REGULAR MEETING
OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF CULVER CITY,
CALIFORNIA

April 11, 2012
7:00 p.m.

Call to Order & Roll Call

The meeting of the Planning Commission was called to order at 7:02 p.m.

Present: Anthony Pleskow, Chair
Scott Wyant, Vice Chair
John Kuechle, Commissioner
Linda Smith Frost, Commissioner
Marcus Tiggs, Commissioner

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Pledge of Allegiance

Sol Blumenfeld, Community Development Director, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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Comments for Items NOT on the Agenda

Chair Pleskow invited public participation

No cards were received and no speakers came forward.

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Public Hearing

Item PH-1

Conditional Use Permit Modification (CUP/M 2011-175) - The Help Group to permit the addition of 250 students to an existing private school located at 12095-12101 Washington Boulevard

Staff provided a summary of the material of record.

A discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding property taxes; obligations when considering a modified Conditional Use Permit (CUP); the effect of the whole project vs. the incremental increase; noise regulations; exemptions; traffic study recommendations; requirements for restriping in the City of Los Angeles vs. restriping in Culver City; restricted parking; mitigating impacts outside of Culver City; Los Angeles Department of Transportation review of the traffic report; conditions of approval; clarification that all recommendations in the traffic study are required; coordinating conditions with the City of Los Angeles; the Yellow Cab Supervisor; the existing Traffic Management Program; changes to property tax income with the change of use; business tax receipts; history of the taxes; the vacancy rate; the rooftop play area; the potential change from an 8-foot high wall to a 14-foot high wall; landscaping; existing ambient noise levels; playground noise levels and proposed mitigations; City noise standards; and sound generation on the proposed rooftop playground.

Chair Pleskow invited public comment.

The following members of the audience addressed the Commission:

Dr. Barbara Firestone, The Help Group, provided background on the organization; discussed their goals; escalating needs; converting the building; securing financing for the project; the redevelopment district; their civic involvement in the City; the recent college fair; the Silver Lining boutique and vocational training center; the relocation of tenants; positive impacts to local businesses; relationships forged with local establishments; the Center for Disease Control report on the prevalence of autism; and she requested their support of the project.

Art Bannick, architect, provided a slide presentation on the project.

Heather Baker, Assistant City Attorney, pointed out that normal policy was to provide the applicant with 15 minutes and she recommended that any additional speakers submit cards to speak with the public.

David Waite, Land Use Counsel for the Help Group, commented on the original approval of the project noting that it included the two-story building and he clarified that the current project did not include a new use.

Larry Greene expressed concern with traffic and parking intrusion into the neighborhood.

Alan Corlin expressed concern with removing valuable property from the tax rolls; the significant increase in size; he noted the importance of basing the decision on the impact of the entire project rather than the impact of the proposed increase; he discussed impacts to City services; the 2012 financial condition of the City; and the original 1999 agreement.

Maria Milagro expressed support for the Help Group.

Kathryn Hedger expressed concern with a proposed driveway at the back of the property; property values; adding a large number of people to an already congested area; misuse of the area; noise issues; taxi drivers; and the safety of the children.

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, clarified that two-way use of the driveway was currently permitted but the proposed plan would make it one-way with buses no longer allowed to use it.

Gordon Gardiner discussed his involvement in the project; concerns and mitigations; the assertion that there are no complaints about the traffic; double-parked mini-vans on Washington; the Grandview parking lot; traffic; the first CUP; and the route of the mini-vans.

David Hauptman expressed support for the Help Group.

Tom Comp discussed the exit point from the west parking lot onto Grandview; concerns of the neighbors on Herbert Street in the original CUP; accommodations to the neighbors; vehicles exiting from the easterly parking lot through the alley; the new plan; and he addressed concerns regarding the loss of property tax revenue.

A discussion ensued between the speaker and Commissioners regarding traffic in the alley; the relocation of the queuing area; clarification regarding pick up and drop off of students at the west end; the existing traffic management program; different traffic issues with Summit vs. Village Glen; space issues; the new traffic management plan; earlier implementation of the new plan; clarification regarding the increase in the number of students and the number of increased cars and vans; and the issue of backing up onto Washington.

A discussion ensued between staff, Scott Sato, Traffic Engineer for the Help Group, and Commissioners regarding the number of trips in and out during peak hours; clarification regarding drop off volumes; the feasibility of the proposed traffic flow; afternoon traffic flow; previous issues with cabs stacking up; the gate; the new traffic management plan; queuing on Washington; a suggestion to stage off-site; current queuing issues; safety issues; the parking structure; the student pick up and drop off site plan; and a suggestion to have buses queue on Washington Boulevard.

Discussion ensued between Art Bannick and Commissioners regarding clearances between buses; turning radius; accommodating the buses; the parking structure; addressing neighbor concerns; clarification that the new plan resulted from discussions with the neighbors; the parent pickup route; the proposed bridge; tenant access; the extra parking spaces; staff parking; and clarification regarding impacts of the expansion vs. impacts of the total project.

A discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding policies of the City Traffic Engineer and clarification that he found no issues with the report; and clarification that the task at hand for Commissioners is to consider whether they can approve a 650 student project rather than to consider only the increase.

Further discussion ensued between staff, Commissioners, and Scott Sato regarding cumulative development; consideration of other potential projects in the area; and significant impacts.

Additional discussion ensued between Commissioners and Help Group representatives regarding types of buses; the current situation and the proposed plan; whether a test run had been conducted; pick up procedures; where buses exit; the independent contract for buses; the Yellow Cab Company; staff interaction and supervision of pick up procedures; and the route of the buses.

A discussion ensued between Commissioners and Shane Kastovani, Acoustical Engineer, regarding studies conducted; noise measurements; ambient conditions; average noise levels; noise patterns; peak periods; composition of the wall; and concern that the sound studies reflected current levels but did not project noise levels for additional students.

Discussion continued between Commissioners and representatives of the Help Group regarding use of the rooftop playground; rooftop studies; noise attenuation; clarification that new students will be utilizing the rooftop playground; Commission discretion regarding the 14-foot wall; the 8-foot wall; changes necessary to accommodate a 14-foot wall and the amount of sound reduction it would result in; the City sound ordinance; Environmental Impact obligations; the sound study; acceptable noise for residential uses; and the rooftop playground.

Dr. Barbara Firestone, The Help Group, clarified the staggered use of the playgrounds; discussed the community meeting; the warm line to address neighbor issues; the sound study; the sound wall; and the reason that the roof was not considered in the sound study.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER KUECHLE, SECONDED BY CHAIR PLESKOW AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING.

Discussion ensued between staff and the Commission regarding loss of revenue to the City; income per student; increased revenue to the school; impacts to infrastructure; adding a condition regarding signage for tenants; clarification regarding permitted use in the zone; differences with other schools in the area; the purpose of the CUP; the traffic study; internal circulation; the significant increase in vehicles; the original CUP; concern that requests for incremental changes add up; the current request for a major change to the CUP; concern that the traffic plan is overly optimistic; concern with having to make the finding that the expansion is compatible with existing land use; efforts to transform the neighborhood into a walk-able retail oriented area; addressing recurring issues; and formulating a global position on school expansion.

Commissioner Kuechle disclosed that he had spoken with Vice Chair Wyant about the issue and had also met with the applicant and had toured the facility.

Further discussion ensued between Commissioners and staff regarding the fact that this is an issue that will come before the Commission again and again; concerns regarding schools in Culver City that cater to non-residents; the number of school-aged residents vs. the number of students served in the City; the expensive nature of schools; generating taxable income for the City; concern with schools that mislead the City regarding their intentions to expand; a suggestion that the City study the full extent of the costs and lost revenue from school uses; whether all schools can be legally required to make contributions to the City as a condition for the CUPs to make up for the shortfall that they are causing; concern with shortchanging the City; average amount of taxes received per square foot; basing recovery on the entire project rather than incrementally; concern with being able to make the findings to approve the item; whether the staff report and traffic study considered the entire impact of the project; parking restrictions; a feeling that the City should not donate its resources so the applicant can mitigate their issues; the need for a policy; compensation for parking spaces; using a portion of Washington Boulevard; mitigating impacts; the proposed sound wall; testing mitigations; a request for the presence of the City's Traffic Engineer when items like this are being considered; maintaining the retail component in the new plan; fully integrating the project into the community; length of time to conduct the proposed study; next steps in the process; whether the City can be reimbursed for lost revenue; supportable findings and reasonable basis to deny the application; whether to request that the applicant address traffic and circulation issues; a desire for additional information; precedents set by other schools; the purpose of a CUP; the basis of land use decisions; radically changing the CUP; whether the use is fitting or can be modified to make it fitting; incrementalism; and the importance of a large policy review.

David Waite, The Help Group, agreed to continue the hearing but questioned the purpose; he asserted that in 1999 the same issues were fully vetted during the General Plan Amendment process and the Zone Change; and he objected to having to wait for a decision on larger policy issues but agreed to come back with further refinements on how the project would work on the site.

Further discussion ensued between staff and Commissioners regarding procedures for continuing the matter; possible dates; and a request for a revision of the staff report and environmental document to make it clear that the entire project is being considered rather than just the addition.

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER TIGGS, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SMITH FROST AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION CONTINUE THE MATTER TO MAY 9, 2012.

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Consent Calendar

Item C-1

Secretary's Report

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER TIGGS, SECONDED BY CHAIR PLESKOW AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION RECEIVE AND FILE THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY REGARDING POSTING OF THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING.

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Item C-2

Meeting Minutes

MOVED BY COMMISSIONER TIGGS, SECONDED BY VICE CHAIR WYANT AND UNANIMOUSLY CARRIED, THAT THE PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 14, 2012 AS WRITTEN.

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Items from Staff

Thomas Gorham, Planning Manager, discussed the schedule of upcoming meetings and agenda items.

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Items from Commissioners

Commissioner Kuechle indicated that he preferred to receive hard copies of traffic reports and supporting documentation.

Vice Chair Wyant indicated that he preferred to receive a CD of the information and he pointed out a typographical error in the proposed resolution for item PH-1.

Commissioner Kuechle requested that information be sent to Commissioners on the Wednesday before each meeting noting the need to be able to ask questions of staff before the meeting.

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Adjournment

There being no further business, at 9:51 p.m. the Culver City Planning Commission adjourned to the next regular meeting on Wednesday, April 25, 2012, at 7:00 p.m. in the Mike Balkman Council Chambers.

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Yvonne D. Hunt

YVONNE D. HUNT
SECRETARY of the CULVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED 5-9-12

ANTHONY PLESKOW
CHAIR of the CULVER CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
City of 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, City of Culver City, California and constitute the Official Minutes of said meeting.

5-10-12

Martin R. Cole
CITY CLERK

Date

By: Ela Valladares

Ela Valladares
Deputy City Clerk