PLUM Committee meeting on October 5, 2017

Minutes

PLUM Committee members Orrin Feldman, Oren Katz, Danielle Mead and Luminita Roman attended the meeting. Joyce Dyrector, Area 4 Chair, attended the meeting to participate as a PLUM Committee member when Japan House’s application was discussed.

There were a sufficient number of committee members present to establish a quorum.

Orrin Feldman called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Approximately 35 stakeholders were present.

1. The draft minutes of prior meetings on July 6, and September 7, 2017 were discussed. Motions to approve the draft minutes for July 6, 2017, as revised, and September 7, 2017, were passed unanimously.

2. Julia Duncan, Senior Planning Deputy for City Council Member David Ryu, made a presentation about the Hollywood Community Plan update. She discussed various substantive changes being proposed for HHWNC’s Area 7. She also discussed the process and time line under which the City, including the City’s Planning Department, will consider public comments and suggestions, including revisions to whatever the Planning Department proposes as part of the Hollywood Community Plan update.

3. 6801 W. Hollywood Blvd. —— is Hollywood & Highland Shopping Center.

Lee Rabun, Takekshi “Tak” Sakimoto and Tanner Blackman explained the new Japan House going into spaces on the second and fifth floors of the Hollywood & Highland Shopping Center, which is a public-private partnership of Japan’s Foreign Ministry and ESP Investment Holdings.

Mr. Sakimoto, who also is Vice President at Musicians Institute in Hollywood, explained that ESP Investment Holdings had been approached to launch a Japan House here in Los Angeles a few years ago, and had chosen to do so at Hollywood & Highland. There will be an exhibition space on the shopping center’s second floor. The fifth floor will have a restaurant and event center. Previously, the Hollywood Highlands nightclub operated in the fifth floor space which will now become Japan House.

ESP Investment Holdings applied for a conditional use permit (Type 47) to sell a full line of alcoholic beverages at the restaurant and event center. The restaurant would be open daily, and the event center would be open for special events as needed. The number of seats available would range from approximately 35 in the restaurant to up to 180+, and would depend on the configuration(s) being used in the event center portion of the 5th floor space. Alcohol service would be limited to the 5th floor space.

Mr. Rabun explained that the proposed hours of operation would be from 10 a.m. to 2 a.m. daily. He also explained that (i) the restaurant might sell some Japanese alcohol products for off-site consumption, and (ii) there would be light live entertainment, but (iii) no nightclub promoters would be involved. All bookings for the event center would be done through/by Japan House, and Japan House would be responsible for all the events occurring at Japan House.

City Council Member Mitch O’Farrell’s office expressed support for the Japan House application. Dan Halden, the Council Member’s Field Deputy for Hollywood, and Amy Ablakat, the Council Member’s City Planner, explained that they had helped close down and rein in several nightclubs last year which had operating problems, and looked forward to a much better operation there with Japan House.

LAPD Hollywood’s two Vice Unit officers who attended the meeting made similar statements supporting the application for Japan House.

Jim Geoghan expressed strong concern(s) that any sales of alcoholic beverages and/or products for off-site consumption would add to the problems with too much alcohol drinking along Hollywood Boulevard and in the larger neighborhood.

The PLUM Committee members welcomed the Japan House to the community, but expressed some concerns. Oren Katz expressed a hope that the sales for off-site consumption should not be a material part of Japan House’s business, and not add to alcohol related problems in the neighborhood. Several PLUM Committee members wanted more assurance that there would be no nightclub promoters involved in Japan House’s bookings and operations.

The PLUM Committee voted (5-0) to support the following motion:

That Hollywood Hills West Neighborhood Council recommends that the City Planning Department approve the pending application for a conditional use permit for Japan House, but that no nightclub promoters be allowed/involved in Japan House’s operation(s).

3. 1719 - 1731 Whitley Avenue - consists of 6 apartment buildings with 40 apartment units.

Matthew Hayden represents the buildings’ owner, which is a corporation. None of the corporation’s owners or employees attended the meeting, and Mr. Hayden declined to name any.

Mr. Hayden was there to report to the PLUM Committee that, after additional research with regard to whether the site has historic significance, the owner wished to continue with its application to demolish the 6 apartment buildings, evict the current tenants residing in the 40 apartments in those 6 buildings, and build a 10-story hotel on the site. Mr. Hayden reported that he had discussed the additional research and the researcher’s conclusion(s) that the site did not have historical significance with Hollywood Heritage.

Fran Offenhauser and John Girodo were there on behalf of Hollywood Heritage. They reported that Hollywood Heritage had met with the owner/developer and its representative, and that the developer had offered no alternative to demolishing the 6 apartment buildings.

Hollywood Heritage strongly opposes the proposed demolition, and asked that a revised historical survey be prepared to analyze whether the 6 buildings are a part of a larger multi-family historical district, and whether alternatives to demolition exist.

The PLUM Committee members and other stakeholders made many negative comments with regard to the owner/developer’s unwillingness to consider any alternative other than demolishing the 6 apartment buildings.

Mr. Hayden also made a short presentation with regard to the new hotel building which the developer wants to build on the site. Mr. Hayden mentioned that the developer is asking for a site plan review, but not for a conditional use permit to sell, beer, wine and or other alcoholic beverages “at this time”. He said that the rooftop bar adjacent to the pool and gym there would sell juices.

PLUM Committee Oren Katz asked Mr. Hayden whether the owner/developer was piece-mealing this proposed project? Mr. Katz noted that every other hotel development application in Hollywood has included CUP requests. Mr. Hayden’s response was a repeat of his statement that no alcohol service was being requested “at this time”.

Many stakeholders commented on the proposed demolition, evictions, and new hotel. All the stakeholders who commented opposed the owner/developer’s efforts to do so.

Council District 13’s Dan Walden and Amy Ablakat said that they had been listening carefully, and would report back to their colleagues, including a new CD 13 Planning Director who would be joining their office a week or so later, about what they had seen and heard.

The PLUM Committee voted (4-0) to support the following motion:

The Hollywood Hills West Neighborhood Council

1. strongly opposes the proposed demolition of the 6 apartment buildings at 1719-1731 Whitley Avenue, which would evict the tenants of the 40 apartment units in the buildings, and
2. recommends that the Planning Department order the owner/developer to (a) conduct a revised historical survey in accordance with Hollywood Heritage’s request, and (b) prepare a draft environmental impact report which includes an analysis of alternatives to the developer’s proposed demolition(s).

4. There was one public comment on a non-agendized item

Gilbert Morra mentioned an upcoming event at which old or unwanted RX medications could be turned in and safely disposed.

5. The meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.