

PLANNING, ZONING AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
UNAPPROVED DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING APRIL 8, 2009

The regular monthly meeting was held on April 8, 2009, in the community room at 1965 Hillhurst Avenue pursuant to notice. Present from the committee were: Kenneth E. Owen, chair, Sorin Alexanian, Bruce Carroll, Rosemary DeMonte, Jacqueline Kerr, Richard Spicer, Richard Stanley and David Uebersax, Donna Kolb, co-chair of the Zoning Committee of the Los Feliz Improvement Association, and Douglas Mensman, of Councilmember LaBonge's office, were also present among a number of stakeholders. The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m.

1. The minutes of the meeting of the committee held March 9, 2009, were approved as circulated.
2. Public comment was received from Bernadette Soter, chair of GGPNC's PROS committee, and Tomas O'Grady, GGPNC's treasurer. Ms. Soter reported that the DWP's report to PROS regarding their proposed disruption of Griffith Park to allow the laying of replacement pipes through the park does not include restoration of curbs to be removed in the process with historically informed Park-Style curbs. She also reported on the installation of signs indicating the historic cultural monument status of the park. Mr. O'Grady urged frugality and suggested charging copying costs to stakeholders seeking review by the committee.
3. 2574 Glendower Avenue. Rafael O. Quezada, representing Chris Parsons, one of the owners of this home, presented the proposed addition to this Storybook Style home. No application for the adjustment required to permit the addition has been filed but the owners wish to inform the committee of their proposal and to seek guidance as to the committee's views. He stressed that the adjustment is to permit the addition of an approximately 750 square foot room at the base of the property. Because of the horizontal extension of the house at the base and down-sloping lot this will increase the height of the house, as computed by the zoning code, from the current 41 feet to somewhere between 47 and 49 feet. He provided drawings and oral assurances that the addition will not be visible from the street and there will be no alteration to the visual appearance of the house from the street. He presented copies of letters signed by the abutting landowners supporting the proposed addition. Frank Masi, a stakeholder, spoke in favor of the project. No member of the committee expressed any objection to the proposed addition.

The committee advised Mr. Quezada and Mr. Parsons, who was present, that it could not make a firm commitment of non-opposition without an application being on file and before it. However, the sense of the currently composed committee was non-opposition, particularly in light of the fact the house was a very important contributor to the community and would not be visually affected from public areas and the addition would likely preserve the house in the future by making the house more livable. Assuming the owner will now go forward with the filing of the application the committee will consider the matter at that time.

4. 2507-41 Nottingham Avenue. (Prior to the presentation the chair recused himself and did not participate in the proceedings. Mr. Carroll acted as chair.)

The proposed construction of a single story home above a garage on the upper portion of this lot was presented by the owner's representatives: Judi Hodge and Ivan Ivanov, both of H.I. Design, and Alex Meyerhoff. The construction is by right except that a number of retaining walls in excess of that permitted by right under the municipal code are required. It was represented that the owner relied on advice of a grading contractor that it was not necessary to have a grading permit so long as the grading was for an "exploratory road" to allow access for geologic work, which was the case here. The need for the discretionary permission to build a larger number of retaining walls than permitted by the code is that the site proposed for the house is the only portion of the lot which will support a house.

A number of stakeholders, mostly living nearby the site, were in attendance. Those speaking, all in opposition, were: Dale Reid, Noelle Gilbert, Leslie and Adam Small, Amelia Coveny, W. Herbert Young and Steve Kaiser. In addition, Marian Dodge, President of the Los Feliz Improvement Association stated her group's opposition to the proposed retaining walls. Letters from Dr. Haque and Laurie Smith were read and received. Also presented was a petition signed by property owners in the neighborhood opposing the project. Among the points raised in opposition were: (1) the owner illegally graded the lot, and based upon his experience, education and professional licensing it

is not believable that he did not do the grading with full knowledge that it was illegal; therefore he should not be accommodated by allowing an exception to the code; (2) the condition of the property is a danger to surrounding property and should be restored to its previous condition to the extent practical, (3) the proposal is a forerunner to seeking to build other houses on this lot, which would be inconsistent with the fragile nature of the terrain.

In response to the last point the owner's representatives said they thought the owner would be willing to commit in a recordable document to there never being any more structures being built on the lot and that it would not be subdivided. They were asked to confirm that with the owner.

Mr. Mensman reported: that Councilmember LaBonge would support donating the property to Griffith Park as suggested by a stakeholder, that while the property has been assigned 4 addresses it is one parcel and approval would be needed for any subdivision, and that if the zoning adjustment and or haul route approval were denied the City Attorney would handle the order to restore the property.

On motion by Mr. Stanley, and seconded by Ms. DeMonte, the committee by consensus agreed to recommend to the Board that it advise the Office of Zoning Administration that it opposes the grant of permission to build the proposed retaining walls. The committee suggested damage done by the illegal grading be repaired by the owner.

5. Proposed Sign Ordinance. Mr. Spicer reviewed with the committee the actions taken by the City Planning Commission on a proposed comprehensive sign ordinance since our last meeting. Some but not all of the points the GGPNC raised in its March 17 letter were addressed in the revised proposed ordinance. The committee agreed to make further comment on the proposed ordinance, this time to the City Council in the form of a community impact statement and possibly a more expansive letter taking the following positions:

1. The existing ban on new off-site signs should be extended until such time as the City Attorney can advise with reasonable certainty the authority of the City to regulate such signs after decisions in relevant pending cases involving the City. In the meantime the Planning Department should be asked to reach out to the neighborhood councils and other stakeholder groups to obtain advice and to continue its work on the pending proposal, reflecting such comments so as to be able to move promptly following the receipt of advice regarding the right of the City to regulate such signs.

2. The City ought not to establish any sign districts which have not already been fully authorized. Should however a comprehensive sign ordinance providing for sign districts be adopted (a) we support allowing for sign districts with limitations on signs more stringent than under the general ordinance as proposed and (b) we believe such districts should be regulated so that (i) new signs in such a district will be offset by the removal of an equal number of square feet or more of signs in the area abutting the sign district, (ii) provision shall be made that areas outside of the district will be protected from the effects of signs within the district and (iii) notice of a proposed sign district be broadly provided to areas adjacent to the proposed district with full opportunity for those outside the district but potentially affected by it to be heard.

3. GGPNC reassert the positions taken in GGPNC's letter of March 17.

6. Hillside Ordinance Revision. The Planning Department not having provided a member of its staff to advise on the issue, the matter was continued to the next meeting. An attempt to get cooperation from the Planning Department will be resumed.

6. Committee's budget. It was pointed out that we may need more funding if the Planning Department produces a draft Hollywood Community Plan during this fiscal year. The matter was deferred to the May meeting when we may have more information.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 p.m.