PLUM Committee meeting on January 5, 2017

Minutes

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

PLUM Committee members Patty Dryden, Orrin Feldman, Samantha Foley, JoAnn Koplin and Danielle Mead were present. A sufficient number of committee member were there to establish a quorum. Barbara Witkin arrived later, and joined in the discussion with regard to 7445 Sunset Boulevard.

More than 50 stakeholders were present. Among those in attendance were Christine Robertson, Council District 13’s planning deputy, and Julia Duncan, Council District 4’s planning deputy.

The draft minutes presented for the December 8 2016 PLUM Committee meeting were revised and approved.

There was a brief discussion about whether (or not) to meet on March 7, 2017, because it will be the City’s election day. The PLUM Committee decided to proceed with plans to meet on that day.

Orrin reported that, based on the discussions at the PLUM COmmittee’s meeting on December 8, 2016, several HHWNC stakeholders went to the Mulholland Design Review Board’s next meeting to discuss how large basement spaces in proposed projects in the Mulholland Corridor should be treated under the Mulholland Specific Plan. They had success with two MDRB board members, but needed more widespread support. They also reported some success in getting a proposed house on Willow Glen downsized from 7,000 square feet to 3,000 square feet.

1. 1770 North Highland - proposed 7-Eleven store.

Sherrie Olson lead 7-Eleven’s team and presentation about the proposed store. Rahul Sharma, who would operate the proposed store, was present.

Ms. Olson presented a stack of forms filled out by people; the bulk of the forms seem to be from people who live or work in Hollywood, including many in HHWNC’s area.

The I Support 7-Eleven in My Community” forms state in English (and Spanish) that:

1. I support the proposed 7-eleven market located at 170 N. Highland,
2. I support a safe business with bright lighting and security system where my family can use services at any time of the time of day,
3. I support a responsible market to operate 24 hour daily with security cameras; and
4. I support a community friendly store which will deter crime, loitering and maintain a graffiti free environment.

Orrin reminded Ms. Olson that he had asked at two prior meetings for 7-Eleven to contact The Jefferson’s building’s managers and the managers of other buildings adjacent to 1770 Highland to tell them about the proposed 7-Eleven store, and ask whether they would support (or oppose) the requested relief from the commercial corner rules to operate the store on a 24/7 basis. He asked if that had been done, and it hadn’t been done.

LAPD Hollywood Division Senior Lead Officer Manuel Sanchez told us that he opposed the proposed store’s request for relief from the commercial corner rules, which would require the store to close by 11 p.m. and not reopen until 7 a.m. or later. SLO Sanchez’ opposition seemed to be based largely on (i) his analysis of the impact of 7-Eleven stores already operating in HHWNC’s area or nearby on the areas around the stores, and (ii) the crime statistics which he had analyzed. SLO Sanchez presented summaries of the crime statistics, meaning reported calls for service, for (i) the mall on Highland where the proposed store would be opening, and (ii) for each of 4 existing 7-Eleven stores in or near HHWNC’s area.

SLO Sanchez reported that the amounts and types of calls for service being generated from the existing 7-Eleven stores were far more numerous and of a much greater seriousness than typical calls from commercial retail operations in Hollywood. There seemed to be a meaningful statistical differences in the amounts of LAPD resources needed by 7-Eleven stores’ operations.

SLO Sanchez also said that he had contacted The Jefferson’s new managers, who had been on the job for only a few days. SLO Sanchez said that the managers opposed 7-Eleven’s proposal to operate the store on a 24/7 basis.

The PLUM Committee’s members and several of the residents attending the meeting echoed SLO Sanchez’ concerns. In response to committee members’ questions, SLO Sanchez confirmed their concerns that 7-Eleven’s seem to generate community safety problems nearby because people start to hang out near the stores at various times of the day, including late at night and in the early morning hours.

Ms. Olson asked if, it was possible that the statistical disparity reflected calls for service from well trained 7-Eleven employees pushing their in-their-pocket “buttons” to do so when they saw problems outside of the store on the street(s)? SLO Sanchez didn’t think that outside calls were responsible for much, if any, of the disparity.

Ms. Olson asked about another nearby 7-Eleven store, and SLO Sanchez had those statistics available. The reported calls for service seemed similar to the statistics for the stores on his report.

Danielle Mead moved that the PLUM Committee recommends to HHWNC’s Board that the Board oppose 7-Eleven’s pending request at the City’s Planning Department for relief from the City’s commercial corner rules.

The motion passed (5-0).

2. 7445 Sunset Boulevard - proposed stores, including a Gelson’s supermarket.

At Orrin’s request, Ira Handelman provided an update about the proposed project to HHWNC’s LUM Committee.

Mr. Handelman mentioned that, following his presentation to a joint Area 7/Transportation Committees’ meeting on December 14, 2016, LAUSD’s facilities office had expressed interest in pursuing Cadence’s plan to improve the cross walks at 7445 Sunset, and also that Cadence was interested in working with LAUSD to improve all of the drop off areas, sidewalks and crosswalks at Gardner Elementary.

Several PLUM Committee members were angry that Mr. Handelman was making any presentation or one which seemed to have so few incremental improvements since December 14th., but they hadn’t realized he was there at Orrin’s request to update the committee.

Several stakeholders were angry at Mr. Handelman, Gelson’s and the PLUM Committee. More than one asked why, if the stakeholders at the December 14th meeting had voted 32-0 to not support the proposed project, why would the PLUM Committee even take up the proposed project or consider any other position vis a vis the proposed project?

Several stakeholders requested or demanded that the project be pulled back and/or down-sized.

Barbara Witkin wanted the project’s building to be smaller, and the sidewalks to be widened.

Another stakeholder expressed her opinion that the committee’s members were there to be the community’s representatives and do what the community told them they wanted with regard to the site.

3. 1915-21 N. Wilcox - proposed “Hollywoodland Hotel”

Dimitri Samaha, the owner/applicant, Michael Gonzales, Esq. and Ira Handelman were there to answer committee members’ and stakeholders’ questions following a brief presentation about the proposed hotel. The presentation about how the hotel would operate was cut short due to time constraints with the library’s closing.

Orrin asked the team to address why the neighborhood should support the applicant’s request for a discretionary entitlement in the form of relief from the residential only zoning rules (R-4) to allow a commercial business, such as a hotel, to be built and operate there.

He also asked about whether there was enough parking for employees and guests. Mr. Samaha mentioned that employees would not be parking on site, but hadn’t yet arranged for where they might park. He hoped they’d arrive without needing to park cars.

Mr. Gonzales mentioned that Hollywood Heritage had asked that the historic property included in the proposed hotel be operated separately in order to not be at risk if the hotel weren’t successful. In response to a stakeholder question, Mr.Gonzales mentioned that the historic property would be exempt from having to have any required parking.

Mr. Gonzales also mentioned that the Planning Department had circulated a mitigated negative declaration (MND) with regard to the proposal in August, which was following the July presentation he made to the PLUM Committee. Orrin mentioned that no one had provided a copy or link to the MND, nor mentioned it’s circulation. Mr. Gonzales said the comment period had closed, but that he thought the Planning Department would take comments up until the department holds any hearing on the MND. He didn’t mention whether any hearing date has been set.

A neighbor on Cahuenga or Wilcox (Anne) commented on how she looked forward to the hotel cleaning up the block(s) she had lived on since 1969. Another team member, whose job seemed to be do outreach, told us how the neighbors supported this proposed project, but others said the there had been little (or even no) outreach to the 14 member Whitley Heights Association’s board.

Orrin expressed his displeasure that Mr. Gonzales and the team on this hotel would come to the neighborhood council to ask for support for the proposed project, but hadn’t shared the draft MND with the neighborhood council. Mr. Gonzales initially told the PLUM Committee that the MND was a public records which we should have looked for if we were interested in seeing it, and then, later, apologized and undertook to provide a copy.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.