved in some way with historic preservation.

Director John Gresham asked how many of the commissioners are leaning toward supporting the proposed revisions, and Mr. Cunningham said only five of the nine were present at the last meeting and four of the five were in favor (but five votes in favor are required to pass, which is why it was held over to the next meeting).

Director Elizabeth Fuller asked if Mr. Cunningham is asking for a formal vote from the GWNC and he said yes, as well as a letter of support. Mr. Wolf said a letter has been drafted, but we will need to vote before it can be sent.

Director Patricia Carroll said the cutoff time for e-mailing comments in the case was 5 p.m. today, but Mr. Cunningham said he can hand-deliver a hard copy in the morning. Mr. Wolf said it would help even more if a GWNC representative could attend the hearing. Director John Gresham moved that we support the proposed revisions to the Historical Preservation Ordinance as discussed at our

recent Land Use Committee meeting, and that we deliver the letter of support. Director Jane Gilman seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

BRE/Wilshire-La Brea Development – Director Elizabeth Fuller reported that the City Planning Commission, at its August 13 meeting, approved all eight of BRE's entitlement requests for this project, including the zoning changes the neighborhood opposed. Director John Gresham asked if there is any further action that can be taken, but Ms. Fuller said the City Council office has been very much in favor of the project from the beginning and the neighbors haven't been able to change their minds, so there's probably nothing more we can do.

See's Candies/132 S. Manhattan Parking Lot – Director Patti Carroll reported that the Zoning Administration has denied the CUP application to turn this residential lot on Manhattan Place into a commercial parking lot for the adjacent businesses on the Western Ave. side of the block.

See's Candies Landmark Application and Building Renovations – Director Patti Carroll said the project's architects are now seeking approval for their renovation plans. Mr. Wolf said the issue was discussed at last week's Land Use Committee meeting, but the committee wanted some clarification of the plans before making any recommendations. He introduced Chris Pak, the project architect, who said he was brought in to the project after the See's building received landmark status. He said the side of the building has been stuccoed, but they will remove the stucco to show the original brick, and will also open up the southern façade to make the building more open to other stores in the adjacent mini-mall. He said the issue at last week's meeting was the front end of the southern wall, which used to be solid brick. They would like to open it up more, however, by adding doors and windows, which would make it more attractive for its adaptive re-use as a retail building. He said Lambert Giessinger, at the Office of Historic Resources, asked that they reduce the size of the doors and windows from the original drawings, and that has now been done. Ms. Carroll confirmed that the current plans have now been approved by Mr. Giessinger.

GWNC President Charles Dougherty asked if the building's front windows have been altered, and Mr. Pak said originally they had rounded indentations, which have been changed. Mr. Dougherty asked what else is going to be done in the renovations and Mr. Pak said the brick will be cleaned, and they'll remove some signage. They are also discussing whether or not to remove two billboards at the top of the building. Mr. Dougherty asked about windows on the second story of the façade and Mr. Pak said the number of windows there have not changed; their only plans for the façade are to clean it.

Director Margy Hudson asked if Mr. Pak has a historical photo of the building, and he passed one around.

Director John Gresham asked Mr. Pak to explain the configuration for the

property at the rear of the building, and Mr. Pak described the mini-mall and parking areas that are planned.

Director Jane Gilman moved that we support the renovation plans. Director Mike Genewick seconded the motion. It passed unanimously, and Mr. Wolf said we would prepare a letter of support.

Mobil Station at 4605 W. Beverly – Director Patti Carroll said the Zoning Administrator asked the business's representatives to meet with the St. Andrews Square Neighborhood Association about their application to sell wine and beer at the station. The meeting took place this summer, but the owners didn't get support from that group, and both the City Council office and LAPD vice unit have also opposed the application. There is no further news at this point.

Dubai/Cordon Bleu – 4653 W. Beverly – Director Patti Carroll said this business has been operating since 1985 as an adult karaoke lounge, and they have an ABC license but no CUP for alcohol sales. They were recently cited for this by the LAPD, so they filed a CUP application as a family restaurant that will also sell alcohol. Neighbors visited the business, however, and found no food or menus available. There have also been a lot of complaints from residents of the Dover Apartments next door, and the City Council office has objected to the application, saying the business should be applying for a CUB/CUX that would allow entertainment and an adult-oriented restaurant, not a family restaurant.

Director John Gresham asked if the business has closed or at least stopped selling alcohol, which it agreed to do at last week's Land Use Committee meeting. Ms. Carroll said it has not.

Director Cindy Chvatal moved that we oppose the CUP application, based on the recommendations from our Land Use Committee, the City Council office, the LAPD and other interested parties. Director John Gresham seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Mr. Wolf said he would prepare a letter to the city.

Vodvil Restaurant – 5722 W. Melrose -- Director Patti Carroll said the owner of this site is working on plans for a new concept restaurant that would feature hosted games and karaoke. The current business there (the Pueblo Viejo restaurant) has a CUP and ABC license, but not the LAPD entertainment permit that would be required for the new venture. Ms. Carroll said the Larchmont Village Neighborhood Association has concerns about parking for the new business, but the owners are working on that issue and will come back to our Land Use Committee as their plans and neighborhood outreach proceed.

Cell Phone Tower – 535 S. Gramercy – Director Patti Carroll reported that T-Mobile is seeking to place a cell phone tower on this landmarked apartment building. The two issues involved are putting a commercial use in a residential area, and making changes to a landmarked building which has a Mills Act

contract. The installation as planned would definitely alter the look of the building. T-Mobile's goal is to increase call volume and coverage, but they have rejected nearby sites on Wilshire. Neighbors are opposed to the application, based on the changes to the building and on coverage maps that show good cell phone coverage in the area already. The Zoning Administration asked T-Mobile to bring the issue to the Neighborhood Council. Our Land Use Committee recommended that we oppose the application and that we develop a standing policy regarding cell towers on historic buildings and in residential areas. Also, she said another recent case in a nearby area contained recommendations for towers in residential areas, which might be applicable here.

Mr. Wolf said the Land Use Committee recommended that our board oppose the currently proposed design, but did say the applicants could return for further discussion if they revise the designs to be less obvious on the top of the building.

Ms. Carroll said we could also add to our recommendation that we generally oppose cell towers on historic buildings. But Mr. Wolf said he would recommend a separate motion to create that kind of blanket policy.

Director John Gresham moved that we oppose the application as submitted. Director Cindy Chvatal seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Mr. Wolf said he would draft a letter to the city explaining our position.

Director Shar Penfold asked why T-Mobile rejected locations on Wilshire Blvd., and Mr. Gresham said the decision was based on studies by T-Mobile, which showed shadow problems at those locations.

Pawn Shop – 5174 W. Melrose – Committee Chair Jim Wolf said the business is located at the SE corner of Melrose and Wilton. It's currently Edmund's Mantels, and the owners would like to turn part of the space into a pawn shop. He said we might want to recommend things like the days of use and parking requirements, to help the business blend in with the residential area nearby and not be disruptive. He said we originally thought the case was closed, since the Zoning Administration has already heard the case, but our City Council office recommended that we still prepare a list of recommendations for conditions of the CUP. Mr. Wolf said GWNC Board Member Rudy Gintel – who owns a pawn shop and thus has expertise in this area – said we should recommendation that the hours of operation stay the same as the current business (closed on Sunday, limited hours on Saturday), because pawn shops open for extended hours are believed to be more disruptive to their neighbors. Also, Mr. Gintel advised that we not weigh in on any licensing issues, since other agencies will cover that area.

Director John Gresham asked if there had been any discussion with the neighbors, and Mr. Wolf said there has not, but we can step in on the neighborhood's behalf.

Director Mike Genewick said Mr. Gintel shouldn't participate in our deliberations

because he has a conflict of interest, but he can give advice as a business person.

Mr. Gresham said he's concerned about the pitfalls of approving this application, but Mr. Genewick said there's lots of commercial activity at this intersection, and the new use is not in conflict with those other uses.

Director Jane Gilman said that if the ZA has already heard the case, wouldn't we already know the approved hours and other details? Mr. Wolf said we do know the approved hours, but we can still weigh in with recommendations before problems develop.

Mr. Wolf moved that we recommend that the pawn shop use be limited to the same hours as the current business, and that the Neighborhood Council defer to the City Council office and others on other considerations.

Mr. Gresham asked about the sales of weapons at the shop, but Mr. Wolf said Mr. Gintel has confirmed that weapons sales are prohibited by city or state laws.

Director Elizabeth Fuller seconded the motion on the table. It passed with 12 votes in favor, and Mr. Gresham abstaining.

Increase in City Fees for Land Use Appeals – Committee Chair Jim Wolf reported that the City has increased fees for Land Use appeals from \$50 to \$150 for most individuals who live within the standard notification area for a project. Fees for people outside the notification area will now be \$500, and fees for applicants will be 85% of their original filing fee. He said the increases have already been passed by the city, so no further action is required on our part.

Director Patti Carroll asked what the range is for applicants' fees, and Mr. Wolf said it's a formula based on the size of the project.

Yavneh Hebrew Academy Appeal Ruling – Mr. Wolf reported that the original ruling in this case created language distinguishing between "primary" and "secondary" uses of the property, and a neighbor appealed, saying that distinction shouldn't have been made. The appeal was denied, however, so the original ruling stands.

AT&T Above-Ground Facility – Lucerne & Clinton – Committee Chair Jim Wolf said AT&T has expanded its fiber optic network and needs to tie it in to the existing copper network. To do this, they use metal equipment cabinets on the parkway strips next to the streets. They can't use the old cabinets for the new technology, so they have to install a lot of new cabinets next to the old ones. Some residents have taken issue with this, but the utility has little choice, since they can't put the equipment underground because of problems with water and ventilation. Also, he said, homeowners do not technically own the parkway strips, so the city has the right to put things there.

Director Mike Genewick disagreed, saying the strips are owned by homeowners, but there's a public easement to the city. Director John Gresham added that if anything goes wrong with something on the parkway strip, it is the owner's responsibility to keep it up.

Mr. Wolf said the Land Use Committee may want to explore further policy on this issue.

#### Ad Hoc Outreach Committee

Committee Chair Margy Hudson reported that our new logo and the city seal are now being used in our monthly Larchmont Chronicle ads, along with meeting summaries and teasers for upcoming agenda items.

Ms. Hudson said we're still waiting for DONE to issue a deposit check to our website designer, so she can begin work on our website revisions. She said there has been no action on our banner project, but the new flyers for the La Brea Art Walk have come out with our sponsorship logo included.

Director John Gresham asked if the flyers will always be printed on black, and Director Elizabeth Fuller, who has been the liaison to the Art Walk, said she hopes not and will try to find out. She asked people to pick up and distribute some flyers for the event, and to patronize it if they can.

#### Board Member Comments/New Business

Director Margy Hudson reported that the Burns Park benches the GWNC paid for have been installed, look great and are already being used.

Director John Gresham said we need to send a representative to the Mayor's Budget Day on October 10. Director Elizabeth Fuller said Alternate Director Margaret Sowma has volunteered to be our representative. Mr. Gresham said stakeholder Jack Humphreville has also expressed interest, and he moved that both of them attend on our behalf. Director Cindy Chvatal seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.

#### Public Comments

Stakeholder Joan Taylor said the city's "Door to Door" transportation program for seniors has two vans in each of 15 districts, which are used by tax-exempt organizations to give rides to senior citizens. Ms. Taylor said that eliminating vans that serve senior citizen centers, and replacing them with coupons for senior taxi rides, would be more efficient. She said each van ride costs the city about \$70, but taxi rides cost only \$10-\$15 per ride. She asked that the GWNC appoint a committee to investigate the needs of seniors in this area, and to make a recommendation to the city on whether such a change in the transportation program would be appropriate.

Director Shar Penfold asked what age groups the taxi coupons would be provided to, and Ms. Taylor said anyone over age 65 or with a certified disability.

Alternate Director Margaret Sowma confirmed that the Department of Aging is having problems with lack of funds, and said she would like to look into this proposal. President Dougherty asked if she'd be willing to do this research on behalf of the GWNC and report back to us, and she said she would.

#### Announcements and Adjournment

Director Jane Gilman announced that the annual Larchmont Fair will be held on October 24.

Director John Gresham noted that the LA Times' "Mapping LA" project is still getting our GWNC area neighborhood boundaries wrong, especially for the Hancock Park and Koreatown areas. He said that since the project is driven by user comments and input, he'd appreciate more people chiming in online on behalf of their neighborhoods.

President Dougherty said the next meeting of the GWNC is scheduled for November 11, which is Veteran's Day. We did hold the meeting on that day last year, but did catch some flak for it. Secretary Elizabeth Fuller noted that it is a holiday for city employees (like DONE representative Betty Wong Oyama and CD 4 representative Nikki Ezhari), so they probably cannot attend if we meet that day.

Director Jane Gilman asked if the Ebell will be open that day, and Mr. Dougherty said it would be, but other events might be scheduled here, too, so we might be in another room that night. November 4<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> would be alternate dates, if people would like to change the meeting date.

Director Martha Schuur moved that we meet on the 11<sup>th</sup>, as originally scheduled. Director Cindy Chvatal seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 12 in favor, and one (Mike Genewick) opposed.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Fuller  
Secretary