

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

**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

**February 7, 2012 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. Approximately 80-100 members of the public were in attendance.

**OPENING BUSINESS**

**1. Roll Call**

The following Members were present at roll call: Jamie Bissner, Anthony Cheng, Amy Cienfuegos, Doug Colliflower, Okorie Ezieme, Steve Haussler, John Klose, Brian League, Diane Marcussen, Brent Musson, Ken Roberts, Sandra Thomas, and Blake Whittington. 13 voting Members total were present constituting a quorum.

The following Committee members were absent: Tecumseh Shackelford. Sylvia Vega was excused from this meeting.

**2. Minutes Approval**

Motion to approve the December 2011 minutes was made by Member League, seconded by Member Bissner, and approved (12-0-1).

**3. Public Comment - none**

**ACTION ITEMS**

**4. 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.

This is the second in a two-part consideration of the CUP application continued from November 6, 2011.

- a) Summary of public comment by the chairman from November meeting.
- b) Statement by representative of Arroyo Pacific, Inc.
- c) Statement by representative of No School on Palm.
- d) Public comment opportunity for those who were unable to speak at the November meeting.

e) Discussion by Land Use Committee, followed by motion.

Chairman Goldschmidt gave a summary of the meeting proceedings to date. He provided a synopsis of the key points from both those supporting and opposing the project.

Mr Philip Clark, the President of the applicant, Arroyo Pacific, provided additional information. He stated that the County Planner informed him 234 letters of support were sent in, and 43 in opposition were submitted, resulting in only 18% of written communications were in opposition.

He also explained that the original traffic and noise study was conducted using a 250 student scenario. The new proposal limits the number of students to 200 students.

Mr Clark also summarized the conditions the applicant is willing to accept as part of the CUP. Enrollment would be limited to 80 students in the first year and 150 in the second year. Traffic would be monitored for the first three years to ensure that no traffic overflows onto Palm. All drop-offs and pickups would be on their property and not on Palm St. Departure and arrival times would be staggered to prevent traffic overflow onto the street.

The attorney for the applicant from Paul Hastings pointed out that there are lengthy additional conditions submitted in the packet provided to the Committee and that the applicant is willing to accept any of those conditions.

Nancy Rothwell (3100 N Raymond Ave) and Colleen Sterritt (3101 N Raymond) representing the No School on Palm organization made a statement. Ms Rothwell reiterated that they are opposed to the project. Even dropping the enrollment limit to 200 students would yield too much traffic on the immediate community. In addition, the bowl nature of the surrounding topography amplifies and reflects noise into the homes of the adjacent residents. Acknowledges that noise and traffic studies were submitted but pointed out that these studies were done on the Arcadia location which is flat, and the school is consolidated in one building. The Altadena site is unfortunately in a bowl shaped site in seven separate buildings requiring students to move between those buildings, and therefore causing noise, which would get amplified by the site topography.

Ms Rothwell stated that although Arroyo Pacific, its President, and its reputation are outstanding and that the school itself may do well in a place like Altadena, the problem lays in the exact location on Palm St, which is not conducive to any high school of this magnitude. That area is zoned for low density, single family housing and that the introduction of a new high school is not appropriate for this site.

Public comment was limited to those from the public that have not made public comments at the September, November or December meetings unless desiring to make add additional comments. There was significant yet equal turnout from both supporting and opposing members of the public.

**Public Comment:**

- A. Miguel Vidal. 3034 Ewing, Altadena. YES. Noted that there are other problems in the community such as buses parked in the community.
- B. Robert Lund. 260 E Pentagon. NO. Recently moved into this house with his wife. Would not have bought the house had they known a high school would be located there. The street is already too crowded.
- C. Debbie Maust. 1160 E Mariposa St. YES. Her children went to Altadena schools. Lives 7 houses down from the subject property. States that the community's home values have gone down due to the economy, not the school. A quality high school will improve property values. She is a volunteer at Arroyo Pacific. Project would benefit Altadena.
- D. Xochitl Bermejo. 1821 Bouett St, LA. YES. She is a teacher at Arroyo Pacific and the service club coordinator. She recently led a group of students to help clean up Eaton Canyon. Felt that Arroyo Pacific has great students that will help the community.
- E. Rick Hughes. 3821 Luna Ct. YES. Altadena resident. Stated that the school site is already in existence and that something will have to be done there. A hospice would entail frequent ambulance runs. Arroyo Pacific would be a huge improvement on the existing site.

Member Bissner stated he felt the site would not be appropriate for a hospice and that the community needs to understand that there are needs and actions that are not always perfect but that the community needs to accept them.

Member League has been a practicing urban planner for the past 20 years and has over 15 year of experience working for municipal city planning departments. He stated the additional traffic count that will be generated by the school may not be considered a significant impact under the state's general guidelines but for such a small street, it would definitely be felt by the community. There are certain sites that are a good fit for a school of this size, but given his experience as an urban planner, the subject property site is not appropriate for the proposed project. He does not think it is a compatible use for a small street such as Palm St. He stated that the Committee has always considered the opinion of the immediate neighbors as one of the most important factors in approving or denying a project and in this case, the immediate neighbors are overwhelmingly against the project.

Member Musson stated that there are other sites that are very suitable for the proposed school and that Palm St is not one of them. Although there are several buildings on the site that are conducive for such a school, the Committee must consider the impact on the community. He also reminded the Committee that a major factor in making a decision about the project is the feedback by the immediate neighbors. He is not convinced this site is appropriate for the proposed school.

Member Whittington thanked the applicant for the site visit of the property that was organized for the Committee members. He reviewed the traffic study and pointed out that the assumption is that each car will drop off students in roughly 50 seconds, moving into the property, around a drop off circle, and out of the property smoothly. However, given his own experience dropping off his kids, it will be very difficult to drop off students in just 50 seconds and assume the car queuing would be smooth.

Austin Richie from the applicant responded to Member Whittington's comments. The drop-off lane is seven cars long. There is room for 14 cars to queue, so that 21 cars total can fit in the drop off route. Members Whittington and Musson felt that a one minute drop off period is too short and the smooth egress of cars would rarely happen effectively. Using a single one-way route with no passing lane will inevitably lead to backups in the drop-off/pick-up route. Member Musson has experience with Blair High School, and traffic generated by a small, tight drop-off zone has always been a significant problem.

Mr Richie also addressed the increase of trips per day; there will be 620 additional trips if there is an enrollment of 250; the revised project will only have 200 maximum students so the trips generated will be less. Under Caltrans standards, Palm St can handle much more flow. Member Musson reminded the Committee that the Caltrans standards are a general average but that a school use will have significant peak times with much higher than average traffic.

Member Klose raised additional questions about the traffic study about flow assumptions. The applicant stated the one way nature of the drop-off lane and the use of only right turns to effectively only generate one way traffic on Palm and thereby minimizing traffic.

Member Marcussen stated that the package of the applicant contains endorsements such as from County Public Health that supports the project because it is within noise levels below those that may cause hearing loss. There is also a document from Public Works that states that all improvements shall be the responsibility of the owner. Should there be a problem with noise or traffic, it is up to the owner of the project to fix the problem. If the owner does not rectify the problem, onus is on the community to attempt enforcement and resolution. She reminded the Committee that being part of the County, problems are

fixed in a reactive fashion, and that it takes significant time to get any future problems solved. She raised concern as to who will enforce all of the conditions of the CUP.

Member Haussler, one of the census tract reps for the subject property, has lived 3 blocks from the site for 27 years. He hopes that Arroyo Pacific finds a home in Altadena, however feels this site is not appropriate for such a project. He remembers the prior school uses that never did fit well with the community, and as much as he would like to see Arroyo Pacific succeed in Altadena, Palm St is not the right place for it.

Member Ezieme is the other census tract rep for this area. He thanked the applicant for presenting the project to the Committee. However, it was clear from day one that the immediate neighbors were opposed to a school in their community, and that the general consensus of residents in that area are what is most important.

Given the above discussion, and on motion duly made by Member Ezieme, seconded by Member Whittington, and approved (8-5-0), 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.

## **5. Member Reports**

- A. Member Cheng explained that given his work commitments and increased travel schedule, he will be unable to adequately serve on the Committee, and announced his resignation. He thanked the Committee and the Community for allowing him to serve as the Secretary for seven years, and hoped that he can return soon.

There being no further business being brought before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned to the next scheduled regular meeting on Tuesday, March 6, 2012 at 7:00 P.M. in the Community Room of the Altadena Community Center.

Respectfully submitted,  
Member Anthony Cheng  
Communications & Correspondence Secretary