

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

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING

April 5, 2005 – 7:00 P.M.

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. A copy of the notice and agenda was posted at the Community Center for one continuous week prior to the meeting date.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 P.M. by Committee Chair Lucy Hino.

GENERAL MATTERS

1. **Roll Call.** The following Members, constituting a quorum, were present:
Steve Bass, Ron Carter, Anthony Cheng, Susie Collins, Steve Glasser, Lucy Hino, Steve Lamb, Tecumseh Shackelford, Viola Williams, and Michele Zack.

The following Committee members were absent:
Jamie Bissner, Steve Haussler and Barbara Koenig

2. **Agenda Approval.** The posted agenda was approved unanimously.
3. **Minutes Approval.** The Minutes of the February 1, 2005 regular meeting shall be distributed for approval at the next regular meeting.
4. **Organizational Matters**
 - A. Filling Committee vacancies. Vacancies were announced for the below census tracts. Members of the public were encouraged to pursue these openings.
CT4613 – 2 vacancies
CT4603.02 – 1 vacancy
5. **Public Comments.** No public comments were made on non-Agenda items. All comments relevant to Agenda items were held until the respective item was discussed.

PUBLIC HEARING: PERMITS, VARIANCES, & CHANGES

6. **2233 Casitas Ave (CT4610)**
Tentative tract map PM#061126
Applicant: Monica Munoz
Presentation of development proposal with community feedback. Proposal calls for four bungalow-style, two-story, single family homes with shared space. Formal Committee action requested now that tentative tract map, CUP application have been filed.

There have been no changes to the proposal and submission from the last time this was presented to the Committee.

Summary by Member Shackelford: Ms. Munoz came a year ago with proposal for 8 homes. Town Council Representative Bobby Thompson walked the area and gave feedback. A new proposal was submitted for 6 homes, and then again for 4 homes after further feedback from the Committee. Two neighbors brought up issues; Ms. Munoz called them and incorporated their comments as changes. Member Shackelford walked the neighborhood to get additional feedback and inform them of tonight's meeting would be the venue to voice any support/opposition.

Supporting documentation was submitted as requested by the Committee of neighborhood signatures of support. (See submission.)

Given the above, and on motion made by Member Lamb, seconded by Member Shackelford, and unanimously passed, it was

RESOLVED that the Committee recommend that the Altadena Town Council issue a letter to the County Regional Planning Department to recommend APPROVAL of tentative tract map PM#061126 for the development of a four-unit PUD as presented to the Committee.

Ms. Munoz thanked Member Shackelford for all his hard work above and beyond the call of duty.

7. 1560 Homewood Dr (CT4601)

Oak Tree Permit Application #04230

Applicant: Jim Osterling

Application calls for the removal of two oak trees and encroachment on four oak trees. All are coast live oak, no heritage oaks. Los Angeles County Fire Department, Forestry Division has performed a site inspection and recommended to approve application. County hearing to be held late April.

Applicants Jim and Scarlet Osterling appeared before the Committee.

The Osterlings have lived at this location for 8 years. It is a 50,000 sf parcel zoned R-1-20,000, and they wish to divide the parcel into 2 parts. The parcel map has already been approved, and the applicant is now just clearing the conditions to record the parcel map including this oak tree permit application. Forestry Dept

has approved the oak tree permit application. No negative comments have been received from any other departments that have reviewed the application. Mr. Osterling has circulated maps and plans to neighbors, and received no negative comments. This site is known in the neighborhood as the “jungle” – it is heavily forested. In addition to the two oak trees, some sycamore and eucalyptus trees will be removed. The back lot line abuts Rubio Wash/LA County Flood Control Channel.

The proposed pad has been designed based on fire requirements. The furthest point of the pad can be no more than 150 ft from the street. Given this fire requirement, the applicant could not design two lots without removing one of the oaks (tree #2). Tree #4 is removed due to the driveway plan as required by the County. Tree #1 is a 19” diameter trunk, 35’ high; tree #4 is 17” trunk, 30’ high leaner.

Property is at end of cul-de-sac on Homewood Dr. The new lot would be located to the rear of the existing lot with a driveway down a natural grade to reach the rear lot.

County Forester has prepared an approval with conditions that Mr. Osterling is meeting one by one. Arborist from L. Newman will be onsite to supervise the encroachment. See submitted documentation. All conditions were read aloud at the meeting.

Trying to relocate the tree would probably damage the tree. Hence, municipalities have found it is easier and more effective to replace/mitigate at a multiple of trees removed.

Soils and hydrology tests/analyses have been done. Sewer system is not nearby, so septic system will be located on site. During construction, dirt import/export should be balanced, but a small amount may be imported.

Given the above, and on motion made by Member Lamb, seconded by Member Shackelford, and unanimously passed, it was

RESOLVED that the Committee recommend that the Altadena Town Council issue a letter to the County Regional Planning Department to recommend APPROVAL of oak tree permit application #04230 for the removal of two oak trees and encroachment on four oak trees as presented to the Committee.

8. 2055-71 N Lake Ave (CT4611)

Expansion of Altadena Animal Hospital.

Applicant: Mr. and Mrs. Baljeet Sahi. Mr. Sahi is a veterinarian. They are seeking early feedback before formally applying for CUP and permits.

2055 and 2071 N Lake are two properties; the Sahi's currently own both.

The Altadena Animal Hospital has been in business since 1942. The Sahi's are its owners for the last 6 years. Their plan to increase the size of the hospital as well as the operation of the hospital. Facility will increase 10,277 sf. There is no other facility like this in the area. Much of the veterinarian business is going down to Pasadena, so this would be beneficial for the neighborhood. The architect retained for this project is a specialist on designing animal hospitals. Although they have not had any complaints from neighbors on sound or any other matters, the applicant feels sound control is a primary focus.

Addition proposed addition onto the existing structure at the north and south sides. Due to county use definitions, the project must be separated into an animal hospital and animal clinic, where overnight stays are restricted to the animal hospital. Renderings and layouts presented. Lake Ave Improvement Plan guidelines have been incorporated by owner and architect. The new facility will house 4 exam rooms, lobby, surgical suite, treatment room, specialty room (e.g., telemedicine, radiology), grooming area, 12 suites, room for orthopedic surgery, physiotherapy, and additional administrative rooms. County does allow two zonings on two adjacent lots even though structure is connected. Additional proposed functions: cat condominiums, underwater testing, education center; in the basement: day care center for dog classes, day care for other pets; this is a tri-level structure, but still complies with all County codes. Metal roof currently selected: earth tones will be used as recommended by the Lake Ave Improvement Plan.

A CUP is required because of the current C2 zoning, and its legal nonconforming use originally permitted in 1965. Although additions are not usually allowed to legal nonconforming uses, animal clinics are excepted. So, this request is for continuance of the legal nonconforming use.

There is a large oak tree which will not be moved. Height limits are in compliance, basement will be added at rear which is allowed under code. 27 parking spaces will be provided; may achieve 29 if a portion of the landscaping is removed.

Architect assessed local area to make sure modern design would fit in with neighborhood. Rounded design selected to balance creation of square footage and required number of parking spaces. Meets Lake Ave Improvement Plan call for Spanish-influenced design.

Comments from the Committee:

- Oak trees need to be assessed
- Modern architecture may not fit
- Watch out for runoff remediation in open space plan to absorb water
- Noise mitigation: watch for any external sound
- Follow Lake Ave Improvement Plan
- Contact neighbors, especially residential neighbors after application

All committee members expressed positive feedback and look forward to the formal application and public hearing.

OLD BUSINESS

9. 1375 E Mendocino St (CT4601)

Potential unauthorized commercial activity on residential property (Cheng)

Cheng gave report of findings on County Zoning Enforcement division. Ms. Pamela Thornton is the representative at County Zoning Enforcement in charge of Altadena. She can be reached at pthornton@planning.co.la.ca.us or at the Code Enforcement Hotline (888) 924-4357.

The issue at 1375 E Mendocino has been taken care of by Ms. Thornton. An advertisement was placed by this land owner for services as a filming site and short-term housing. In order to do limited filming, the filming company must obtain a permit from Entertainment Industry Development Corporation (www.eidc.com), the only organization authorized to grant filming permits in LA County now. There are limits to the amount of filming before a business license is required, and the resident at the subject site has been informed of such.

In regards to use as short-term housing, a CUP would be required to authorize such use, and a subsequent business license be obtained. The owner has indicated discontinuance of offering such services.

An issue was brought up by Member Glasser to disseminate information regarding Code Enforcement on the website. Committee will seek to do so in the future.

NEW BUSINESS - none

REPORTS

10. 1056 E New York Dr (CT4603.01)

Akuchi Family Services group home expansion (Williams)

Applicant: Mr. & Mrs. Emeka & Vivian Okoro, Akuchi Family Services. Mr. Okoro is a social worker who owns this business. The Okoros live in Ontario.

Member Williams inquired with the County and the Sheriff's Dept, and found that no complaints were received/logged. As such, Member Williams did not investigate further.

CUP application filed for increase of the adult residential facility from 6 residents to 10 residents, for an additional 4 residents at 2 persons per room using the existing 5 bedroom/3 bathroom single family house. The original license submitted was for 6 residents or fewer with 2 persons per room.

The home is not licensed to provide any treatment, so none are provided. However, a site technician is on premises to administer psychotropic medication. Three residents are professionals who have had mental breakdowns before; they currently attend Pacific Clinics for day programs, and are free to come and go as they wish. Age range is 25 to 48 of current residents. Some residents have come, stabilized, and moved into their own residences. Each resident has a treatment plan, with the goal to transition back to his/her own home. Some stay as short as 3 months, some for 6 months, some longer just out of comfort.

The home's license was granted 3/18/04 – it has been open for 1 year.

There was a death in the house yesterday.

Member Goldman gave findings from her investigations. There are currently 6 people in the house, 5 living upstairs, and 1 onsite manager downstairs. There is a back house that is being rented out as well. The owner of the property is living in the back. The house is operating under two addresses: 1052 and 1056 New York Dr. Member Goldman brought signatures of 29 neighbors opposed to an expansion, but not requesting a shutdown. The southwest corner of the subject site backs up against Member Goldman's property; that corner has lots of individuals regularly smoking, including smoking of illegal substances.

Mr. Okoro stated that residents of the house are tested for illegal drug use at Pacific Clinics. He is there 3 nights a week from 3p-10p on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday.

Comments from public:

Arlene Anderson, 1070 New York Dr.

The County does not license the facility; the State licenses it; the State representative is Rebecca Carosco. The facility was licensed on March 18 2004, and originally applied for 10 beds, which was not approved, so went with the 6 bed facility. There are 6 residents in the house and at least 4 residents in the back house. She has personally seen smoking of marijuana, but these were not reported because the Sheriff's Dept response is so delayed that no smoking would be seen. She has approached the on-site staff that there is marijuana being smoked on the property. She has seen it, but the on-site manager claims he has not. If he is supposed to be a supervisor of the facility, then she deems this as a safety issue. These residents are staying on premises most of the day. The dangers of mixing marijuana and psychotropic medications is worrisome for her. There are also people who offer rides to the residents; instead of getting off and notifying the residents, they just honk their car horns in front of the building. She does not want this to become a bigger nuisance than it already is. On March 30, 2005, Rebecca Carosco found 2 minor violations with the site, which will be released in a report.

Member Shackelford instructed her to call the Sheriff's Dept anyway in the future to document such complaints.

Rae Syms, 1040 New York Dr.

Ms. Sims was not aware there was a mental health facility next to her. She does not usually call the police on her neighbors. She was aware of the older couple who used to live in the front and now moved to the back. She has lived there since September, her boyfriend has lived there for 10 years. She is a registered nurse. She opposes the expansion. The thought of 10 people in the front and 6 in the back is disturbing to her. She was not notified of the facility.

Gary Guth, resident there

Mr. Guth as lived at the Akuchi home for a year. He is concerned with the smoking. Second hand smoke comes inside the house, which gets very hot in the summer, over 90 degrees. He is worried about the effects of the second hand smoke on his health. He would like to see no smoking on the entire property. He

is for expanding the facility, but they may not occupy the whole facility because some residents can pay more money to occupy a room as a single. There are 5 rooms available. Originally when it first opened, there were 2 people per room, so only 3 bedrooms were being used. The rooms are very large, there are no plans for expansion of the house structurally. He gets treated better there than at his own home. He says they are very courteous there. The horn being honked is actually the Pacific Clinics van; they can be instructed to come in instead of honking. He was asked last week whether he has seen marijuana being smoked there, which he has NOT, but he has smelled it without seeing it. The person who passed away yesterday had a respiratory problem and died in his sleep; compounded with his sleep apnea. When he first moved in, he felt there was a bad resident, and after complaints, he was evicted. He feels like a guest there so has not real complaints now.

Vivian Okoro, owner

Ms. Okoro has been a social worker with mentally challenged youth for 18 years. Their intention is to expand to 10 beds, but they might not do so, they just want to have the option to do so. She has 5 children and understands the concerns of neighbors and parents; she would not want this to become a threat to the neighborhood. She feels it is very important for her residents at the Akuchi home to become accepted by their neighbors.

Emeka Okoro, owner

Mr. Okoro explained that citations were given for: 1) backyard was dirty and unkept due to rakes and landscaping not maintained; and 2) don't remember. These were given by Rebecca Carosco.

Member Shackelford made it a point to state that a negative decision should not be treated as a personal comment on Mr and Mrs Okoro, but the reality is that Altadena as a community has a problem with expanding group homes given the sheer number of group homes and group home residents here.

Member Carter stated he will not vote positively on any expansion of any nursing homes and group homes in Altadena, which there are too many in Altadena. Unfortunately for the group homes who are well run and legitimate, the overabundance is a fact, and will run into opposition by the Committee.

Motion to deny application Lamb, Bass second. Unanimous approval.

Given the above, and on motion made by Member Lamb, seconded by Member Bass, and unanimously passed, it was

RESOLVED that the Committee recommend that the Altadena Town Council issue a letter to the County Regional Planning Department to recommend DENIAL of the CUP for expansion of the group home located at 1056 New York Dr as presented to the Committee.

11. Watershed Subcommittee (Zack)

The Subcommittee applied for an MWD grant. Subcommittee members gathered a good group of partners. Supervisor Antonovich has put in \$10,000 for the project. Various partners have dedicated services. The Arroyo Seco Foundation is also a partner. Given such support, the Subcommittee will move forward with the pocket park construction at the corner of Old Marengo and Woodbury. The Subcommittee will work with LA County Public Works for donations of boulders from Rubio Canyon. Member Shackelford brought up fact that there is a problem property nearby with loiterers. Member Zack stated the park will be filled with low-laying shrubs and landscaping. The Subcommittee is working with the neighborhood to inspire ownership of the pocket park; will have a pocket park captain from the neighborhood.

12. Hillside Ordinance community group (Zack)

The community group chair, Patty Mulligan, has not responded lately and held any meetings. Member Zack will try to contact Ms. Mulligan again.

13. County General Plan Update (Hino)

No new announcements.

Other announcements:

JPL/NASA meeting was held on March 29, 2005. NASA has agreed to come to the Town Council to report on remediation on cleaning up the groundwater at JPL.

No further business being brought before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned to the scheduled regular meeting on Tuesday, August 2, 2005, at 7:00 P.M. at the Community Room of the Altadena Community Center.

Respectfully submitted,

Member Anthony Cheng
Communications & Recording Secretary