

GHSNC Community Informational Meeting – 04/24/2007 – Minutes

I. Attendance:

A. Board Members Present:

1. Robert Norris
2. Karessa Silvers
3. Jim Yoder
4. Brad Smith
5. Randall Neudeck
6. Norbert Soski
7. Pamela Finn
8. Shamica Doty
9. Sylvia Witteman
10. Mark Barrionuevo
11. Sean Rivas
12. Alexia Cirino
13. Lottie Van Emden
14. Glen Chester
15. Jim Summers (Presiding Officer)
16. Eric Mansker
17. Bonnie Bursk
18. Mike Cabo (Parlamentarian)

B. Board Members Absent:

1. David Beauvais (excused)
2. Christopher Silvers (excused)
3. John Seletos (excused)
4. Debi Orrico
5. Julie Carson
6. Troy Seletos (excused)
7. Amelia Herrera-Robles (D.O.N.E. representative)

II. Jim introduced himself and introduced the concept of this session and then called the meeting to order.

III. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

IV. Board Members roll call was taken.

V. Jim Summers went over the agenda description.

VI. Jim Summers turned the meeting over to Enrique Legaspi (213-553-2278) from the Regency Centers group. Enrique Legaspi introduces a traffic engineer and Tom Layman, the architect for the proposed project. Enrique Legaspi talked about the height of the proposed renovation. Enrique Legaspi stressed that the proposed renovation was about the same height as the Ralph's supermarket.

Enrique Legaspi explained why he was asking for a variance in the hours of operation of the center to anticipate the leasing of space to a nice sit down restaurant. Enrique Legaspi also discussed expanding the pharmacy's hours to 24 hours a day should the pharmacy wish to expand its hours. Enrique Legaspi then discussed the logic behind the request for dismissal of the shopping center size b/c of the removal of the movie theatre tenant. Enrique Legaspi went on to discuss the parking requirements of the Granada Hills Specific Plan and how it relates to his proposed renovations. Enrique Legaspi continued to talk about how the traffic study determined that at peak hours 693 spaces will be used while there are a total of 1155 spaces total in the proposed plan.

VII. Jim Summers introduced Eric Mansker the Planning and Land Use Committee spokesperson. Eric Mansker went over the draft resolution that the Planning and Land Use Committee is presenting to the council. Eric Mansker mentioned that he is the homeowner's representative. Eric Mansker read out loud the three pages, 15 point draft resolution as drawn up by the Planning and Land Use Committee.

VIII. Audience members were invited to speak for up to 2 minutes. One speaker was concerned about the elimination of a driveway. Enrique Legaspi responded that he was closing one driveway which is not the main driveway used by Fed Ex. The traffic engineer, Sarah M. Drobis (626-796-2322) discussed why the one driveway is recommended to be closed. The next speaker recommended changes in the height portion of the draft resolution. The next speaker complained about the email outreach effort. The same speaker opposed the relaxing of the current size of the shopping center. The same speaker opposed adding a separate parking structure. The next speaker applauded the draft resolution of the Planning and Land Use Committee. The speaker advocated keeping the present size of the shopping center and not add additional square feet to the size of the center. Jim Summers submitted Dave Beauvais four page comments for the record. The next speaker indicated that some residents of Granada Hills were in favor of having Kohl's coming in but the speaker was opposed personally to Kohl's. The next speaker applauded the board for its work. The speaker suggested that 15f of the motion be amended with regards to Lindley Avenue. The next speaker urged attendees to support the businesses that currently operate in the shopping center. The same speaker went over some details of the traffic study that Regency Centers is presenting at the hearing. Tom Layman discussed the traffic study and how the numbers correlate. The next speaker discussed how the traffic was in poor condition on San Fernando Mission Blvd westbound in the mornings. The speaker opined that the Kohl's center would increase the severity of the traffic with adverse impact on hundreds of trees in the local neighborhood. The next speaker shared his experience with the difficulties of making a left hand turn on Zelzah. The speaker thought that having Kohl's would create more difficulties in making left hand turns on Zelzah into the shopping center. The next speaker informed us that the Old Granada Hills Residence Group did not take an official position.

The next speaker wondered about the issue of having a parking structure on the property. The same speaker also thought that the traffic would worsen to a large degree. The same speaker encouraged more windows on the proposed property. Tom Layman stated that there was no parking structure proposed but city ordinance required that a potential site had to be identified. Tom Layman also stated that if the window ordinance is approved at full strength then the tile roof would have to be removed and glass put in its place. The next speaker was opposed to the time expansion of the center. Enrique Legaspi stated that he was just trying to anticipate future leasing needs. The next speaker stated that Kohl's advertises heavily and thought the traffic study did not take into account the increases generated by the advertising. Enrique Legaspi pointed out that T J Maxx and Steinmart also advertise heavily and their impact on the traffic has not caused the parking spots to be overly used. The next speaker talked about how the history of the shopping centers at the Chatsworth and Zelzah intersection and proclaimed that there is just too much traffic. The next speaker asked Regency Centers to downsize the proposed renovation. Enrique Legaspi responded the Kohl's business model is to have stores of 80,000 square feet. A Kohl's representative was not present to respond to the question. The next speaker stated that traffic was worsening. Enrique Legaspi responded that he can only mitigate traffic in the immediate area surrounding the shopping center. The next speaker discussed how the parking situation is inadequate from the speaker's perspective. Enrique Legaspi repeated that he can only mitigate from the area of his property not beyond. The next speaker discussed the new locations that Kohl's is opening in the future.

IX. Sarah Drobis gave a presentation on the traffic study. Sarah Drobis explained that the traffic study was made consistent with the guidelines of the City of Los Angeles. The study analyzes current traffic conditions, and increases of traffic that derives from the project. The study specifically analyzed peak periods to provide a more detailed analysis of the traffic during the peak use times. Eric Mansker asked how the traffic study would reveal the additional traffic on a daily basis. The a.m. additional traffic would be 19 additional trips when the project opens on a daily basis.

X. An audience speaker asked with 181 current trips with a projected additional 19 trips in the morning peak hours. 396 current trips in the evening hours and 87 additional trips in the evening peak hours, the speaker doubted the figures as being too low. The next speaker pointed out the additional evening trip figures as being higher in the peak hours. The next speaker asked what the percentage increase would be and what percentage increase would Kohl's need to have to provide a profitable enterprise. Sarah Drobis responded that the traffic study looked at other Kohl's sites and how the traffic engineers are confident that their study is accurate. The study focused on the additional trips generated by the 24,000 additional square feet and not the project as a whole. Tom Layman noted that the study was expecting an approximate 8.5% increase in trips. Mark Barrionuevo asked about the traffic at the intersection of Chatsworth and Zelzah.

Mark Barrionuevo asked about the specific days that the traffic study covered. Sarah Drobis responded with details about the days and hours that the traffic study covered. Sarah Drobis explained why the traffic study did not include Friday and Saturday. The next speaker stated that there is currently a lot of traffic generated by the Granada Hills High School and queried whether that traffic was accounted for in the study. The next speaker stated that the shoppers of Ralph's North will still be there in traffic going to Ralph's South. Sarah Drobis additionally explained that the parking (though not the traffic) study did include Friday and Saturday.

XI. Sean Rivas asked about traffic during the peak periods and Sarah Drobis responded about how the study was conducted. Karessa Silvers offered some comments and asked about methods for mitigating traffic. Norbert Soski made his comments about the process followed by Regency Centers and Kohl's and urged them to reassess the traffic situation. Mark Barrionuevo offered multiple comments regarding the proposal. Jim Summers indicated that GHSNC cannot appeal the decision. Shamica Doty expressed that she was uncertain. Alexia Cirino asked about what the Kohl's peak hours are. Sarah Drobis responded that Kohl's peak hours are during the mid-day during the weekday and 3 p.m. on the weekends whereas the traffic study was focused on peak commuting hours. Accordingly there will be heavier traffic during the non-peak hours. Alexia Cirino asked who retained Sarah Drobis' firm and Sarah Drobis responded that the firm was hired by Regency Centers but the traffic firm gets direction from the City of Los Angeles. Eric Mansker expressed sorrow that Kohl's could not attend the meeting. Bonnie Bursk expressed appreciation for the draft resolution but she found errors. Bonnie Bursk stated that resolution is drafted only from a residential perspective and did not consider other points of view especially commercial. Bonnie Bursk thought that there was a low turnout by businesses b/c they were happy with the proposed Kohl's shopping center. Bonnie Bursk expressed that there are other traffic considerations than just Kohl's. She cited the high school as a large generator of traffic. Bonnie Bursk expressed appreciation for the proposed longer hours at the shopping center. Brad Smith expressed that there are other shopping centers in the northwest San Fernando Valley that have vacant storefronts that meet the sizing needs of Kohl's.

XII. Eric Mansker moved and Sean Rivas seconded the following motion:

DRAFT RESOLUTION OF GHSNC REGARDING KOHL'S

1. Whereas Granada Hills is a community defined by our low density, small town feeling, friendly atmosphere and neighborhood oriented services;
2. Whereas Granada Hills is a community that provides no regional shopping destinations;
3. Whereas Kohl's would attract significant business from all over the West San Fernando Valley;
4. Whereas Old Granada Hills in particular is a community highly organized against over building, increasing density, and preserving the slower pace of life enjoyed in more rural areas;

5. Whereas the Granada Hills Community Plan is being re-written to address the growth in the community;
6. Whereas the resident stakeholders have made their opposition loudly ~~and clearly~~ heard in a public forum for the Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council;
7. Whereas the business community has not clearly articulated their support for the addition of any big box retailer to the Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council;
8. Whereas the GHSNC Planning and Land Use Committee has entertained presentations from Regency Properties, TW Leyman and Associates, and Kohl's with no response of mitigations to address concerns of the community;

Be it Resolved that:

9. In the matter of the size of the shopping center:
 - a. The GHSNC opposes the increase of 36,000 sqft. which is sharply out of scale with the surrounding buildings and the community as a whole;
 - b. The GHSNC can find no clear benefit for the community to have a big box retailer in the neighborhood;
 - c. The GHSNC opposes that the addition of a large scale promotion based retailer which will likely push existing retailers, Steinmart, TJMax, and other boutique retailers out of business;
 - d. The GHSNC opposes the addition of a Kohls which would create a regional shopping center where a neighborhood center currently stands;
 - e. The GHSNC expresses extreme concern that increasing the size of this building will only set precedence for future large scale retailers in the community;
 - f. The GHSNC recognizes and supports the community desires to keep a neighborhood oriented shopping center.
10. In the matter of the parking spaces and request for shared parking:
 - a. The GHSNC is highly skeptical that the parking requirements for a regional shopping destination will be adequate at the site;
 - b. The GHSNC opposes any parking structure on or near the property to address the forecasted lack of parking spaces;
 - c. The GHSNC calls for an independent parking study to ensure that reduction of 10% parking spaces will not negatively impact the surrounding neighborhood, businesses, and schools;
11. In the matter of extending the operating hours allowed in the shopping center:
 - a. The GHSNC contends that the hours listed in the project booklet is incorrect and grossly exaggerated;
 - b. The GHSNC emphasizes that Granada Hills is a bedroom community and that operating hours outside of the specific plan are out of character and will only draw outside traffic into the area at late hours;
 - c. The GHSNC encourages the Department of Building and Safety to investigate any business operating outside the prescribed operating hours and remedy the infraction;
 - d. The GHSNC is opposed to opening 24 hour commercial operations in Granada Hills;
 - e. The GHSNC is strongly opposed to seasonal extensions of operating hours causing increased traffic, noise, and activity in a residential community.
12. In the matter of an exception to the prescribed northerly setbacks and height limits for the proposed building:
 - a. The GHSNC champions and supports the property rights of the neighbors surrounding the proposed building;
 - b. The GHSNC opposes the building of such a large structure in such close proximity to residential property that already has had to deal with a loss of enjoyment as a result of commercial operations in the shopping center;
13. In the matter of the reduction of the eastern setbacks to allowing the building to sit only 6 feet from the sidewalk:
 - a. The GHSNC opposes a structure being built 15 feet closer to the sidewalk which will increase the reverberation of street traffic noise to the residential properties on the east side of Zelzah Ave.;
 - b. The GHSNC calls on the Department of City Planning to adhere to the appropriate zoning plans to enforce setbacks for the benefit of the entire community.
 - c. Zelzah Avenue in that location has one lane in each direction, and waiver of the prevailing setback requirement is unsafe and dangerous in that location.

14. In the matter of the reduction of frontal glazing required in the Granada Hills Specific Plan:
 - a. The GHSNC recognizes the unique community character and supports the requirement for 50% external glazing;
 - b. The GHSNC supports businesses that endeavor to meet the requirements of the area;
 - c. The GHSNC opposes any deviation or variance from such code that would allow architecture sharply out of character with the surrounding buildings.

15. In the additional matter of an increase to the local traffic pattern:
 - a. The GHSNC has recognized that the projected increases in traffic come dangerously close to requiring an Environmental Impact Report;
 - b. The GHSNC is concerned that the increased projected traffic is not within the capacity of the existing roads, and does not allow for natural increases in density from future residential development and changing business in the future;
 - ~~e. **The GHSNC urges the Planning Department to consider that the project does not exist in a vacuum; the southern shopping center is experiencing incredible increases in visitation and traffic due to the former Ralph's Market closing;**~~
 - d. The GHSNC further urges an in depth study of how the increased traffic will flow in concert with the southern shopping center and traffic from Granada Hills High School, LA Baptist Elementary School on Zelzah, and First Presbyterian Weekday Elementary School on Zelzah in the mornings and afternoons and ;
 - e. The GHSNC opposes increasing the volume of traffic to between 70% and 94.7% of capacity for afternoon traffic with the addition of the Kohl's project;
 - f. THE GHSNC calls for an Environmental Impact Report to determine the cumulative impact of the increased traffic on surrounding two lane roads (one lane in each direction) that will be impacted: Westbound San Fernando Mission Road between Louise Avenue and Lindley Avenue; and Zelzah Avenue between Rinaldi and Chatsworth Street; and eastbound San Fernando Mission Road between Lindley and Zelzah—the route that shoppers will be taking to Kohl's from the freeways. Currently, the left turn pocket on SF Mission (westbound) at Zelzah can only accommodate 2-3 cars before all westbound traffic is blocked.
 - g. GHSNC opposes widening the roads or adding traffic signals in these locations, which will drastically change the character of the neighborhood, will harm property owners along SF Mission.

The Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council has provided 3 opportunities for the Architect, Property Owner, and Commercial Tenant to meet with the council. The GHSNC as well as vocal residents have provided feedback and concerns with various aspects of the project. To date no mitigating plans have been presented to address the size or location of the building on the property. With the exception of agreeing to post right turn signs the project management team has not provided any responses to the concerns for the traffic pattern,

Norbert Soski moved and Mark Barrionuevo seconded an amendment that “clearly” be removed in Section 6 and Section 15c be eliminated in its entirety. Eric Mansker stated that we are not voting on Section 6. The amendment was approved by 11 in favor, 2 opposed and 1 abstained. (The amendment is noted by a strikethrough font so that the minutes reflect both the original motion and the amended motion.) Bonnie Bursk reiterated her comments that the resolution was drafted with a bias in favor of the residents. Eric Mansker stated that business owners had the opportunity to show up and discuss their concerns as well. Jim Yoder called the question and a roll call vote was held with seven votes in favor, three against, four abstentions and three not presents. The motion failed b/c it did not garner a majority of the votes on the council.

XIII. Adjournment – Jim Summers adjourned the meeting with the next Board meeting taking place at May 10, 2007 at 7 p.m. in the Tulsa Elementary School Auditorium.