

# CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE

## MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LA CAÑADA FLINTRIDGE HELD ON FEBRUARY 8, 2016

- I. **CALL TO ORDER-** 6:00 p.m.
- II. **ROLL:** Chairman McConnell, Vice Chairman Smith, Commissioners Gunter and Hazen were present. Commissioner Jain was absent.
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE** Was recited.
- IV. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:** At this time, members of the audience may address the Commission regarding matters that are not on the agenda or matters that are on the Consent Calendar. No comments were offered.
- V. **REORDERING OF THE AGENDA** – The agenda was not reordered.
- VI. **CONSENT CALENDAR** There were no items.
- VII. **CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS**
  - A. **Conditional Use Permit 185-Amendment/Negative Declaration; Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy; 440 St. Katherine Drive:** request to amend the enrollment cap approved under Conditional Use Permit 185 in 1994 from 385 to 425 students. No construction is proposed as part of the project. Staff is recommending approval of a Negative Declaration for this project. (Deputy Director of Community Development Koleda).

Deputy Director Susan Koleda presented the staff report and referred to a site plan. She explained that the project applicant, Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy, requests to amend the enrollment cap approved under Conditional Use Permit 185 in 1994 from 385 students to 425 and that no construction is proposed as part of the project. She stated that the increase in student enrollment can be accommodated through the use of the existing campus facilities. She said that the school demonstrated that it could accommodate an increase in student enrollment during the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years when enrollment ranged between 412 – 415 students. She stated that two to four employees are proposed to be added to the staff.

Deputy Director Koleda explained that at the January 12, 2016 meeting, the Planning Commission received a request from the project applicant to continue the public hearing as they were in discussions with a neighbor regarding the project that they wished to

resolve. She explained that the project was continued to the current date certain, February 8, 2016.

Deputy Director Koleda discussed the traffic impact analysis that was prepared for the project by traffic engineering firm, LLG and that they studied the potential queuing at both lower and upper parking lot driveways and traffic counts during peak student drop off and pick up times. She stated that the Draft Conditions of Approval for the amendment of the project requires the maintenance of the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program, but that it was not included as a mitigation measure as the results of the analysis of traffic impacts associated with the project determined the increase to be less than significant. She said that staff proposes Condition of Approval No. 8 to be amended to address traffic and circulation at peak drop off and pick up times, total vehicle trips during peak hours, to require that yearly traffic counts be conducted as well as to require guest parking and shuttle accommodations for large school events to be made.

Deputy Director Koleda discussed the environmental review process, that an Initial Study was prepared by staff, and that during the 20-day public review process, five responses were received from the public, of which, the Planning Commissioners received a copy. She explained that prior to approving the proposed project expansion, the Commission must consider the proposed negative declaration.

Deputy Director Koleda stated that staff recommends approval of the project and adoption of a negative declaration and asked the Commissioners if they had any questions for her.

Chairman McConnell asked staff about vehicle trips for the proposed amendment.

Deputy Director Koleda said that there would be less than a 10% increase over the existing total vehicle trips which is still well under the threshold for it to be considered a significant impact.

Commissioner Smith asked staff for clarification about the traffic impact analysis and any changes the proposed project would have on the existing level of service.

Deputy Director Koleda responded that the proposed project would yield a level of service "A" even with the increase in student enrollment.

Chairman McConnell invited the applicant's representative up to speak.

Applicant's representative, Carmella Grahn, introduced herself as the Project Manager for the applicant. She introduced key school staff that was in attendance, including school President, Sister Carolyn McCormack, as well as the school's Land use counsel.

Sister Carolyn McCormack spoke, thanked staff and asked those in attendance that support the school and the project to stand up. She stated that today, February 8, 2016 is Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy's celebratory, "Founder's Day." She talked about the

school's mission statement and philosophy and the fact that it has been operating since 1931. Sister McCormack said that the school is committed to being small and one that meets the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She talked of the school's ability to accommodate up to 425 students and how they experienced a higher enrollment during the 2012 school year and were able to sustain operations well during that time. She explained that there are 29 classrooms on campus and that an increase in enrollment as requested would equate to two additional students per classroom which would be easy to accommodate.

Carmella Grahn spoke and stated that the Traffic Management Plan has experienced great success. She said that school families, students and the community have benefitted from this. She indicated that traffic has been reduced during the morning peak hour and overall by 50%. Ms. Grahn stated that students are required to register as to the manner in which they will commute to school and talked about the number of students that walk, carpool, and are bussed to the school. She said that campus safety officers enforce the requirements of the plan and that the school offers carpooling incentives to further encourage carpooling. She feels that the success of the traffic management undertaken by the school provides a basis for the higher enrollment cap requested by the school.

Commissioner Hazen asked about the 50% traffic reduction and how this was achieved.

Carmella Grahn explained that the carpooling and busing measures have greatly helped the situation.

Chairman McConnell said that he was comfortable with the conditions of approval proposed by staff to contend with any traffic issues.

Director of Community Development, Robert Stanley, explained that those members of the public who wished to speak have three minutes to do so and that they will be informed when their time is running out by lights that will illuminate at the podium.

Janah Risha, 523 Inverness Drive, La Cañada Flintridge, explained that he is a longtime La Cañada Flintridge resident. He has no concerns with the project. Mr. Risha lives five minutes away from the school. He said that he finds it convenient and generous of the school to offer the campus as a voter polling location for many years. He stated that Sister Celeste and Sister McCormick have done a good job instituting traffic control measures. He said that the school is good and reputable in its approach to empowering young women and cannot understand why there is opposition to the project. Mr. Risha asked that the Commission grant approval for the project.

Michael Powers, 4033 Alta Vista Drive, La Cañada Flintridge, stated that a 425 student cap as proposed will not be anything new to the school as from his experience of two daughters that have attended the school during peak enrollment over the last few years, he has not experienced any traffic problems. He said that permitting an enrollment of 425 students will help to restore the school back to the higher number that was able to be accommodated a few years back. He stated that the school teaches good morals. He

commended the patience that the Dominican Sisters that operate the school have shown over the last few years. He stated that aggressive traffic control measures that are in place have resulted in no traffic lines. He asked that the school be granted their request.

Frances Marick, 3713 Chevy Chase Drive, stated that the traffic is no longer existent in the neighborhood and even more so after the carpooling requirement was put into place. She said that the only time she remembers there being a commuter traffic line was when you were late dropping your daughter off at school. She voiced her support in favor of the project and for what the school does for the community. She said that she appreciates the school's patience during the length of the case.

John Caire, 2028 Lombardy Drive, La Cañada Flintridge, stated that he lives in the City and is in support of the project. He said that the school adds value to the community and is good for it. He indicated that his daughter attends the school and that the school teaches good character and morals. He listed names of La Cañada schools and explained that the impact of Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy's request will not make a difference in the larger scheme as they are one of many schools in the City and the impact will be minimal.

Charlie Kinney, 330 St. Katherine Drive, La Cañada Flintridge, said that he has lived in the City for 35 years and has experienced the school as a neighbor. He called the school a good neighbor which makes a good neighborhood. He indicated that every time the school has worked on a new construction project, they reach out to their neighbors. He said that the school administrators are welcoming and react well to input. He said that they share their campus with the community and the neighborhood. He stated that, "Protect La Cañada Flintridge" members should see what a good neighbor does and how they behave. He gave an example that Saint Katherine Drive is hilly and that his guests he has over have parked on occasion in the school parking lot. He also stated how the school has shared their facilities with their neighbors. He said that he enjoys attending school sporting events and other socials and fundraisers hosted at the school. Mr. Kinney questioned why events like the Shakespeare-fest could be prohibited. He said that the school has been very respectful to the neighborhood. He stated that he wants to help his neighbor and show his support for the project.

Bill Spathelt, 904 Monarch Drive, La Cañada Flintridge, said that he lives two minutes from the school off of Monarch and Figueroa streets. He is in favor of the project, to raise the enrollment cap to 425 students. He said that it is a sustainable number to keep school operating. He stated that traffic has never been an issue especially, now.

John Pridjian, 300 Inverness, La Cañada Flintridge, indicated that he experiences 85 – 90% of traffic generated from the school. He expressed his thanks to Deputy Director Koleda and to Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy. He said that he appreciates the school's attempt to balance safety and preservation of the campus for the future. He stated that he was thankful to school administrators who have worked in a proactive manner. He said that he supports the proposed amendment to the CUP.

Michael Hert, 4293 Chevy Chase, La Cañada Flintridge, said that he is a La Cañada Flintridge resident. His daughter attends the school and that his wife also works in the City of La Cañada Flintridge. He indicated that Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy has contributed to the good sense of self-worth instilled in his daughter and that he is still involved with the school. His daughter was involved in carpooling while she attended the school. Mr. Hert said that he supports the project to sustain the school.

Chairman McConnell invited others to speak. There were none.

Chairman McConnell closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Comments were offered.

Commissioner Gunter indicated that it is encouraging to see support of a project by the community. He said that he is familiar with the site and the project. He commended Deputy Director Koleda and staff for a job well done and their careful attention to the potential project impacts that could take place today. He further commended staff for well thought-out conditions of approval. He said that he is pleased that the school and community came together and stated that as a Commissioner it is nice to see all interested parties come to a good resolution. He said that the traffic control plan has been in play for a while and is working well. As to the negative declaration, he believed it was carefully prepared in a very thorough manner with great attention made to the comments and responses. He expressed that he is confident that the application has met the findings and is happy to support the project.

Vice Chairman Smith said that he echoes Commissioner Gunter and is also happy to see the support of the project by the community. He commended staff's work on the project and said they have done a good job presenting it. He stated that he is happy when both sides come together and that it is a big step forward. He feels that the TDM Program is working well. He indicated that he does not see any issues with increasing the enrollment cap to 425 students and believed there is a lack of evidence that the highest enrollment number was indicative of the maximum amount the school could accommodate years back. He said that he has driven the project site and feels that there are some challenging locations on the surrounding streets. He said that common sense and manners need to be displayed by all parties. He said that the project has been thoroughly reviewed and that he can support the findings.

Commissioner Hazen said that he agreed with the Commission and that he is happy that all parties came together to achieve a good resolution. He indicated that he can support the findings for the CUP and negative declaration.

Chairman McConnell said that he visited the site and sat in the parking lot to view the carpools and bus commuters. He indicated that there is still work to be done to stay committed to the traffic control plan and that this can be achieved through the conditions

of approval in addition to the conditions of the current CUP. He highlighted that Condition Number Eight of the Conditions of Approval pertaining to traffic and circulation should be adhered to and that queueing should be kept in check. He said that he would like the school to make sure to address any issues that might arise in the future during peak times and that the Condition of an annual traffic count during normal school hours be performed.

Commissioner Gunter stated that he wished to make a motion to approve the project and asked the Deputy City Attorney, Adrian Guerra, how to make the motion.

Deputy City Attorney, Guerra, instructed the Commission to word the motion in the following way: To waive a reading of and adopt the draft resolution, A Resolution of the Planning Commission of the City of La Cañada Flintridge Approving Conditional Use Permit 185, Amendment Number Four for Flintridge Sacred Heart Academy at 440 St. Katherine Drive, Approval of the CUP as well as the Adoption of the Negative Declaration.

M/S/C Commissioner Gunter moved the motion to approve as stated by Deputy City Attorney, Guerra/ Vice Chairman Smith. Approved 4-0.

**VIII. OTHER BUSINESS** There was none.

**IX. REPORT OF DIRECTOR'S REVIEWS** There were none.

**X. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMISSIONERS** There were none.

**XI. COMMENTS FROM THE DIRECTOR** There were none.

**XII. ADJOURNMENT** 6:47 p.m.