

PLUM Committee meeting on November, 10, 2016

Minutes

The meeting began at approximately 6:02 p.m.

PLUM Committee members Samantha Foley, Orrin Feldman and Danielle Mead were present.

PLUM Committee member Oren Katz arrived a short time later. A sufficient number of committee members were there to establish a quorum.

Joyce Director, HHWNC's area 4 chair, Susan Proffitt Wattles, HHWNC's area 6 chair, and Barbara Witkin, HHWNC's area 7 chair, were present.

Approximately 45 stakeholders, including, Julia Duncan, Planning Deputy for City Council District 4, were present.

1. 1715 N. Wilcox

Bill Roschen presented his architectural design proposal for a new hotel at 1715 Wilcox Avenue. Michael Gonzales, Esq., on behalf of Adolfo Suaya, described the discretionary entitlements requests which Mr. Suaya is asking the City's Planning Department to approve.

Orrin mentioned that he had talked with Brian Dyer, HHWNC's area 3 chair, because Brian would be unavailable to attend this meeting. Both were concerned about the request for zero or "no set back" side yards on the south and north sides of the lot. There seemed to be no space for fire fighters or their fire fighting equipment to get in to the building from the south and north if a fire occurs. When they visited the site, they steel fences and barbed wires which would prevent firefighters from being able to get access to the south and north sides of the building in the event of a fire. If a fire were to occur, there is a significant likelihood that firefighters would not be able to effectively fight the fire, and that a fire could spread to adjacent properties. Mr. Roschen said that the number of exits from the building should be sufficient to provide guests inside the hotel with ways out of the building in the event of a fire.

Orrin and Brian also were concerned that the proposed roof top bar would be open, rather than enclosed. Mr. Roschen said that the photovoltaic cells on the roof provided a nice architectural feature.

Orrin pointed out that there are other rooftop bars nearby which can be heard by residents and people just walking through those neighborhoods even if they're several blocks away from the open rooftop bar(s). The concern was that an open rooftop bar could be a (noisy) nuisance for decades to come for current and future residents in the neighborhood. Stakeholders were doubtful that Mr. Gonzales' suggestion to keep the noise level below a specific decibel level could prevent the sound from becoming a nuisance.

Orrin also mentioned Brian's request that Mr. Suaya provide trees and other landscaping for the entire block, rather than just in front of the proposed hotel.

Stakeholders also raised concerns about the proposed hotel's impact on the adjacent two story rent controlled apartment building to the north of the site. The loss of light and air was mentioned.

The possible impact of the proposed hotel on vehicular traffic moving on Wilcox was raised.

Messrs. Gonzales, Roschen and Scott Campbell agreed to see what improvements and mitigations were possible, and to come back to discuss the matter(s) further.

Mr. Gonzales mentioned that the Planning Department expected to circulate a mitigated negative declaration for the proposed project in December, 2016, as the next step in Mr. Suaya's efforts to get California CEQA approval for the proposed hotel.

2. 7445 Sunset Boulevard

Ira Handelman presented a revised proposal on behalf of Sunset & Gardner Investments LLC and Cadence Capital Investments, LLC for a new Gelson's supermarket at the northeast corner of the Sunset Blvd./Gardner intersection.

Mr. Handelman explained (i) the newly revised proposed facade design with a "federal" architectural style, and (ii) that there were some new proposed changes for the site's circulation plan.

The newly revised rear elevation of the supermarket has no windows facing the Gardner Elementary School's playground.

While trucks would be required to enter and exit from Sunset per the community's request at an HHWNC area 7 committee meeting last summer, Gelson's wanted northbound customers' cars on Gardiner to be able to enter the parking lot for the store by making a right turn from Gardner. Southbound traffic on Gardner would not be able to make a left turn to enter the garage from that street.

Also, a traffic monitor would be provided outside the Gelson's parking entrance from Gardner during Gardner Elementary School's hours to increase the school childrens' safety during drop off and pick up periods.

The project manager for the proposed Gelson's construction explained that the parking garage also would have a new exhaust system, which features machinery to suck in and clean up the air in the garage and from the store(s) before the air is vented from the site. The supermarket and any additional first floor retail spaces along Sunset Blvd. would (all) be covered by this exhaust system. The net result of adding the exhaust system should mitigate/remove concerns about this proposed project decreasing the air quality at the Gardner Elementary School..

Stakeholders' comments focused largely on traffic safety and air quality concerns. There also were a few questions about the proposed building's height, and whether it should be no higher than the buildings on the west side of Gardner. Mr. Handelman mentioned that the proposed building's height was allowed by right under the LA Municipal Code.

There was a substantial discussion as to whether the revised plan would (or would not) put childrens' safety at risk. Some stakeholders thought that, if the supermarket were built, some sort of serious injury to the Gardner Elementary Schools' students would occur.

There also were concerns about the supermarket being adjacent to any school, and especially if the supermarket served alcohol on the premises. Mr. Handelman explained that the request to do so had been dropped from the proposed project as a result of the HHWNC area 7 meeting last summer.

Oren Katz, Barbara Witkin and several other stakeholders thanked the proposed project's development team for listening to stakeholders' concerns at that HHWNC area 7 meeting last summer, and for trying to respond to those concerns in the revised design proposal.

Mr. Handelman mentioned that the development team needed to meet with the school's principal and the parents' group's leaders. Additionally, the development team would present the proposed project again at the next HHWNC area 7 committee's meeting.

3. 2100 Laurel Canyon Boulevard

Patrick Panzarello presented on behalf of Pace Restaurant, which has asked the City's Planning Department to approve several new discretionary entitlements for Pace restaurant.

Owner Sandy Gendel and Manager Josh Blum were present and participated in the discussion.

Pace restaurant has asked the Planning Department to approve the restaurant's expansion into an approximately 500+ square foot area, which occurred several years ago. The expansion occurred without permission from the Planning Dept. The expansion also occurred without obtaining the required permits from LA Dept. of Building & Safety. Mr. Panzarello said that, if the expansion is allowed retroactively, the City's Building & Safety Department is expected to set a new maximum occupancy of between 60-75 seats.

The restaurant has asked the Planning Department to approve the restaurant for an upgrade from a Type 41 to a Type 47 establishment in order to allow Pace restaurant to serve a full line of alcoholic beverages.

Pace restaurant also has asked the Planning Department to approve the restaurant's requests for (i) additional operating hours to stay open until 11 p.m. on weekdays and to midnight on weekends, and (ii) permission to have live entertainment.

Mr. Panzarello mentioned that the request for live entertainment would be dropped, but asked the Plum Committee to support the remainder of the requested entitlements. The gist of the argument was that (i) the restaurant needed the upgraded license, (ii) and would be at a severe disadvantage if the license weren't upgraded to a Type 47 to allow the restaurant to serve a full line of alcohol for on-site consumption.

Mr. Panzarello also discussed the valet parking operations. Mr. Panzaarello said that the current employee operating the valet parking service there for many years would be removed, and that that Proper Parking would take over the valet parking operations.

Mr. Panzarello and the Proper Parking representative said that everything would be done properly. No approved or proposed valet parking plan was provided.

Mr. Panzarello said that the Pace would no longer be valet parking cars at 2400 Laurel Canyon Blvd., the Houdini property because the property isn't zoned for any commercial operations, including valet parking.

Instead, customers' cars would be parked at the Wonderland Elementary School's lower parking lot, which Mr. Panzarello said could accommodate approximately 20 cars. No lease or other documentation was provided, but he did say in response to Orrin's question, that LAUSD had approved the arrangement.

Mr. Panzarello also said that Pace restaurant's customers' cars would not be valet parked at the Union 76 gas station during evenings when the gas station is closed, which is a change from what he said at the Planning Dept.'s zoning administrator's hearing on October 27, 2106.

Ronald Smith described problems that he and other nearby neighbors have had as a result of the restaurants' employees' and customers' cars being valet parked on the nearby streets seemingly almost every day for many years.

Messrs. Panzarello and Gendel said that employees' cars would be parking soon at a house which Mr. Gendel owns near the restaurant. They thought that up to 12 cars could be parked there.

Kristen Stavola presented a sheaf of many emails from people in support of Pace's application. Ms. Stavola mentioned that the restaurant had never violated its current liquor license.

Many of the emails were identical. Most focused on a statement that the restaurant would be at a severe disadvantage if its license was not upgraded to a Type 47 to allow the sale of a full line of alcoholic beverages for on site consumption.

Gilbert Morra spoke about his understanding that new liquor licenses would run in perpetuity with the site, and he urged caution about granting any new licenses.

Oren Katz mentioned that the restaurant has not operated as a good neighbor. and should not be rewarded for not having been a good neighbor. The installation of speed bumps on Rothdell Trail behind the restaurant was one example mentioned. The complaints in the file and at the zoning administrator's hearing, as well as Mr. Smith's statements to the Plum Committee, about how the valet parking operations have been conducted, were another. Mr. Katz said that ignoring how the restaurant operated all these years couldn't and shouldn't be ignored, and that the restaurant needed to show that it could operate properly (as a good neighbor) before the neighborhood council should support Pace restaurant's request to upgrade to a Type 47 to be able to sell a full line of alcoholic beverages for on-site consumption. .

Orrin Feldman asked if the PLUM Committee members would like to consider (i) supporting Pace's requests, or (alternatively), (ii) support legalizing the restaurant's expansion into the additional space, allow the restaurant to operate until 11 p.m., daily, but deny the request for a Type 47 to sell a full line of alcoholic beverages, and allow the restaurant to re-apply in 18 months. He said that the hope would be that, if Pace's operations improved, the full line request could be supported at that time.

At Barbara Witkin's suggestion, Feldman made a motion that the PLUM Committee recommend to the Hollywood Hills West Neighborhood Council Board that the Board recommend to Zoning Administrator John Chiang that (i) the Planning Department legalize Pace restaurant's expansion into the additional space several years ago, (ii) allow the restaurant to operate until 11 p.m. daily, but (iii) deny Pace's request for approval to sell a full line of alcoholic beverages at this time, and (iv) permit Pace to reapply in 18 months.

The motion passed (3 -1) with Feldman, Foley, and Katz voting in favor of the motion, and with Meade voting against the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 p.m.