



Northridge East Neighborhood Council

Meeting Minutes: Wednesday, July 18, 2007
Andasol Elementary School Auditorium, 10126 Encino Ave.

Call to Order: 7:20pm

Attendance: Kelly Lord, Thomas Baker, Don Dwiggins, Ray Calnan, Barry Greenberg, Peter McCarty, Lucille Meehan, Judith Nutter, Alice McCain, Yeprem Davoodian (new member), Sara Adelman (Youth Rep -- new member)

Absent: Steve Patel (excused absence), Caroline Moore sat with Stakeholders

Minutes: Kelly Lord motioned to approve the minutes. Thomas Baker seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

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Agenda

Kelly Lord stated that the agenda would not go directly in the scheduled order.

1. June 24th Election: Results, Swearing In and Oath, of the Elected 3rd Board of Northridge East Neighborhood Council

The third year board members, some of whom had second terms, were sworn in as a result of the election. Also elected was Sara Adelman, the youth representative and Yeprem Davoodian. John Bwarie from Council Member Greig Smith's office swore in the new board members.

2. Tessa Charnofsky from Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's Office of the Mayor

Tessa Charnofsky announced that on Monday July 23rd there will be a Progress Report meeting focusing on the Mayor (who will not be present) and his performance on issues such as education, traffic, employment, and the environment. This will happen from 5-7pm, at the Encino Tarzana Medical center. She also announced the Mayor's Million Trees Initiative, which will lead to new trees being planted throughout LA. The Initiative needs the support of residents, so tree adoption events will be held. The first such event will be at 5pm on July 31st, at Canoga Park Bowling Lanes.

Kelly Lord then announced that the floor was open for Public Comments.

Public Comments

Bill Cody: Could the board please define the Northridge East neighborhood?

Tom Baker answered that the NENC Boundaries, for the sake of simplicity, encompass

the area of Northridge from East of Reseda, to West of Bull Creek, to North of Nordhoff, to South of 118 freeway, with West of Aliso wash from 118 to Devonshire. It follows the postal zip codes.

Richard Fisk:

1. Recognized that John Bwarie is also the president of the San Fernando JC.
2. The Grenada Hills Chamber of Commerce Street Fair will be held on October 6 on Chatsworth St. The area from Zelzah to Encino Ave. will be closed down for the fair, which will offer food and entertainment, and will be covered by local radio stations.
3. Updates on the Adopt A Street Program -- Grenada Hills Chamber of Commerce adopted White Oak. This is a good program.
4. Thanked the Board for supporting the Old Granada Hills Residence Group in their desire to mitigate Kohls Department Store into something the community will embrace.

Colleen Frenck: A 47-year resident, lives on Balboa, south of Mayall, who is wondering when the last streets will be repaved, since all the other streets have been. She was referred to the NENC website.

Melvin Canas: The Project Coordinator for the City of Los Angeles wants to coordinate the city's various councils. Please call extension 311 and ask for his department -- neighborhood empowerment. He's been there since 2001, mostly working on the east side (Eagle Rock, Chinatown, etc.), but he went to Camino Real High School, and is happy to be back in valley to work with everyone here. Melvin is now taking over Representation to NENC from Thomas Soong, who is moving up to a new position.

John Bwarie: The Deputy District Director got up again for an update.

1. Movies in the Park had a screening of "The Wizard of Oz" got a great turnout. Next month the Movies in the Park screening will be at Winnetka Park, and they'll be showing "Willy Wonka." In & Out Burgers will bring their truck to cater burgers for all of the attendees.
2. Responding to request to investigate the crosswalk on Zelzah (and Superior). There's not a full signal yet -- we're 2-3 weeks away from installing the necessary flashlights underground. We are still working on it.
3. Launched multifamily recycling, please sign up. Barry Greenberg asked if this program includes condominiums -- yes it does. Also, conversion technologies will be implemented over landfill areas -- this is called contained conversion. Companies are currently bidding.
4. Lastly, in cases of extreme heat, there will be plans in place for stocked facilities to go during outages, with air conditioning and water provided.

Adam Haverstock (President@csunas.org): The new student body president at Cal State Northridge introduced himself, hoping for a good working relationship between the council and the campus.

Kelly Lord stated that it was time to move on to the agenda, although again, the order will diverge from how it was printed.

4. West Valley Alliance, Daniel Ruiz

Daniel Ruiz of the West Valley Alliance said that he can be reached at extension 311, and for reporting graffiti, residents can call 818-227-9722. He talked about cleanup efforts. His staff covers the area between the 405-W, from Mulholland Drive to the 118 freeway. In the past year, there has been a 25-30% increase in graffiti. Some funds have been increased to deal with this increase -- \$20,000 has been set aside for rigs, and we also have additional commitments for \$25,000 and \$2,000 from the Canoga Park neighborhood. We need more resources in high-activity areas. We purchased a new vehicle and a sandblaster, but we are now asking the council for \$3000 to help cover these supply costs. *He then showed the neighborhood map.* For past 7 years, graffiti problems have been controllable. Last year, it got more difficult to maintain, so they bisected the area. (Reseda to Balboa/Balboa to the 405 Freeway) Requests are usually backlogged by about 4 months, now we're 4 days away from getting to the newer requests. The new crew plan may not need to be permanent -- it may revert to the original plan. Our main goal is to get in front of requests and quicken our response time. Also, we have a weed abatement crew for parkways -- once done with that, his crew will move over to help with graffiti cleanup. Our staff cleans 8000 locations a month. Just 3000 are requests, the rest are proactive initiatives. For requests, our response time is now 6-12 hours.

Tom Baker then added the Board's appreciation for the weed crew from West Valley Alliance that cleaned up the areas on Lassen from Reseda to Etiwanda on July 14th. Audience question: is this graffiti problem gang related? Daniel Ruiz answered that yes, taggers and gang members are in part responsible. The reason it's happening more now in Granada Hills is because when new high schools go up, that often happens. New population means more graffiti.

Audience comment: we appreciate the West Valley Alliance's proactitvity.

5. Eric Taguchi with the "Adopt A Street" Program

Eric Taguchi (Eric.Taguchi@lacity.org), the Street Cleaning Coordinator, and John Saponi (John.Saponi@lacity.org), who oversees street sweeping and potholes for Street Services, spoke about the Adopt A Street Program. It's unique, they said -- no other council districts have this program at this time. This is a joint effort between community and city to create a more beautiful environment. Making this happen, though, requires a choice --

1. The community can choose a location, and the city will sweep that area = this comes at a cost.

2. Volunteer program = no cost to the community.

John & Eric presented brochures, safety guidelines, and service agreements. They explained that in a residential area, an "adopted" street entails two blocks. Safety first, is the motto under which they choose volunteer areas. Once implemented, there will be a quarterly cleanup, or every three months. Signs will be put up to indicate which group is working, at either end of the street that they're working on. The community needs to coordinate with ongoing city efforts, and to give two weeks notice if you need city's help

in removing debris. John & Eric also mentioned safety precautions, such as what clothing to wear, how to react to hazardous materials or crime scenes, the importance of staying hydrated and calling the city when necessary.

Audience question: can an individual adopt a street? Answer: Yes. It doesn't have to be a group. This is only about the commitment to clean streets.

Audience question: Some areas seem to be maintained better than others. Why?

Answer: There are probably a couple alliances covering those areas.

Tom Baker: Is our request to Adopt Lassen from Reseda to Etiwanda still in the works?

Eric: We need all the signatures of interested volunteers before we can move forward.

Tom: Do you need anything else from us? Eric: The selected areas are fine, but the distance is a question.

Tom: But we chose that area because a lot of people in

wheelchairs need to get from apartments to the University. Eric: We need the volunteers'

signatures and service agreements, so that the cleaning is done in a legal way. Tom: We will do that and set a date to see that it gets done.

Audience comment: This is a commendable program, but I'm concerned about signage.

I don't like signs in my neighborhood. Eric: If signage isn't requested, then it won't be there.

John: Also, the sign doesn't have to be huge and unwieldy.

Audience question: Are homeowners responsible for their own property? John: Yes, and for the sidewalks in front too.

Eric then stated that the minimum age for volunteers is 16. They need one adults for

every six youths to supervise. Tom: Our intention was to use Youth Groups which ages

much less than 16? Eric: The minimum age should be 16, so that little kids aren't

running around in the street unsafely. John Bwarie added: we are helping the city by using responsible youth.

Kelly Lord then recognized Tom Soong from DONE. This will be his last meeting here, but he will still be in the valley with his project occasionally.

Tom Soong: I will still be trying to provide for senior citizens in the area, so I will stay in touch and will still be working with Peter McCarty. And concerning the 50/50 Sidewalks Program: We are trying to find alternate ways to maintain this program. How it works is: if citizens pay for 50% of sidewalk upkeep, then the city will match that for sanitation efforts. One way to roll this initiative out to our neighborhood councils could be to hold raffles.

3. Phyllis Winger, Chief Planning Deputy to Council Member Greig Smith of District 12 and City Planner, to inform Board and Stakeholders of the Amended Northridge Master Plan and Small Lots Subdivision Ordinance

Phyllis Winger, the Chief Planning Deputy to Council Member Greig Smith, spoke concerning the Small Lots Subdivision Ordinance, and stated that Robert Duenas, the Senior City Planner, is also here, because he is the expert on the technical aspects.

There were audience requests for louder volume. The board responded that there is no microphone because school is out for summer and the sound boards are locked, so Phyllis tried to speak louder.

Phyllis stated that the amended Northridge master plan has not been done yet. Item 6 of the plan talks about ad area as an outgrowth of city development. The Small Lots Subdivision began as creative way to make housing more accessible to a growing city population. This applies to condos or single family homes; its not individual ownership. This ordinance would create small lots for individual ownership. It is a loose ordinance, which requires coming into their office, filing a plan, and creating a map. You don't have to have spaces between buildings, and don't have to have setback requirements that most such ordinances have. There must be a MINIMUM lot width of 16 feet. Not every area will be suitable for this. But that width is the baseline.

Patio Homes is the name of a development being sold. It's close to the proposed project on Halsted -- west of White Oak, on the north side of the street. It was built as a condo. Every home is separate, single family, no prescribed lot surrounding it. The lot is set. Each home can be purchased with a lot. There is room for creativity. This is only a planning tool. We need to have consistent zoning.

Audience question: Are we calling this a small lot or small home? What is the terminology? Phyllis: Small lot. We are describing a home on a lot, getting away from the condo notion.

Audience question: What will the parking situation be? Phyllis: Two spaces per unit (not per bedroom).

Audience question: Minimum square footage? Phyllis & Bob: That's dictated by the zone, but it must be at least 2000 square feet.

Audience question: Is this a new ordinance? Phyllis: Fairly new, I remember it from 2005.

Robert Duenas takes the stage.

Robert: This ordinance is not to mean high density.

Audience clamors, a couple indicate that they are strongly bothered by the ordinance.

Kelly Lord called for order:

Kelly Lord: We need to be informed. He needs to be allowed to finish.

Robert: This ordinance means one lot, the units are within. So the entire development is therefore owned in common. A lot of ten units is owned by one-tenth of the total tenants. A lender feels more comfortable lending land than he would with condominiums. With this method, insurance premiums will go down. Some people may be unhappy with homeowners associations, they want to own their land, their home -- but there's no way we could cut up land under today's code. New provisions and variances need to be created. This Ordinance won't cut up ownership. We're cutting up the land underneath, so that tenants are not encumbered by the condominium set-up. It's not necessarily easier on owners. And the city will not cover utilities.

Audience question: Is this information on the internet? Robert: Yes, look up Section 12.22.C77 of Municipal Code for City Planning on City of LA's website. All provisions needed to be met to cut up ownership under ordinance.

Ray Calnan: Our local ordinance number is 176354.

Kelly Lord: This ordinance can NOT be put under R1 zone.

Robert Duenas: The density is set by the zone. Whatever the zoning is, that prescribes the density.

Barry Greenberg: How can the zoning be changed? Robert: Community planning has to be prescribed. Commercial areas, residential areas -- those are all specifically designated.

Barry: What would it take to move one zone to the other? Robert: You can request a zone change in a public hearing, only for a zone within range. What is called a Plan Amendment, requesting to go from low- to medium-density, is more strictly scrutinized. Analyzing the impact of one person's request means my staff has to look at the layout of the whole area, and to consider the environmental impact. These projects have to be looked at as a whole. We do that in early stages, looking at larger impact. The difference between RA: Residential Agriculture and RD2: Residential Density (two acres) was then discussed.

Robert stressed that he's not here to talk about a specific project, after receiving several audience murmurs on the matter. He stated that the decision-makers arbitrating on proposals need to receive a plot plan, a landscape plan, as many elevations as applicants can provide.

Next, the subject of common areas and ownership came up. The state has requirements when you record a condominium. What are the distinctions between who owns which area of the space? Does the SLSO allow a small lot with a common area? Every lot is independently owned and the owners have to agree about common areas. Ownership, financing -- all identical.

Some clarifications were then discussed: A driveway is an easement, not a common area. A small lot is not a condo. There are no hallway common areas.

Tom Baker: Can we see on the website see what the density changes are in our neighborhoods as shareholders? Robert: There is a map with corresponding tables so you can see what your zone is. We know about low-density residence at a time, there is a formula to tally how many units Northridge will have. Tom: Who can I talk to by phone? Robert: Me. We can discuss questions such as what can be built, what can our neighbors build, what can I expect 15 years from now, and so on.

Audience asks for some definitions: A single family home, in general, means that I own the lot, and the house upon it. A town home is a definition of design. A condominium is a form of ownership. A town home is always a condominium.

Alice McCain: Will a small lot require an EIR [Environmental Impact Report]? Robert: Not necessarily, but I can't speak to specific projects.

Don Dwiggin: Studies show no unusual environmental impacts, but a traffic study showed increases in traffic though. Can we challenge this on that basis? Robert: You can file for an environmental assessment, where the city evaluates what the appropriate impact of the project will be. Environmental clearance always requires a proposal.

Citizens can contest it, and then ask decision makers to deny the clearance.

Tom Baker: As stakeholders/citizens, how are we notified about these developments?

Robert: At public hearings, we set up a mailing list.

Don Dwiggin: How much notice is there before each hearing? Robert: A minimum of 24 days. And at each hearing, the next one is announced. We do our best to keep you notified.

Tom Baker again addresses an audience member's query about a specific location, which will not be discussed tonight.

Robert: If you have a case number, you can go to the Planning Department website and get that information about that project, such as when the hearings and appeals are.

Planning Case Tracking System (PCTS) is the name of the program.

Ray Calnan provides the case number in question: CPC2007805GPAZCBL.

Kelly Lord: This information will also be on the council website.

Robert: The Environmental Assessment Court is my staff, who handles these claims.

Audience question: Is this kind of ordinance happening in Bel Air? Robert: Not as many. Ray: Seen some in Venice.

Audience question: Is there a maximum number of these houses? Robert: Depends on zoning. I can't address that here, But I can in the public hearings.

Audience question: Are there statistics about these small lots from other communities? Robert: Yes.

6. Proposed White Oak Street Community Plan change from Very Low I Residential to Low Medium II Residential "Add Area" (Possible Board Action)

Kelly Lord discussed the Proposed Northridge Community Plan Change, in regards to a small section along White Oak Ave. from Lassen to Halsted, to be changed from very low density to medium density. He proclaimed that zone changes fall within our jurisdiction, so the council wants to educate stakeholders on how it works. We appreciate your participation, because these changes affect all of us.

Tom Baker: We're looking at a possible Amendment to the Northridge Community Plan in regards to a small residential section of White Oak, from the commercial area at Lassen to Halsted. A developer brought the Board two months earlier a map designating the proposals which included both sides of White Oak. We want to know from the city planners -- where will the line be drawn?

Ray Calnan clarifies to the audience that we're not discussing specific properties, just the general ad area. Four partials have been requested by a specific developer; the planning department did not request this. The city automatically did it, because this is what they call an ad area. The city needs to review the whole area when that kind of request comes in.

Barry Greenberg: There's a term called NIMYism -- Not in my backyard. That's why you're here now. Please get more involved in general, learn the process, be a participant and an activist, don't just show up on a specific issue, know your neighbors. We're here to help us all to learn about this project, and to be involved, to be better citizens.

Audience: Where did we get these flyers? Alice: I distributed 300+ of them, all the way up to Lucille. Audience: How do we get these to EVERYONE? Peter McCarty: Tell everyone you know, go on the website, bring everyone here. This place should be packed. Audience: Some buildings have gone up without us being able to do anything about it. Peter: Come here, participate. We'll bring in experts. Audience: Let's volunteer, let's help Alice distribute flyers. Alice: I wanted to start at the houses most impacted by this. Audience: Too few of us seem to care. Kelly: We will have information on our website so that we can all be contacted.

Lucille Meehan: I organized my own neighborhood, got a volunteer from each street, distributed materials and telephone numbers. If you tell your neighbors, they'll come.

Board Member Reports

Peter McCarty:

Addressed the audience about working with the elderly. Falling down is a huge problem. We are coordinating efforts to put on a one-day event to educate seniors, families, and caregivers on how to prevent, treat, and survive falling down. 40% of seniors who fall go to nursing homes and never come out; 20% never walk again. Let's provide information to avoid the financial, legal, practical, and emotional ramifications of this. Collaborations to promote awareness of this resource will take money. September 8th is the tentative launch date of this program.

Kelly Lord: Next month will be the elections for the executive board. Positions to be filled include: President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary.

Alice McCain motioned to adjourn the meeting. Don Dwiggins seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned: 9:10p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jon Abrams, AppleOne, July 18, 2007