REGULAR MEETING OF THE
PLANNING COMMISSION
CULVER CITY, CALIFORNIA

November 18, 2015
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Lachoff called the meeting of the Planning Commission to order at 7:02 p.m.

Present: Kevin Lachoff, Chair
David VonCannon, Vice Chair
Ed Ogosta, Commissioner
Dana Amy Sayles, Commissioner
Scott Wyant, Commissioner

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Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Thomas Gorham.

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Comments for Items NOT on the Agenda

Chair Lachoff invited public input.

No cards were received and no speakers came forward.

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Public Hearings

Item PH-2
(Out of Sequence)

Consideration of a Conditional Use Permit Modification (CUP/M-2015066) to permit the addition of 50 students to an existing 600 student private school located at 12095-12101 Washington Boulevard. (Continued From October 14, 2015)

Chair Lachoff recused himself and exited the dais.

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, provided a summary of the material of record.

Commissioner Sayles disclosed that the Help Group is a former client but she had not had contact with them since 2012 and was not a part of this project.

Vice Chair VonCannon indicated that he had been given a tour of the school.

Commissioner Ogosta indicated that he also attended the tour of the school.

Commissioner Wyant reported that he had visited the school as well and he received clarification that when an applicant requests a change, a reason is not required but supporting materials are required in order to make the findings.

Ben Resnick, Land Use Counsel to the Help Group, provided background on the item; discussed natural growth; the cap of 600 students; the number of students that the facility can handle; he asserted that there would be no impact from the additional 50 students and that neighbors supported the project; and he discussed letters of support.

Vice Chair VonCannon received clarification that no additional construction is required.

Vice Chair VonCannon invited public comment.

The following members of the audience addressed the Planning Commission:

Rosa Foreman discussed her daughter's learning disabilities and asked that the request for 50 additional students be granted.

Daniel DeVidelio discussed his experiences at the school and he asked that the request for 50 additional students be granted.

Yolanda Caldwell discussed the experience of her daughter at the Help Group and she urged the Commission to support increasing the population by 50 students.

Neil Glickman discussed the experience of his child at Village Glen; the need for schools like the Help Group; the increase of instances of Autism; the efficiency of the school; communication; the sense of community; the safe environment provided; and networking in the special needs community.

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding appreciation for the facility to help children with special needs in the City; the incremental increase; a suggestion to eliminate the special condition that the applicant cannot return and the fact that the condition is not enforceable or legal; the previous Help Group hearings; appreciation for the agreed upon conditions and the fulfillment of them by the Help Group; appreciation for their services and efficiency; the previous rejection of the item; and clarification that concerns regarding noise and traffic impacts had been addressed and those conditions no longer exist.

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, explained next steps in the process including closing the public hearing, directing staff to return with a resolution approving the CUP modification with any additional conditions desired, and the removal of condition #59 regarding future requests for changes to the use.

Commissioner Sayles received clarification that since all Commissioners were in agreement, the item could return on a Consent Calendar.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SAYLES AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WYANT THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: OGOSTA, SAYLES, VONCANNON, WYANT
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: LACHOFF

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SAYLES AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WYANT THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION DIRECT STAFF TO COME BACK WITH A RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE ITEM ON THE CONSENT CALENDAR AT THE NEXT MEETING WITH THE REMOVAL OF THE VOLUNTARY CONDITION THAT THE HELP GROUP NOT RETURN FOR OTHER REQUESTS

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: OGOSTA, SAYLES, VONCANNON, WYANT
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: LACHOFF

Chair Lachoff returned to the dais.

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Item PH-1
(Out of Sequence)

Comprehensive Plan Amendment (No.6) for the proposed construction of three new office buildings and a new multi-level parking structure; and a Historic Preservation Program Certificate of Appropriateness for the relocation of four historically designated bungalow buildings for The Culver Studios, located at 9336 Washington Boulevard, in the Studio Zone

Commissioner Wyant recused himself and exited the dais.

Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director, introduced the item.

Susan Yoon, Senior Planner, provided a summary of the material of record.

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR VONCANNON AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OGOSTA THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION OPEN THE PUBLIC HEARING.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: LACHOFF, OGOSTA, SAYLES, VONCANNON
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: WYANT

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding postponing the item to a later date to allow additional time for review of the extensive materials; architectural projections; exceeding building height for stair towers or building towers; percentage of roof coverage; the code minimum vehicle spaces for the project; cumulative totals and ratios; staging areas for trailers; use of the excess parking spaces for the staging area; the façade; items on the roof top; involvement of Historical Preservation staff; the Historic Resources Assessment; Certificate of Appropriateness; and the California Environmental Quality Assessment additional study portion relating to Cultural Resources.

Jim Sur, Hackman Capital Partners, discussed the studio use designation; the zoning code; the comprehensive plan requirement; flexibility in the application of zoning code standards; the nature of entertainment uses; comprehensive plan amendment #6; the previous owners; changes to previous plans; bringing studio impacts within the property lines of the studio; modernization of the facility; public comment records; clarification that there is no access off Van Buren Place; the traffic study; and clarification that all the buildings are code compliant.

Dave Mannix, Culver Studios, discussed his responsibilities as a General Manager; community meetings; productions that come and go and create concerns; contact information; he provided an overview of the modernization plan; discussed the history of the lot; the evolution of the facility over the years; maintaining relevance as a studio; respecting the quality of life for the neighbors; and why an upgrade is needed.

Claudia Carroll, Gensler Architects, discussed the specific plans; improvements for the Culver Studios; technology requirements; flexibility; improving current conditions for the neighbors when possible; including environmental sustainability in the improvement; meeting zoning requirements; the importance of the historical aspect; enhancing the value; and continuing the success of an important asset to the City.

Jim Sur, Hackman Capital Resources, discussed the extensive community outreach and he asked that the item be brought to conclusion during the current meeting.

Chair Lachoff invited public comment.

The following members of the audience addressed the Commission:

Carl Manheim discussed the comment letter he submitted earlier; he noted the short length of time that the public and the Commission had to review the 1,185 pages of material submitted; support for the studio as it currently exists; neighborhood concerns with the proposed expansion; traffic, safety, noise, light, air, and height issues; the shade analysis; digital media; existing conditions and limitations; the request for the expansion; he presented pictures of Irving Place on school mornings; discussed traffic back up during drop off and pickup; the lack of egress and access for emergency vehicles; the added vehicle trips per day; use of the Van Buren entrance; the traffic and noise studies; and the need for more thorough background studies.

Kristin Pauling indicated that she was not against the expansion; discussed mitigation measures; concern with over parking; going beyond code; mobility options; existing requirements; the Expo Line; offering modern amenities; offering other transit options; what Millennials are looking for; and she provided a copy of her written comments with suggestions for mitigation measures.

Steven Rose, Culver City Chamber of Commerce, discussed the history of the studio; improvement plans; protection of the neighborhood; timing; and he encouraged the Commission to vote for acceptance tonight.

Chair Lachoff reported that he had recused himself as a member of the Chamber of Commerce and refrained from voting when they considered their support of the item.

Lee Freiling discussed current conditions; proposed changes; and she questioned what materials were planned for the panels.

Discussion ensued between Commissioners and the architect regarding solid parapets to block headlights; screened areas and solid areas; and floor to floor height and height of the parapet.

Lee Freiling expressed concern with noise from the trucks; light intrusion into the neighborhood; and she asked about the projected construction schedule.

Discussion ensued between Commissioners and project representatives regarding the length of construction and the initial plan for the garage portion.

Louise Hines indicated that she looked forward to a time when there would be no trucks on Ince.

Dan Milder discussed the redevelopment of the downtown area in 1999; parking garage placement at that time; he expressed concern with diesel particulate matter; discussed responsibilities of the Culver City Unified School District; he noted that the parking structure was proposed to be built within 50 feet of the Linwood E. Howe elementary school kindergarten playground; and he questioned whether City or School District staff had signed off on hazardous air emissions with regard to the students at the school.

Grace Nakamura reported previous noise issues and wondered how much worse that would be with the expansion; she expressed concern with effects to health of the immediate residents; and she questioned what plans were to mitigate construction dust during the process.

Dylan Gottlieb felt that a parking garage was a good idea; supported getting the parking off of Ince; expressed support for beautifying the area and for modernizing the studio; wanted to see production brought back into the City; he did not want to see overflow parking back on Ince; and he questioned the order of the construction.

Norman Leonard felt that the studio needed to be updated; expressed support for the plans; expressed concern with the increased traffic into the neighborhood and overflow parking on Ince; discussed a sign indicating No Truck Parking; the lack of enforcement; concern with diesel effects to the neighborhood; concern with asbestos that could be released during demolition; discussed the use of Building Y; current issues with noise in the morning; and ensuring that Gate 4 remains only used for Emergency and Fire.

Chair Lachoff indicated that use of Gate 4 solely for Fire and Emergency vehicles is a Condition of Approval.

Paul Cooley noted that his view of nice trees was going to be replaced by a large wall; expressed concern with late night and early morning traffic back up; and he wished that the parking structure would not be so large.

Renato Romano expressed appreciation for the renovation; he asserted that the Studio is a good neighbor; and he felt the project was good for the City.

A speaker reported that he had submitted comments in writing earlier; expressed concern with health and safety in the neighborhood; discussed 1,400 new parking spots near his home; he encouraged the Commission to revisit the traffic study; questioned how there could be zero through trips in the neighborhood; he encouraged the Studio to modernize in a way that takes mass transit options into consideration; wanted to see the amount of parking necessary with alternative options; and he suggested alternatives that could reduce the size of the parking structure.

Project representatives addressed speaker concerns including diesel exhaust from trucks; mechanical ventilation; construction; location of the parking garage; direct impacts of the production trucks in adjoining uses; other parking options; extensive use of tandem parking; compliance with stringent air quality regulations; and regulation of demolition.

Discussion ensued between project representatives and Commissioners regarding the parking lot option under the front lawn; ventilation on the upper floors; construction impacts; coordination with the school; City recommended mitigation measures; measures to reduce dust; use of a sound barrier; sensitive receptors; adherence to safe environment requirements; construction traffic; current parking spillover into the neighborhood; and truck parking on Ince.

Norman Leonard reported that despite the prohibition of truck parking on Ince in studio documents it has been occurring for many years.

Additional discussion ensued between project representatives, staff and Commissioners regarding whether closures would be necessary; the construction analysis and timetable; the intent to keep as much construction on the lot as possible; deliveries and haul away of dirt; concerns noted in the letter from Mr. Manheim; the exclusion of Van Buren from the traffic study; signage on the public right of way south of Gate 3 indicating that No Left Turn is allowed; and traffic patterns.

Carl Manheim reported that similar projections were made when the downtown area was revitalized and the reality is that there is twice as much traffic as maximum projections were for the project, and he questioned how credible the projections could be without a traffic study.

Further discussion ensued between project representatives, staff and Commissioners regarding Building Y; whether a prohibition of events and parties is a condition; consideration of additional levels of underground parking; costs per stall; the water table; restricting the future of truck parking on Ince; compliance; green technology for trucks; keeping overflow in the lot; restriping the parking Ts on the west side of Ince where trucks are currently parked; access provided by Gate 1 to Washington Place; encouraging pedestrian use; pedestrian access to exit from Gate 1 but not to enter; a suggestion to provide annual public access to the bungalows; the need for coordination with the tenants in the bungalows; and a suggested historic mitigation measure to create an online museum.

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR VONCANNON AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SAYLES THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: LACHOFF, OGOSTA, SAYLES, VONCANNON
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: WYANT

Discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding concerns about administrative decisions put off on staff about Building Y and the parking structure, setback and step backs; the resubmittal with screening on the southerly and westerly side of Building Y; design drawings; skylights; installation and maintenance of planters; ensuring that the installations are permanent; working with the applicant on potential step backs for the parking structure; meeting competing needs; ensuring there is a full parking supply to guarantee there is no spillover in the neighborhood; creative office tenants; whether the code required parking meets the market demand for parking; the design of the lot; historic restrictions on the property; location issues with the parking; the importance of the parking to the viability of the studio; the importance of the studio to the City; stepping the building with parking supply elsewhere on the lot; appreciation for the update of the studio; potential health issues with the garage; ventilation requirements; the partnership with Linwood Howe; concern with the proximity to a potential health hazard; concern with noise issues with the garage; trucks; ambient noise levels; mitigation for vehicular noise in the structure; massing on the Van Buren side of the parking garage; whether there has been sufficient time to absorb the materials; traffic counts; older traffic studies used as a baseline; potential impacts; the transition between Culver and Washington Boulevard; clarification on the uses of the Building Y balcony and limitations; the parking structure; the green screen; the existing garage; garage lighting; car alarms; shadowing; limiting the view of the sky; impacts to neighbors; possible ways to limit the bulk and mass of the garage; alternate transportation options; compromises between costs and aesthetics; the addition of the pocket park; breaking the neighborhood in half; adding a unifying element; making the sound blanket a condition of approval; the proximity of residents; the construction plan and schedule; appreciation for the design and branding; bicycle parking; whether there are EV chargers or if Zip Cars are provided; making it more appealing for people not to drive; concern that Air Quality Exposure to Sensitive Receptors in the area was rated Insignificant; impacts to the school; and enforcement of truck parking restrictions on Ince.

Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director, reported that there is a mitigation measure requiring the installation of noise blankets; he clarified that the addition of a parking garage is not necessarily an environmental impact with regard to emissions though it could be for noise; he discussed spillover light; noise mitigation; and the supplementary study.

Further discussion ensued between Commissioners regarding construction staging; alternative views of step backs and setbacks for Building Y and the parking structure; the number of EV charges included; additional information necessary to make findings; Metro passes to offset trips; further details on the proposed partnership with CCUSD; mitigations for air quality, noise, and construction hours; mechanical air handling on the upper floors of the parking structure; differences to air quality; proximity to the school; requests for additional information; and next steps in the process.

Jim Sur, Hackman Capital Partners, discussed issues with a continuance; timing of contractual obligations with tenants on the lots; sequencing of productions and hiatuses; and he asked that deliberations be brought to a close.

Discussion ensued between project representatives, staff and Commissioners regarding the lack of a construction schedule; concern that if the item is not passed now the studio would lose a whole year; general Commissioner support with reservations; the first building to start; existing tenants and commitments; construction impacts to productions on the stages; maximizing the annual hiatus period; Commission concerns; approval of the project conditionally with the proviso that the applicant address issues; the need for the details to be worked out before sending the item to the City Council; other options with step backs or setbacks; massing; time necessary to address issues; additional study and research for certain items; design issues with respect to massing; restrictions due to the historic use of the lot; marginal changes; modifications to the structure; and agreement to take a short recess to allow staff to work on the item.

MOVED BY VICE CHAIR VONCANNON AND SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER OGOSTA THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION TAKE A SHORT RECESS.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: LACHOFF, OGOSTA, SAYLES, VONCANNON
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: WYANT

The Planning Commission recessed from 10:25 p.m. to 10:59 p.m.

Chair Lachoff reconvened the meeting.

Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director, discussed building articulation and the Commission's desire to see the item before approval; identifying issues of concern; he suggested that the requirement for setbacks and step backs be submitted to staff and the Commission for review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit; moving the project forward with a recommendation to the City Council; consideration, review and approval of the final design for Building Y and the Van Buren parking garage prior to the issuance of a building permit; applicant agreement; using similar wording to Condition 106: "the applicant shall provide additional visual enhancements such as setbacks and step backs and submit it to the Commission for review and approval prior to the issuance of the building permit"; other areas of concern: using Condition 106 as a model; and agreement that the item would come back as an Action Item with Conditions added to address Commissioner concerns.

Additional discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding the construction staging issue; a Condition of Approval requiring the submittal of a Construction Management Plan; ensuring minimal impacts to the neighbors; adding a Condition requiring the installation of EV charging stations in the parking structure as part of the building permit review process; Metro passes; the Transportation Demand Management plan; adding a Condition regarding the CCUSD partnership to provide mitigation measures such as double paned windows and mechanical ventilation to address the impacts of noise and potential air quality issues as related to the school; putting additional mechanical ventilation on the higher floors or providing additional study to demonstrate that there will not be excessive discharge of particulate matter to the school; verifying that a problem will not be created; providing a definitive study and developing appropriate mitigation; noise monitoring after 6 months; instituting an overall review of the garage mitigations related to the operation; furnishing a construction schedule to Commissioners along with the final design of the garage and Building Y; adding a restriction to eliminate parking of trucks on Ince; working on public accessibility; and restrictions on the use of the roof deck and balcony for Building Y.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SAYLES AND SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR VONCANNON THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION: ADOPT THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION MND NO. P2015-0069-CP-MND. THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: LACHOFF, OGOSTA, SAYLES, VONCANNON
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: WYANT

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER SAYLES AND SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR VONCANNON THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION: ADOPT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT P2015-0069-CPMAN AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS P2-15-0069-HPCA INCLUDING THE AMENDMENTS AS OUTLINED BY STAFF.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: LACHOFF, OGOSTA, SAYLES, VONCANNON
NOES: NONE
RECUSED: WYANT

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Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda

Chair Lachoff invited public comment.

No cards were received and no speakers came forward.

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Items from Staff

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, provided an update on upcoming meetings and agenda items.

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Items from Planning Commissioners

Chair Lachoff discussed Men's Health and Movember.

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Adjournment

There being no further business, at 11:12 p.m., the Culver City Planning Commission adjourned to the next regular meeting on Wednesday, December 9, 2015, at 7:00 p.m.

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YVONNE D. HUNT
SECRETARY of the CULVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED ____________________

KEVIN LACHOFF
CHAIR of the CULVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
Culver City, California

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that, on the date below written, these minutes were filed in the Office of the City Clerk, Culver City, California and constitute the Official Minutes of said meeting.

Martin R. Cole CITY CLERK	Date