

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLANNING
COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LA CAÑADA
FLINTRIDGE, HELD JUNE 12, 2001**

CALL TO ORDER: Commissioner Gelhaar called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

ROLL: Present were Commissioners Engler and Mehranian; Commissioners Brown and Levine were absent. Also present was City Manager Fulwood, Assistant City Attorney Steres, Director of Community Development Stanley, Director of Public Works Castellanos, City Engineer Keipke, Senior Planner Buss, Planning Aide Gjolme and Consultants Al Grover and Jenni Suvari.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC: Comments were not offered.

CONSENT CALENDAR: M/S/C Gelhaar/Mehranian, naming Commissioner Engler to chair the meeting, given the absence of Vice-Chair, and to continue the matter of electing a Chair and Vice-Chair to June 26. The motion passed unanimously.

FINDING OF SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMITY RE: MOD 00-41; 4740 HAMPTON ROAD: M/S/C Gelhaar/Mehranian to adopt the minutes of May 22 as submitted. Unanimous.

Director Stanley advised that there were no issues on Staff's part. The project was "flipped", with relocation of the garage and master bedroom to the north side of the residence. The revision shifts the driveway further from an oak; all setbacks, height, etc. remain as approved. He noted that the neighbor to the north is aware of the changes and has provided written endorsement.

PUBLIC HEARING: M/S/C Mehranian/Gelhaar, finding that the proposed revisions are in substantial conformance with the original approval. Unanimous.

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT 324; TREE REMOVAL PERMIT 01-17; LA CAÑADA PROPERTIES; Director of Community Development Stanley provided an overview of the request to construct a new corporate

839 HOUSEMAN ST.:

office building for Sport Chalet that would be located within the Village Center of the Downtown Village Specific Plan. He introduced staff and the consultants, who were available to answer questions from the Commission: Environmental Consultant, Jenni Suvari, of Cotton Bridges and Al Grover, the traffic engineering consultant who the City hired to determine the North Road alignment. Mr. Grover is also working with Caltrans and prepared the Focused Traffic Study for the proposed office building.

Construction of a 27,642-sf corporate office building and a 14,092-sf underground parking area, would require demolition of four, single-family homes, two detached garages and a surface parking lot used by the Montessori school. Associated improvements include surface parking on both sides of the building, access along Houseman, a private access road, utilities and an extension of Beulah into the project site. Two homes and a garage located south of the project that lie within the proposed alignment for the Beulah Drive extension, would also be demolished.

A more exact location description is south of the freeway, north of Houseman and west of the existing day care facility. The project's assigned address is 839 Houseman, its General Plan designation is the Downtown Village Specific Plan and its MU-2 Zoning allows office uses and multi-family with a Conditional Use Permit.

Setback - The Specific Plan does not call out required setbacks for office uses. As proposed, the structure would be 10 ft from the north (freeway) property line. Staff concurs that the proposed location, noting the lot configuration and placement of the building would be consistent with the location of the North Road.

Elevations - building elevations were shown on an overhead transparency. The Specific Plan seemingly contradicts itself when comparing overall *Building Height* and allowed *Architectural Extensions*. Staff determined that the intent of the Plan is to allow extensions over the allowed 32 ft-height maximum, and

could therefore support the 32' 4" height at the entry gable.

Density - The proposal represents 27% lot coverage.

Trees - A total of 14 trees of the existing 19 would be removed; one, which is greater than 36 inches in diameter requires mitigation for its removal.

Parking - The project would eliminate the parking lot that serves the Montessori School, directly east of the project site. A total of 90, standard, 9 x 20, parking spaces are proposed via two surface lots and subterranean parking. Additionally, ten tandem spaces, which do not qualify towards the total "count", are proposed underground. Further, the School only requires 5 parking spaces, but since ten were initially provided, the City required a like replacement.

The Specific Plan states that the project must comply with current Parking Code until a Parking District is established. *Professional office* requires 1 space per 250 sf or, in this case, 111 spaces. If a Parking District were in place, only 83 parking spaces would be required. Director Stanley noted that a reduction is allowed if parking is found to be adequate, satisfies the needs of the project and does not impact the parking needs of the area. Given that the building would be occupied by a single tenant, that 90 standard spaces (including the 10 at the School) would be available for 86 employees and that visible parking would be reduced, Director Stanley determined that the proposed parking adequately serves the project.

The current alignment for the North Road, shown on an overhead transparency, is subject to adjustment depending on whether Caltrans grants the City's request to reconfigure the eastbound ramp at Angeles Crest Highway. Should that occur, some parking would be displaced; however, the vacation of Houseman Street would provide parking opportunities. If replacement parking cannot be satisfied on-site, a condition requires parking to be provided on Lot 3, (the most western lot on Houseman). The draft conditions also require the applicant to dedicate and improve the

west portion of the property for the North Road when a new project is proposed.

Director Stanley emphasized that the proposed siting of the building allows dedication and improvement of the North Road.

Nexus - The issue of nexus between the proposed project and the total improvement and dedication of the North Road was raised. Staff determined that a nexus did not exist at this time because of the uncertainty of Caltrans regarding the City's pending request. Staff did determine however, that extending Beulah Drive into the project site would satisfy the requirements of the Specific Plan by providing: direct access to the project, a direct link to Foothill and utilities and sewer connection. The draft conditions require an irrevocable offer of dedication to the City, consisting of 60-ft of right-of-way. This would allow for a 40-ft roadway, of which 28 ft would be improved as part of this project.

Tree Removal - The tree survey shows 19 trees on site of which 14 are slated for removal and 5 would be transplanted. A single pine exceeds 36" in diameter and must be replaced with three, 60-inch-box trees, per the mitigation measures found in the approved EIR for the Specific Plan.

Further, Staff is currently and separately, processing a Lot Line Adjustment that would create 4 lots from the 8 individual parcels owned by La Cañada Properties. The newly-created Lot 1 would accommodate the office building and lots 2, 3 and 4 would remain "residential" at this time. The draft conditions require recordation of the Lot Line Adjust-ment prior to occupancy of the office building. Director Stanley commented that there had been discussion regarding the applicant's issuance of eviction notices to some of its tenants. He cautioned that the topic does not fall within the Commission's scope of authority and is a civil matter between La Cañada Properties and its tenants.

Consultants for the environmental analysis and traffic then followed.

Jenni Suvari of Cotton Bridges Associates (CBA) was retained to assure that the project complied with CEQA. Having prepared the Program EIR for the Downtown Village Specific Plan, she was familiar with its content and mitigation measures. CEQA guidelines allow "a smaller project within a larger project". CBA reviewed the EIR checklist to determine if the project introduced any new impacts that were not discussed in the EIR and if any new mitigation measures would be necessary. Her firm determined that was not the case and they were therefore able to make the finding of consistency. The majority of mitigation measures in the EIR apply to this project including air quality, the effect on trees, noise and traffic.

Al Grover , then addressed the Commission and provided an over view of his experience as a former employee of Caltrans and an independent traffic consultant for 20 years. He cited the pending traffic-related matters dealing with this project: 1) working with Caltrans to relocate the intersection, 2) a traffic study for the proposed office building and 3) modifications to the traffic signal at Beulah. The Caltrans work involves a Project Study Report (PSR) to have the North Road intersect with Angeles Crest Highway where the ramps are now located and eliminate the eastbound onramp. Eastbound traffic would then use the loop ramp and new north and south left turn pockets would be provided on Angeles Crest Highway. Mr. Grover stated that it would appear as a typical intersection once the project is completed. With those fundamentals in mind, he then reviewed the alignment of the North Road from Angeles Crest to Commonwealth and gave all the information to the applicant so that the building could be sited appropriately. Mr. Grover advised that everything worked out well; "the building conforms horizontally and vertically" with the North Road alignment. He studied whether Beulah Drive or Marvin Street should provide access to the site, and determined that Marvin was too narrow and would require signalization. A left turn pocket would be provided at Beulah for traffic to access the site. The driveway at Taylor's steak house would be modified (not affecting the outdoor patio) and converted to a public street for approximately the depth

of the restaurant and then taper to the 28-ft roadway to the site. Foothill and Beulah would become the ultimate Intersection per the Specific Plan. The traffic analysis then looked at "how things would work for the office building". A barrier gate at Houseman and Lillian Court would allow only emergency vehicles access; therefore, the majority of traffic generated from the site and the Montessori School would have access to Beulah. Motorists wishing to access the freeway would use Marvin to Craig, to the onramps. New daily trips to the site were estimated at 300. Based on the worst-case traffic conditions, the Level of Service (LOS) for the intersection of Beulah and Foothill would remain at "A". Further, the LOS for Marvin and Foothill, "B" in the a.m. and "E" in the afternoon, would continue unchanged - The project would not produce any traffic impacts at the two intersections along Foothill. The result would be a fully signalized intersection and he did not believe that the existing crosswalk would be disturbed.

Commissioner Engler asked Mr. Grover to disclose his contractual arrangements.

Mr. Grover advised that he has contracted with the City to conduct a PSR and a traffic study to determine any impacts the proposed project would generate. He is under separate contract with Sport Chalet for a City-requested signal design; it seemed the most appropriate and expeditious way.

Commissioner Engler asked if there would be a need for projected redesign if Caltrans denied our request to eliminate the eastbound ramp.

Mr. Grover advised that in that case, the radius would have to be modified to enter Craig, but we probably would be precluded from any major enhancements at Angeles Crest.

If the North Road did align with Craig, Commissioner Engler asked how that would effect the lot at the west end of the site?

Mr. Grover responded that there would still be some loss of parking, but less than with the desired alignment for the North Road.

Responding to a question from Commissioner Mehranian, Mr. Grover advised the traffic study assumed that all store fronts would remain occupied at all times. If there were any major reconstruction, the City might have to re-evaluate such a project.

Director Stanley commented that the traffic study assumed the "worst case" scenario; and included all current vehicle trips as well as any added traffic generated by the office building.

Commissioner Mehranian confirmed that this scenario included the assumption that the employees at the Sportland building would remain in that location.

Commissioner Mehranian asked for an explanation of the relationship between the North Road and the proposed access road.

Director Stanley responded that the access road would serve as temporary access for this project via Marvin Street. Sport Chalet was required to design the building so that it complied with Consultant Grover's calculations for the north/south and elevational alignments to meet the North Road standards.

Commissioner Engler remarked that the current plan does not include constructing the access road to full City standards, ultimately required for the North Road. "Therefore, we will go through all this build, demolition and rebuilding process. Who bears all this cost? Requiring the next guy that comes along to bear all the cost of creating a proper road bed and over-excavation seems extremely convoluted". He felt it would be more efficient if the City and the applicant agreed to put in that section of the North Road. He pointed out that the applicant could sell the property and transfer the burden to the new owner, and put the City back into the issue of "nexus". Commissioner Engler felt the City should be a participant in the overall creation of this plan.

Commissioner Mehranian confirmed that the mitigation measures require dust control during construction.

Commissioner Engler believed that the mitigation monitoring process would be an "extreme" burden on staff and recalled that at one time, creating the position of Clerk of the Works was discussed. He stated he was "befuddled how the monitoring would be done by essentially two people who have other duties".

Jack Attwood, resident of the City and a Director of the Corporation for Sport Chalet addressed the Commission. He thanked the City Council for releasing the City Manager and Director Stanley to fast track a project that would typically take 6 months to process. When a prior City Council rejected the Specific Plan that focused solely on a Sport Chalet Center, the pressures of a growing company led to a decision from the Board of Directors to relocate the corporate offices. He related that it was at the request of Norbert Olberz to try "one more time" that we are here. Mr. Attwood introduced Mark Giles, project architect, Saeid Shantiyai, project engineer, Tom O'Neil, construction manager and Art Pearlman, developer. He expressed appreciation for Staff's recommendation of approval and urged the Commission to do the same.

Commissioner Gelhaar commented that there was much public interest in what Phase II would consist of; he asked what the City could expect from Sport Chalet in terms of timing.

Mr. Attwood stated that would be premature discussion and stated the importance for customers to have ingress, egress and parking. "Until we know if there's going to be a realignment at Angeles Crest and Foothill, we're going to hold". Mr. Attwood stated "the only reason we're here is the desire of Norbert to stay in town. The Board has a different view of that".

Commissioner Engler opened the public hearing.

Chari Manuel, 822 Houseman Street, asked if "839 Houseman" was the extent of the proposal.

Director Stanley explained that four homes would be demolished, plus 2 others across the street from her's in order to extend Beulah Drive. The draft conditions provide for a barrier gate that would prevent vehicular access (with the exception of emergency vehicles) to her portion of Houseman. Additionally, there would be no access to Houseman from Commonwealth Avenue.

Ms. Manual asked that Staff investigate 4539 Lillian Court, which has been vacated by La Cañada Properties. On three occasions, she has found the front door open after locking it.

Bert England, 4318 Bel Air, expressed concern with what he referred to as "piecemeal" planning and not knowing "what's going on in Phase 2". He suggested that the portion of the access road that would become part of the North Road, be designed now, to the specifications of the North Road. Tearing up a portion of the access road at a future date would remove a considerable amount of parking -- he stated he had no problem with that, so long as Phase 2 goes forward.

Commissioner Engler stated that the proposal as phased would reduce available parking in half. He felt Sport Chalet would need additional parking "down the line", especially when Phase II starts.

Director Stanley advised that the Conditional Use Permit would encumber Lot 3 as an overflow parking area after approval of the Lot Line Adjustment.

Commissioner Mehranian commented that to preclude future disruption, those portions of the access road that would not be disturbed by the future North Road be designed and constructed to meet the specifications of the North Road.

Commissioner Engler concurred, adding that the added cost would be minimal. He felt the "City could come up with plans".

Mr. Grover stated that from his standpoint, it was possible.

Mark Giles, project architect, explained that future North Road construction would require removing 24 stalls from the west side of the building and replacing them with 14 spaces on the east side, plus the available parking on Lot 3. "Because we don't know the exact configuration of Phase II, do we build out 'half' of the North Road or only provide a temporary road along the proposed North Road alignment?"

Commissioner Engler questioned what would happen if this was the extent of the applicant's use of the site. He felt it was important to establish "who is paying for what".

Commissioner Gelhaar stated it was almost unreasonable to think that Sport Chalet would incur the cost of a corporate office and associated improvements and not go forward with Phase II.

Director Stanley explained that if Phase II did not happen, the City would still have the extension of Beulah, fully dedicated and partially improved and that complies with the Specific Plan. Any other developer would be required to build their portion of the North Road. Whatever Caltrans approves will determine where Sport Chalet sites its retail building.

Commissioner Engler stated that he supported the project, but failed to understand the need to tear up a portion of the access road in the future, when it could be done now at minimal cost.

City Manager Fulwood stated that a Redevelopment Agency, would allow much of what Commissioner Engler was talking about. "The reality is that we are a contract city and we need to negotiate and work it out as we go." He felt that Phase II might be carried out with a Development Agreement and pointed out that this proposal clearly defines the North Road, it ties into the corporate office and we are assured that Beulah would be dedicated. Mr. Fulwood stated that the major components of the Specific Plan are included in this proposal. From a business viewpoint, the expense of constructing a corporate office without including the retail aspect was not logical.

Commissioner Engler stated that the difference between constructing an access road and half of the North Road at this time is not a great deal of money and would solve "that much" for Sport Chalet and the City.

Mr. England stated that he was confused and as a resident of the community, he wanted to know what his financial exposure is.

City Manager Fulwood stated that the City has not committed any funds to this project.

Mr. England commented that the storefronts on the north side of Foothill would probably revert to retail and asked if the traffic analysis considered that, since Bel Air now has an LOS of "F".

Mr. Grover responded that the EIR traffic analysis for the Specific Plan considered future retail use. He acknowledged there would be more traffic if all would convert to retail before the remainder of the Specific Plan was developed, but it would not have any adverse effects on the Bel Air/Foothill intersection. He added that the City was considering more studies for Bel Air/Chevy Chase to determine if any additional improvement is possible.

Commissioner Engler asked if the traffic analysis considered total build-out of Beulah and would the signalization change to accommodate the full build out? Were conduits, etc. considered?

Mr. Grover advised that all those concerns were taken into consideration.

Jane Sisson, 814 La Porte, expressed appreciation for the "crash" gate on Houseman, but was unclear as to who would maintain it. She provided the history of a gate in her neighborhood that is not maintained.

Joe Paneno, spoke on behalf of his parents who reside at 786 La Porte. He asked if a traffic study was done for the La Porte/Commonwealth area.

Commissioner Engler explained that the proposed gate would preclude any traffic traversing that area.

Mr. Paneno expressed support for the project and associated improvements, but was concerned that "everything seemed to hinge on what Caltrans says". He felt an assumption should be made that there would not be a Phase II.

Commissioner Engler referred to Mr. Attwood's prior comments regarding the necessity of first reaching an agreement with Caltrans as to the location of the North Road. He felt it would be unwise for a business person to commit funds until there were some assurances from the government agencies involved.

Mr. Paneno then asked that a condition be added, guaranteeing there would be a North Road. Commissioner Engler explained that the Specific Plan assures that would happen.

Mr. Paneno then questioned if the gate would create a cul-de-sac situation and he asked about the height of the proposed office building.

Director Stanley responded that a cul-de-sac would not be created; Houseman would remain "as is". The sole purpose of the gate is to preclude vehicular access and would be designed to comply with the City and Fire Department standards. La Cañada Properties will absorb the cost of the gate. Total building height is 32' 4" as allowed in the Specific Plan.

Peter Kudrave, 1615 Fairmount Avenue, stated that he had no comments - technical or otherwise. He asked "does the jigsaw puzzle relate to the plan that has been adopted?" He was satisfied that it did, and therefore recommended, "without rushing", that we proceed.

Mr. Attwood responded to comments:

The Houseman gate - "we design, pay and maintain it".

Bel Air - it is not in the project and is therefore not an issue until we get to the main project.

Building-out the section of the North Road now that would meet the specifications of the Specific Plan -- He agreed that it would not be a major cost, "but it's our cost either way. As businessmen, we're not going to put more money in than we have to because we don't know when the North Road is coming in, even though Caltrans is fast tracking the matter.

Mr. Attwood emphasized the need for space for the employees to work and stated that if the project was further delayed, there would be no choice but to relocate them at least temporarily, out of the city. He noted that there were other potential uses for the office building, including a future city hall.

Mr. Giles further expounded that they were not building the access road to the North Road specifications in the event it would have to be torn out later, adding to the cost. He noted that this project might proceed without Caltrans' cooperation on the realignment.

Commissioner Engler confirmed with Mr. Giles that if Caltrans responded in a positive and timely matter, Sport Chalet could build half of the North Road to full City standards.

Commissioner Engler closed the public hearing.

As a member of the Specific Plan Steering Committee, Commissioner Mehranian expressed appreciation for the volume and quality of work involved in this proposal. She felt the degree of consensus for this project was a direct result of the comprehensive public outreach involved in the Specific Plan process. Commissioner Mehranian stated that it is a good project and that she could support it so long as mitigation includes maintenance of the barrier gate, and that the impacts of dust, noise, circulation and access during construction to the neighbors be mitigated. While her preference was that the access road meet specifications of the North Road, she did not want to delay the project pending a

decision from Caltrans.

Commissioner Gelhaar conveyed gratitude to Sport Chalet its patience in dealing with the City". He related of being upset when an earlier approval for Sport Chalet was rescinded by the Council, but he is now convinced that the Specific Plan represents a much better proposal. He noted that every segment of the project complies with the Specific Plan and stated that he could support the request with the 33 conditions.

Commissioner Engler noted the lack of landscaping along Beulah.

Assistant City Attorney Steres advised that maintenance is not a requirement until the City accepts the dedication after the extension is approved.

Commissioner Engler asked that the draft conditions address maintenance along both sides of Beulah.

Attorney Steres advised that condition No. 22 could be modified to include that requirement.

Commissioner Engler equated the construction of Rubio's restaurant without widening Commonwealth to the failure of the access road in meeting the specifications of the North Road. He felt there is a nexus and if it wasn't the property owner's duty, then the City should step in. Otherwise, he supported the project.

City Manager Fulwood stated that it took time to find someone who is a visionary and who had contacts with Caltrans. That search resulted in hiring Al Grover, who facilitated an excellent meeting at the Caltrans offices. The City Council has allocated funds to move forward with the PSR. The total cost will be approximately \$100,000; we have given ourselves 9-12 months to accomplish that objective.

Assistant City Attorney Steres read Resolution 01-33, making a finding of consistency and Resolution 01-34, approving Conditional Use Permit 324 and Tree

Removal 01-17 for a new office building. Attached to Resolution 01-34 are conditions of approval, including modification to conditions #20, regarding maintenance of the gate barrier and #22, addressing the applicant's responsibility to maintain the Beulah Drive improvements until the City accepts the dedication.

Assistant City Attorney Steres confirmed for Commissioner Mehranian that construction issues are addressed in the Mitigation Monitoring Program.

M/S/C Mehranian/Gelhaar, finding that the proposed 27,642 sf office building and related improvements at 839 Houseman Street are consistent with the Program Environmental Impact Report for the Downtown Village Specific Plan, and approving Conditional Use Permit 324 and Tree Removal Permit 01-17 for the new office building. Unanimous.

M/S/C Gelhaar/Mehranian to adjourn at 8:18 p.m. Unanimous.

ADJOURNMENT:

Secretary to the Planning Commission