

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE DESIGN COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE
HELD ON FEBRUARY 2, 2012**

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Moldafsky called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.
- II. **ROLL:** Present were Commissioners Hoopes, Roberts, Tobias, Vavoulis, Director of Community Development Stanley, Consulting Architect Cantrell, Senior Planner Buss and Planners Gjolme and Clarke.
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Flag Salute was recited.
- IV. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** There were no comments.
- V. **CONSENT CALENDAR:**
 - A. **Minutes** - 11/17/2011, 12/15/2011, 1/5/2012 Meetings. The minutes were approved with changes.
- VI. **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**
 - A. **Design Review 11-33;** Hair Mode; 2147 Foothill Blvd.; new wall sign.

Planner Clarke outlined the request in accord with the staff memo, a ledge sign composed of channel letters next to several outdated cans signs. Sign letters would be red despite submittal of printed plans that show orange letters.

Commissioner Hoopes confirmed that the business was going into the tenant space previously occupied by Aviani Jewelers.

The Commission had no further questions for staff.

Commissioner Roberts noted his concern with the overall visibility of the sign. Channel letters pulled off of the background parapet lend to strong side views. The text, however, would be difficult to read unless directly in front of the sign. Black returns lend to the problem. White returns of the neighboring Tae Kwon Do sign help its visibility. He believed that the color of the returns should match the color of the letter faces to improve visibility.

Ben Parsekian - Representing DJ signs - responded that he would discuss the issue of return color with the client. He agreed that consistent face and return color would improve overall visibility.

Commissioner Vavoulis inquired if the red lettering proposed was the same as the pharmacy sign. He felt the color should be toned down a bit, as has been the practice for most channel letter signs.

DC Minutes - 2/2/2012 Meeting

Commissioner Tobias agreed and recommended a color change from red to burgundy.

Commissioner Roberts felt if the letters had a white surround with burgundy faces, the returns should definitely be white as well.

Commissioner Vavoulis agreed and was comfortable with final color confirmation by staff at a later date.

Commissioner Hoopes didn't like the white areas between certain letters/characters, in particular the "IR" in "Hair" which looked like a block element as opposed to individual letters. Separate letters would refine the sign.

Mr. Parsekian responded that the font style employed required the connection of certain letters; otherwise the sign would be too difficult to fabricate.

Commissioner Hoopes acknowledged that the problem would be alleviated through the use of white returns.

M/S/C Vavoulis/Hoopes to approve the sign with the use of burgundy letter faces and white returns subject to color confirmation and approval by staff. Unanimous 5-0.

B. Design Review 11-27; Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy; 440 St. Katherine Drive; advisory/preliminary review of new auditorium, classroom wing, parking structure, landscaping and tennis courts.

Director Stanley explained that problems with the computer system would preclude the PowerPoint presentation associated with the project. Printouts of the presentation, however, were made and distributed for the Commission and applicants in attendance.

Consulting Architect/Planner informed that this was an informal review for input to the Planning Commission, which would be reviewing a Variance, CUP and Tree Removal Permit for the project next month. He went over project in accord with a substantial staff memo and detailed the four phases of the project - parking structure, auditorium, classroom wing, and sports concourse/tennis courts.

Chairman Moldafsky prefaced the Commission's comments by thanking the applicant for great submittal and enough information to get a good head start.

The Commission had no questions for staff.

DC Minutes - 2/2/2012 Meeting

Commissioner Hoopes acknowledged the magnitude of the project and substantial amount of information to cover. Addressing the project phases seemed to make the most sense.

Chairman Moldafsky confirmed that the applicant was looking for an endorsement of the overall concept at this point, in advance of upcoming PC review.

Director Stanley responded that this review was necessary and advisory to the Planning Commission's review next month. FSHA is on tight a schedule due to summer break and class scheduling, around which construction of the parking structure will hopefully occur.

Chairman Moldafsky inquired if the goal was to have an overall endorsement of the project and specific comments or recommendations for the parking structure at this time.

Director Stanley confirmed this was the objective.

Chairman Moldafsky polled the Commission for their individual feelings about the project as a whole.

Commissioner Vavoulis felt the project was ambitious and impressive in the big picture. He thought the Commission should 'step back' and look at the design and layout and then move to the specific phases. The layout was well thought-out and consistent with the environment and surroundings. He had no issues with the overall layout.

Commissioner Hoopes added that the layout was dictated by the site and that it was very well done overall.

Commissioner Vavoulis confirmed the Commission's endorsement of the overall site plan and building layout. He suggested the Commission move on and review the parking structure (Phase 1).

Commissioner Hoopes commented that the street view of the parking structure was negligible. He was concerned with the structure's starkness since it lacked character in relation to the other buildings on site. The structure could be screened heavily to mitigate its lack of character as seen from street. However, screening alone may not work for the east elevation, which is exposed to the entire valley. Said elevation needs major refinement and/or screening. Other elevations are fine while the top level was really well done. The drop-off system is brilliant and will work very well. The cottages to the west are a great accent.

DC Minutes - 2/2/2012 Meeting

Commissioner Vavoulis - confirmed that the east elevation is the only issue with the parking structure and that the solution may go beyond just landscaping improvements.

Chairman Moldafsky felt the solution might need a combination of architectural and landscaping enhancements. The key was to tie in the parking structure with the rest of the campus.

Commissioner Vavoulis asked if this was an issue that would be discussed by the Planning Commission.

Consultant Cantrell responded that this was a design issue specific to the Design Commission's purview.

Commissioner Vavoulis confirmed that the proposed height of the tower and setbacks are major issues with the parking structure with regard to the Planning Commission's review.

Director Stanley confirmed that height and setbacks were the focus of the Variance but that the Commission could identify the lack of detail on the parking structure's east elevation for the benefit of the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Hoopes noted the 35-foot height of the parking structure's lighting fixtures and that they would be fairly visible from below.

Commissioner Vavoulis confirmed that the Commission had no issues with the height and setbacks given the parking structure's location and lack of major offsite visibility.

Consultant Cantrell called the Commission's attention to sheet L2.01 - landscape plan - which detailed planting around the parking structure, which might be adequate pending field confirmation.

Commissioner Hoopes acknowledged the benefit of landscaping but felt that the basic shape / design of east elevation needed major work.

Commissioner Vavoulis noted that trees to the east would break up the mass as identified in the staff report.

Chairman Moldafsky confirmed that the tower covers the staircase and elevator shaft.

Commissioner Tobias inquired about the need for the tower's excess height.

DC Minutes - 2/2/2012 Meeting

Maureen Sullivan - project architect, Pica & Sullivan - responded that the tower's height accommodates a bridge to the upper terrace while the site plan accommodates a pedestrian path across the entire campus. The tower takes you up to the cottage level and bridges the campus to parking structure. Its height is dictated by pedestrian flow. She agreed that the east elevation is simple but noted the difficulty of integrating a parking structure with the style and feel of existing campus buildings, which present strong Spanish architecture.

Commissioner Hoopes inquired about the color of the parking structure.

Mrs. Sullivan responded that it would not be white, but rather a muted color to blend with landscape. She stated that all needed changes to the plan would be completed by April to allow construction during the summer break.

Commissioner Hoopes noted that the color of the parking structure would be important to the Planning Commission given its potential to mitigate the effects of the east elevation.

Consultant Cantrell agreed, but only if and to the extent that the Planning Commission has an issue with the appearance of the east elevation.

Mrs. Sullivan further noted that the shape and proportion of the parking structure dictated by functional need, which conflicted greatly with the Spanish style of existing buildings on campus.

Commissioner Hoopes inquired if the trees proposed to screen the parking structure were deciduous.

Commissioner Roberts responded that both coniferous and deciduous trees were proposed.

Commissioner Roberts stated he loves the preservation of the campus, how it was originally built. He thought the solution for the parking structure was to focus on the stonework, which was very strong and dominant at the base of the auditorium. It needs to be emulated on the east elevation.

Wayne Romanek - landscape architect - noted that the east slope is heavily planted. The plan was to fill in gaps with new oaks to provide continuous screening along the east side of the parking structure.

Commissioner Tobias suggested advising the Planning Commission that the applicant will return with new colors and textural enhancements, and additional landscaping for the parking structure.

DC Minutes - 2/2/2012 Meeting

Commissioner Hoopes noted the dead ends in the traffic aisles and confirmed that the City Traffic Engineer has reviewed the plan.

Consultant Cantrell added that this is not a commercial use and that the Traffic Engineer's review was similar to the St. Francis parking structure along Foothill Blvd.

Commissioner Hoopes inquired whether the small dots on the plan were representative of proposed bollards.

Mr. Romanek stated that bollards were used only at the end of the emergency access aisle and that parking spaces were not affected.

Senior Planner Buss added that the plan presented today was review, modified and approved by the City Traffic Engineer.

M/S/C Vavoulis/Tobias - Variance for excess height and for setback encroachment endorsed. Assurance at final design review should be provided as to the view of the utilitarian east elevation. To that end, landscape documentation of screening shall be provided. To the extent appropriate from that information, color muting and surface refinement similar to the stonework of the garden walls of the new auditorium could be required. The applicant shall prepare exhibit confirming screening of glare from lighting fixtures atop and within the parking structure. Unanimous 5-0.

Phase 2 - Auditorium.

Consultant Cantrell informed the Commission that the Variance again dealt with excess height and substandard setbacks, and the overall aesthetics of considerable mass.

The Commission had no issues with the height and setbacks proposed for the auditorium.

Commissioner Roberts noted staff's recommendation to relocate the tower and asked the applicant if there were any issue with the recommendation.

Mrs. Sullivan responded that the applicant favored all of staff's recommendations and planned to implement all of them.

Commissioner Vavoulis inquired about other issues with the auditorium.

Consultant Cantrell responded that terracing, landscaping, demo of existing buildings were the remaining issues to be considered.

DC Minutes - 2/2/2012 Meeting

Commissioner Hoopes hated to see cottages 1 & 2 removed and asked why they had to be demolished.

Mrs. Sullivan explained that removal was again dictated by the overall site plan. The cottage's location makes pedestrian progression up the hill confusing. Removal also gives the scale of the new auditorium needed relief and allows for creation of new outdoor space.

Chairman Moldafsky noted that the cottages in question are currently marginally functional.

Commissioner Vavoulis quipped that if the nuns were amenable to their removal, so was he.

Commissioner Roberts felt the new garden space and improved connectivity outweighed removal of the cottages.

Commissioner Tobias felt that if the cottages were critical, they would have been reproduced elsewhere on the campus and accounted for on the plan.

Commissioner Roberts commented that the terraced gardens are fabulous. He was very anxious to see them in greater detail. On the plan, the gardens visually impart some strange angles, but felt this to be a minor issue that would be clarified upon submittal of final landscape plans.

M/S/C Vavoulis/Roberts - Variance for excess height and setback encroachment endorsed. Demolition of Cottage 1&2 endorsed as part of overriding over space/relief provision for the auditorium. Expanded landscape plan shall be returned to the Design Commission for final review and approval. Auditorium elevations shall be revised per City Alternate drawings dated 2/2/12 and agreed to by applicant: 1. Shift and/or extend south tower southward to beyond the plane of the adjacent walls to the east and west. 2. Revise upper round window location. 3. Extend west ends of south roofs to achieve overhangs. Unanimous 5-0.

Phase 3 - Classroom Addition.

Commissioner Vavoulis felt the height of the classroom tower was important the architecture and endorsed it.

Commissioner Roberts said that he had a special comfort level with the project since he and Commissioner Hoopes approved the 1994 project and has since seen how well it was implemented.

DC Minutes - 2/2/2012 Meeting

Commissioner Vavoulis confirmed that final landscaping associated with the classroom addition would be brought back for final review and approval.

Commissioner Roberts commended the landscape architect for great landscape plans - color coordinated and a joy to review.

M/S/C Vavoulis/Tobias - recommend approval as submitted. Unanimous 5-0.

Phase 4 - Tennis Courts.

Chairman Moldafsky noted the proximity of residential properties and acknowledged the potential for use impacts on neighboring homes.

Consultant Cantrell noted that FSHA received approval for lighted courts in 1994 so there may not be too many issues with this request.

Commissioner Tobias inquired about discussions with neighbors at this point. He commended the removal of lights as a concession to the neighbors, but noted their utility.

Kent Allmon - facility director - responded that several neighbors had been consulted with thus far, and had inquired only about lights.

Commissioner Tobias confirmed that two neighborhood meetings had been held and about 12 residents attended.

Commissioner Tobias stated that the courts are slightly elevated above the neighbors and asked about the intended hours of use.

Mr. Allmon responded that precise daylight hours had not been specified at this point and noted that the area in question would accommodate three courts.

Commissioner Hoopes questioned if the courts could be rearranged to move one court away from the road. He felt one lighted court further up on the knoll would have minimal impacts and would be of value to the school.

Mr. Allmon responded that said relocation would result in a new setback encroachment.

Commissioner Tobias reaffirmed his belief that the applicant would be well served by making sure the neighbors are included as part of the process. He felt it was critical to reach out! From a design standpoint, lights make sense. He could support lighted courts as long as the neighbors were on board, but would not formally recommend them.

Chairman Moldafsky asked if there were any issues with exception of the court lighting.

Commissioner Vavoulis asked about landscaping issues.

Commissioner Roberts felt the final solution was to see a street-level elevation to demonstrate what the neighbors would see.

Consultant Cantrell added that the court fencing was included as part of Variance request.

Commissioner Tobias wanted to make sure that landscaping would be integrated into the court fencing prior to final landscape review.

M/S/C Vavoulis/Tobias - approve plan subject to final review of landscaping with emphasis on integrating planting into tennis court perimeter fences. Representation of the street view of courts as seen from neighboring residential properties required to be prepared. Applicant may pursue lighting of courts. Strong recommendation to consult with neighbors during the process. Unanimous 5-0.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS: There was no other business.

VIII. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS:

Chairman Moldafsky restated the need to focus on the minutes. He suggested taking to the Council for addition staff/support since minutes are a very important record of meeting that could prove critical if a case were to be legally challenged.

Commissioner Vavoulis confirmed that the audio tapes are part of the public record. He felt the tapes were the most important part of the record and could resolve issues with the minutes if needed.

Director Stanley stated that the Commission could consider action minutes and that the item could be agendaized for future discussion.

The Commission agreed.

Commissioner Vavoulis stated that the minutes could be simple and brief, and needed only to capture project motions. The audio tapes would capture lengthy discussion, etc.

Commissioner Hoopes acknowledged Wes Seastrom's attendance in the audience, the new President of the LCF Chamber of Commerce.

IX. COMMENTS FROM STAFF:

Director Stanley updated the Commission on the Unocal project. The applicant has been notified about the unauthorized change to the rafter tails, and a revised sign and fountain plan would be coming back for additional review within the next couple weeks.

Commissioner Tobias noted his discussion with Mr. Seastrom and that progress was being made with regard to the landscape/fountain design.

Director Stanley informed the Commission that Public Works is requiring a slight relocation of a traffic signal fronting the new Sprouts building. Some landscaping will need to be removed to accommodate change in location. Mr. Stanley would possibly be making a substantial conformance determination on the matter but wanted the Commission's input prior to making said determination.

Commissioner Roberts expressed his frustration with this type of issue, which keeps happening from time to time. He wished the overall process caught these issues up front rather than at the back end when opportunities for resolution were much more limited. He appreciated Mr. Stanley's disclosure of the issue and was hopeful for an appropriate solution.

Commissioner Tobias mentioned that freezers had been placed up against the big windows of the Sprouts building visible along Foothill Blvd. This really degrades the appearance of the windows as seen from the street. Something should be done to improve the aesthetic since it takes away from the charm of the building.

Director Stanley noted the issue and stated that he would look into it.

X. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 a.m.

DC Minutes - 2/2/2012 Meeting