

**LAND USE COMMITTEE  
OF THE ALTADENA TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

**September 6, 2011 7:00 P.M.**

**Altadena Community Center, 730 E Altadena Dr, Altadena, CA**

A regular meeting of the Land Use Committee of the Altadena Town Council was held at the abovementioned date and time in the Community Room of the Altadena Community Center, 730 East Altadena Drive, Altadena CA.

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 P.M. by Chairman Mark Goldschmidt. 184 members of the public were in attendance according to sign-in sheets.

**OPENING BUSINESS**

**1. Announcement of Committee Chair.**

**2. Roll Call**

The following Members were present at roll call: Anthony Cheng, Amy Cienfuegos, Doug Colliflower, Okorie Ezieme, Anthony Hasler, Steve Haussler, John Klose, Brian League, Diane Marcussen, Brent Musson, Ken Roberts, and Tecumseh Shackelford. 12 voting Members total were present constituting a quorum.

The following Committee members were absent: Gino Sund and Sandra Thomas.

**3. Minutes Approval**

Motion to approve the July 2011 minutes as amended was made by Member League, seconded by Member Colliflower, and approved (12-0-0).

The May 2011 minutes will be distributed shortly. Member Jamie Bissner arrived after approval of the July minutes.

**4. Public Comment - none**

**INFORMATION ITEMS**

**5. 1563 Meadowbrook Rd (CT4612) – Cheng/Edwards**

Applicant: Michael Miller (architect) for Gary McDonald

R2011-00375 filed 03/30/2011 – R1-7500 – Planner Dean Edwards

CUP for reduction of required 10' side yard setback to 5' for a house addition.

Applicant gave a brief summary. The entire house has been updated except for the master bedroom. The prior side setback requirement when the house was built was 5'. The current setback required is 10'. The proposed addition is just under 400sf. Less than 90sf will be in the setback. The wall on that side of the property hides the view of the house from the north neighbor, which is also at a higher elevation than the subject property due to the sloping nature of the street. The back of the house faces the Altadena Golf Course. Neither residential neighbor will be able to see the addition. The applicant distributed copies of the site plans, photographs of the property, and a full-size set of plans with signatures of support from all of his nearby neighbors.

Member Haussler reminded the Committee that the proposed changes to the Altadena CSD for residential additions of this size would call for approval of this project without a CUP.

Member Colliflower has met with the owner and walked the property. He stated there would be no real impact on the golf course.

Member Marcussen commented that a tall wall should not be enough to allow for approval of the project but that the entire proposal should be considered.

Member Cheng who is the census tract representative stated he met with the owner at the property and believes there would be virtually no impact on the community. Also, by continuing the existing roof line and house side setback, the owner would be creating a more aesthetically pleasing addition.

Member Haussler commented that the Committee has historically supported projects of this type where the existing rooflines and setbacks are followed for small additions.

Given the above discussion, and on motion duly made by Member League, seconded by Member Colliflower, and approved (13-0-0), it was

RESOLVED the Committee recommend that the Altadena Town Council send a letter to County Regional Planning recommending APPROVAL of project R2011-00375 for a reduction of required side yard setback for a house addition at 1563 Meadowbrook Rd.

**6. 183 E Palm St (CT4602) – Ezieme/Haussler**

Applicant: Arroyo Pacific Inc.

R2008-00985 filed 01/06/2011 – R1-7500 – Planner Anita Gutierrez  
CUP for a school in a R1-7500 residential zone.

Philip Clark, the President of Arroyo Pacific, Inc. gave a summary of the property. Arroyo Pacific operates a school in Arcadia. Founded 12 years ago, it is a college prep school. It will initially limit the proposed Altadena school to 100 students. For its existing school in Arcadia, it has never filled its parking lot of 56 parking spaces during the past ten years. Average usage of parking spaces was 35 spots. The Arcadia City Council and Police Department have commended Arroyo Pacific for its performance in the community. About 35% of its students and alumni are from Altadena. It is attracted to Altadena due to the peaceful, serene community, and wishes to enhance the serenity and beauty of the neighborhood. The subject property is suitable for its use since it was a YMCA and foster home before.

There are 8 existing buildings in the proposed project. The villa will not be used for teaching purposes since it is designed for residential use. Arroyo Pacific will not do any construction whatsoever for the project. They will have more than enough classroom space for up to 250 students and 20 teachers and staff. The parking will be adequate especially during the first few years with the planned 20 staff parking spaces and 35 student permit carpool parking spaces.

Arroyo Pacific teaches on a quarter system, which should result in less movement of students as compared to a traditional high school. The villa will be used as the home for one teacher and his family, who currently live in Altadena. There will be a 50 student maximum in any classroom at any time. The applicant does not expect to have more than 15 teachers on site at a time. According to the site plan shown at the meeting, there are 22 classrooms available and only 17 are needed to support 250 students. Operating hours will be 8am-5pm. Classes will be staggered so that traffic will be mitigated for the residential area.

The applicant has submitted all requested technical reports to the County to address potential traffic, noise and property value impact on the community. As a private school, it can insist on carpooling and limit parking permits. It will not use noisy school buses should students be bused in from elsewhere. Proposed enrollment is 90, 120, 150 and 180 students each of the first four years. Under County Planning requirements, the CUP must be prepared to demonstrate the ability to handle all 250 students from the outset. The applicant will prohibit students from parking on Palm St or the surrounding streets.

Carl Ballard, a partner at Kunzman and Associates, gave a brief summary of the parking study done for the applicant. The study ran a scenario with all 250 students arriving at once without staggered start times and no carpooling. The study showed acceptable traffic flows as per County standards. The study does call for right turns only out of the subject property parking lots.

As for noise, the school will not use any bells since this is a high school only with students 14-18. The school handbook will prohibit loud music, door slamming, and drop-off/pickup lag which may cause traffic to back up. The applicant offered to install landscaping and build sound walls to further mitigate sound should that be needed.

An associate from Kunzman and Associates stated that a noise study was prepared and submitted to Regional Planning that shows all County standards are met by the proposed school use. The state of California requires no more than a 3 dB increase from current use, and the proposed school should only increase overall noise levels by 2.5 dB over the current residential use and ambient traffic noise. Requirements will be imposed to have no exterior fire alarms, school bells, loud music from cars, and truck pick-ups and drop-offs during 7a-7p. The applicant stated that all of these measures are already being done at the Arcadia site.

In regards to impact on property values, the applicant stated it is proven in Pasadena and Arcadia that the existence of a school of their type and caliber has shown an increase in property values of roughly \$50,000, not a decrease as many in the community fear. The applicant would not want its own property value to decrease and offered to have an independent real estate board provide factual evidence that a high quality school would increase property values. Arroyo Pacific maintains its Arcadia campus to high standards. The applicant will also have its school foundation offer scholarships for local children.

Member Ezieme is the census tract representative. He called on ATC Member Greg Middleton to comment on the project who stated that the issue at hand is not a matter of whether the proposed school will do well or not, but whether there is a fit for any school at this location, which he felt the immediate community has indicated there is not.

Member Marcussen asked that the Committee understand that the CUP is asking specifically for placing a school use in a R1 zone at the subject property, and to evaluate the project based on the impact any school would have on the residential neighborhood.

Member League stated that the CUP will last for a long time. If Arroyo Pacific pulls out, the CUP will still run with the property until its expiration, and the subsequent owner may not operate itself up to the standards of Arroyo Pacific. He stated that there are numerous vacant commercial buildings in more suitable locations in the community, and that the impact on the community at this site is much greater than any of those sites.

Member Musson commented on the size of the residential street on which the Arcadia school is located. He believes Palm St is much narrower than that used in Arcadia by Arroyo Pacific, and would probably not be able to handle the school here. He is the PTA

President for Blair High School, and even as the highest ranked school in Pasadena that encourages carpooling, they still have a massive traffic jam each morning.

Member Roberts asked the parking study consultant to present some figures of the proposed traffic flows. The consultant stated that for 250 students, there would be a maximum of 123 total inbound entries over the course of 1 hour during the morning. Member Haussler asked if the consultant looked at surrounding streets for traffic impact, and the consultant stated the County required several other intersections, and all of those were addressed in the study.

**Public Comment:**

- A. Coleen Sterritt. 3101 N Raymond, Altadena. No School on Palm organizer. She lives adjacent to the school. She has been a resident since 1997 when the site was a residential facility for no more than 84 students. She is part of their neighborhood association. She is a teacher at the university level so understands the importance of a good high school. However, a school doesn't work in their neighborhood. Against.
- B. Rachel Figura. 3061 N Raymond, Altadena. Moved here in 1999 and lives there with her son. The subject property borders 3 sides of her property. Noise is easily heard at her house. The prior facility already created significant noise. Arroyo Pacific is a respectable school but Palm St is not the place for such a commercial use. She fears property values would decline due to the proposed school. Against.
- C. Hugo Artenega. 241 E Palm St, Altadena. Moved here in 2001. Traffic is already a problem there. They have asked for speed bumps to reduce speeding. There are no sidewalks on Palm. Any increased traffic would drastically impact their quality of life. The community must consider that these will be teenage drivers brought into their neighborhood by the school. Against.
- D. Michael Reilly. 3101 N Raymond Ave, Altadena. Their community has formed a residents association to address the prior proposed school projects that would increase traffic in the community. Moved here in 1997 when Bienvenidos Children's Center was there, which housed much fewer children than what is proposed here, and was not designed for such high traffic flows to support 250 students. The site is bowl shaped, which amplifies noise towards the neighbors. He suggested alternative uses for the site, which would directly benefit the community and not destroy the peace and harmony in the neighborhood. Against.
- E. Sonja-Sophie Loeffler. 60 E Palm St, Altadena. Moved here in 2010. Drives her 9-year old son daily to Alhambra for a good school. She would never have moved in at Palm if there was a school located on her street. Many of her neighbors have children that like to play in the street. If the school should open, her son and the kids of her neighbors will no longer be able to do so. Against.
- F. Rick Hughes. 3821 Luna Ct, Altadena. Altadena needs more schools. Existing school had 150 students. In support.

- G. Dawn Dawson. 1256 Sonoma Dr, Altadena. Lived here for 19 years. Her children were born here and went to St Marks. There is no good accredited high school in Altadena now. In support.
- H. Ted Bosley. 1215 E Woodbury Rd, Pasadena (Altadena jurisdiction). His son is at Arroyo Pacific. Son is a driver. Believes the property is suitable for institutional use and this is the type of school you would want there. In support.
- I. Joe Futerman. 4001 Alzada Rd, Altadena. Educator and psychotherapist. His daughter has flourished at Arroyo Pacific. The property is already an institutional type property. Would like to work with the community to make this a positive outcome for everyone. In support.
- J. Nan Boden. 2240 Mar Vista Ave, Altadena. Her son is in his third year at Arroyo Pacific. The school is outstanding. Her office is 200 yards from her office. Over the past 10 years, they have never had any problem with or complaint about the school. In support.
- K. Joan Collazo. 1780 Meadowbrook Rd, Altadena. She is a teacher at Arroyo Pacific. She wishes there was a good high school here so that she would spend on education in our community. In support.
- L. Ellen Dinerman. 2129 Grand Oaks Ave, Altadena. Lived on Mariposa before. Her daughter went to Arroyo Pacific before and is now in college. She witnessed similar fears at the Arcadia City Council meetings when Arroyo Pacific went in there but all were unfounded. In support.
- M. Sharon Spangler. 2961 N Maiden Ln, Altadena. Lived on Sonoma before. Her daughter succeeded only because of Arroyo Pacific so believes the school will be outstanding for the community. In support.
- N. John Pings. 1941 New York Dr, Altadena. Has been in the community a long time. Made a point that the school is very willing to cooperate with the community. In support.
- O. Sophia Vidal. 3034 Ewing Ave, Altadena. 17 year resident in Altadena. She was opposed and testified against the Sahag Mesrob proposal. She visited Arroyo Pacific and felt that they addressed all of her issues. She did not want the prior school proposals to bias her judgment. In support.
- P. Marcille Hughes. 3821 Luna Ct, Altadena. She used to live here, moved away, and came back to the community. She stated how outstanding Arroyo Pacific treats their students. It is a very special school with great students. In support.
- Q. Karen Skinner-Twomey. 1645 E Mendocino, Altadena. Her daughter and god son have both gone to Arroyo Pacific. The school is excellent. In support.
- R. Sylvia Ruiz. 501 Magnolia, South Pasadena. Used to live in Altadena. Her son went to Arroyo Pacific. Would have loved to have had Arroyo Pacific in Altadena. In support.
- S. Debbie Pock. 726 Mountain View, Monrovia. Her son blossomed at Arroyo Pacific. In support.

- T. Bob Fisher. 920 Mt Washington Dr, Los Angeles. Owner of Icehouse Comedy Club. Spoke how the Icehouse went through similar public hearings before they opened, and is now a well-respected establishment in Pasadena. His son is at Arroyo Pacific. As a property owner, he would fear a public school opening here but Arroyo Pacific is different. In support.
- U. Charles Joseph Dilsaver. 707 S Orange Grove, Pasadena. In support.
- V. Lynne Beaucher. 2971 Emerson Way, Altadena. The shape of the property makes the sound travel to the neighbors. There are many dogs in the neighborhood that bark with any noise, and a school of this size would exacerbate them. Against.
- W. Kathleen Brand. 854 Oakglade Dr, Monrovia. Her son went to Arroyo Pacific and is now at Whitter College. She served on the Monrovia Foothills public commission and they had always been afraid of noise and traffic but usually those issues never surfaced as real problems. In support.
- X. Ross Gottstein. 44 E Palm St. Altadena. Although he is part of No School on Palm, he believes the applicant gave a good presentation. However, he has lived in Altadena 19 years, and stated that it will be the immediate neighbors that have to live with the school. Against.

Member Roberts summarized that the public comments that were against the project were from those who live immediately near the subject property, and that those in support of the project were from various locations.

Member Haussler stated he was opposed to the Bienvenidos project when that came before the Committee in the 1990s. Given the constraints of the property site, it is still not adequate for a school especially of this larger size.

Member Musson stated that the current zoning of the subject property is residential and that a school would be a new use, which requires a CUP. The prior CUP allowing the foster home facility had run out so the property has reverted to its underlying residential zoning. If there was overwhelming community support for a school use, the Committee would take that into account and support the project. However, there is no overwhelming support or general consensus for approval.

Member League stated that the CUP would run with the land and we need to take a long term view for the community. He would not want to place such a burden on the community should Arroyo Pacific leave.

Member Marcussen reminded the Committee that this is a CUP for an exception to the residential zone and we must consider all factors from a residential impact standpoint before approving such an exception.

Member Ezieme, the census tract rep for the subject property, reiterated that this CUP is a request for a school use in a residential zone and that the issue at hand is not whether Arroyo Pacific will run well or not. Based on all of the neighborhood feedback, there is no way he believes the Committee can support such a project.

Given the above discussion, and on motion duly made by Member Ezieme, seconded by Member Shackelford, and approved (13-0-0), it was

RESOLVED the Committee recommend that the Altadena Town Council send a letter to County Regional Planning recommending DENIAL of project R2008-00985 for a school in a R1-7500 residential zone at 183 E Palm St.

There being no further business being brought before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned to the next scheduled regular meeting on Tuesday, October 2, 2011 at 7:00 P.M. in the Community Room of the Altadena Community Center.

Respectfully submitted,  
Member Anthony Cheng  
Communications & Correspondence Secretary