

**REPORT OF THE PLANNING, ZONING AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
COMMITTEE TO THE GREATER GRIFFITH PARK NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL  
BOARD (June 16, 2009 meeting).**

The PZHP Committee did not meet in May because it seemed the Board was likely to be fully occupied during its May meeting with discussion of several proposals to modify the By-laws and therefore would be unable to give substantive attention to any matter to be brought up by any committee. Such proved to be the case.

1. Home Restaurant Hearing.

On May 28 two members of the committee attended the hearing on the application of Home Restaurant to expand its authorized seating and extend its hours. They attended to support the position of the Board taken at its March 17, 2009, meeting to oppose such expansion and extension.

The committee members were met with an apparently unified assault on the GGPNC, both by the applicant, Home Restaurant, and by members of this Board. Very little time was spent by the applicant in showing why the requested expansion was justified or how it had addressed the problems which led to the denial of a similar request in 2007.

The applicant's representative asserted that an error in the Planning Department's notice of the 2007 hearing made the 2007 denial irrelevant and an error in the GGPNC's agenda notice rendered its opposition invalid.

The wife of the applicant said the GGPNC opposition was the result of anti-Armenian bias by the GGPNC.

Without advance notice to the committee, three members of the Board took positions contrary to that of the GGPNC.

According to the Home representative's comments to the Associate Zoning Administrator Tor Hyams sent an email either to Home or to its representative stating that he was chair of the GGPNC Transportation Committee, that he personally had inspected the Home premises and parking arrangements and that he found them to be consistent with parking requirements of the City of Los Angeles. Tor has been requested to provide the committee and the Board with a copy of this email, but has not done so.

Also according to the Home representative's presentation, Mark Mauceri, described by the representative as Secretary of the GGPNC, has written a letter personally opposing the position taken by the GGPNC. A copy of that letter was mailed to the chair of the PZHP committee the day before the hearing, but the letter was not received until after the hearing. In response to the president's email to the Associate Zoning Administrator, Mark has provided the Board with a copy. Another copy is attached for the Board's ready reference.

Tomas O'Grady appeared at the hearing and advised the Associate Zoning Administrator essentially as follows: He is the Treasurer of the GGPNC and an elected member of its Board; he voted to oppose the application but would not have done so if he had known then what he knows now and therefore "I hereby revoke the [note not: my] vote"; he counted only 60 seats on Monday, May 25; residents need to understand they live in a city, the city is crowded and noisy and will get more crowded and more noisy and the residents simply have to live with it; more density is desirable. Moreover, he advised the Associate Zoning Administrator that the GGPNC had acted "illegally" and had "broken the law," without stating in what manner it had done so. Although Tomas has been requested by a member of the committee to specify how the GGPNC has broken the law, he has not done so.

## 2. The Accusations Discussed.

### A. Adequacy of Notice.

It is true that the Planning Department sent out a notice to property owners within 500 feet of the Home Restaurant in advance of the 2007 hearing that used a description of the requested expansion which obviously referred to another site. However, a corrected notice was sent well before that hearing. Moreover, the letter the GGPNC sent in advance of the PZHP meeting in 2007 to the same group of stakeholders was correct, and no one who attended the PZHP meeting appeared confused. Furthermore, that issue was resolved by the Associate Zoning Administrator (and confirmed by the Central Area Planning Commission on appeal). The repetition of this claim at the 2009 hearing was disingenuous.

The Agenda Notice for the March 9, 2009 PZHP Committee meeting relating to Home was as follows:

**B. Home Restaurant, 1758-1760 Hillhurst Avenue** (ZA-2008-3701-CUB).\* Request to increase authorized seating from 60 to 96 and

lengthen the authorized hours from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. to 9 a.m. to midnight. (Request to increase seating to 112 and same hours as now requested, denied in 2007.)

(Note the asterisk. By clicking as indicated on the webpage version of the agenda anyone was able to read the application in full. This is greater disclosure than provided by the Planning Department.)

Home's representative has asserted that our agenda description was wrong. However, we believe that anyone with average reading ability would in good faith find this to be a fair summary of the action now requested and the recently requested and denied permission. The first sentence correctly describes the current request; the parenthetical informs the stakeholders that there was a prior, similar request denied in 2007.

#### B. Mauceri's Letter.

The letter mostly states the writer's subjective views: he was misled; he could not hear noise when he went onto a neighbor's property.

However, he states that one of the misrepresentations to him and the rest of the Board was the failure to advise that Home was allowed to use the parking area of the neighboring auto repair shop. No such permission has been granted as is clear from the attached copy of a letter from the owner of the auto repair shop immediately to the north of Home Restaurant.

Mark has apparently misunderstood the matter of noise as a basis for opposition, particularly to the extended closing time. It is in part the noise emanating from the patio area at night (and Hillhurst is a rather quiet street after 9 p.m.). But it is as much the noise of people, particularly those who have been drinking alcohol, going at midnight or later to their cars parked on the residential streets that disturbs the neighbors.

#### C. O'Grady's Statements.

The assertion that GGPNC acted "illegally" and "broke the law," all without explanation at the hearing or thereafter, speaks for itself.

His self-identification as Treasurer of GGPNC suggests that he was speaking on behalf of the GGPNC. Thus, his position regarding density, which flies in the face of our stakeholders' widely expressed views, is most troubling.

#### D. Assertion of Anti-Armenianism.

This is a particularly serious charge. Presumably, Mrs. Serobian made it knowing how offensive and hurtful it would be and did so only based upon some advice given to her. What was that and from whom did it come?

#### 3. The PZHP Committee's Response.

The committee was disturbed that its work has been treated so shabbily by a few members of the Board. The committee takes its mission seriously and does not simply sit around a table and casually make its recommendations to the Board. Every meeting goes for hours, giving applicants and other stakeholders a full opportunity to be heard. Each meeting requires many hours of preparation, dealing with applicants, their representatives, city personnel and stakeholders. Notices are frequently prepared to stakeholders likely to be affected by committee action, and they must be distributed.

While the Board is the final decider it is impractical for the Board to do its job regarding planning matters without an effective and conscientious committee. When the committee so acts and makes its recommendations to the Board and the Board adopts or modifies those recommendations, the committee, which must present the Board's position to the City, deserves respect.

Several members of the Board in this instance have not given the committee or the Board due respect; nor, have they shown normal courtesy in expressing personal opinions.

This is obviously a manifestation of a broader problem.

The committee recognizes this and does not view this as a particular attack on it. However, given the untenable nature of this behavior by certain members of the Board, the Committee has determined that it will not take on any new matters until the Board has taken effective action to cure the problem. The committee will however continue to pursue the matters already approved by the Board.

# Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council

*Your Neighborhood. Your Voice. Your Council.*



**Mark F. Mauceri**  
District Representative (E)

May 27, 2009

Patricia Brown  
Zoning Administrator  
Office of Zoning Administration  
200 North Spring Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Case ZA 2008-3701 (CUB)

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing regarding the above-mentioned case number for a conditional use permit application at 1758-60 Hillhurst Avenue.

On Tuesday March 17, 2009, the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC) considered this application and I voted to recommend opposition; this passed unanimously. Before voting, I directed questions regarding the particulars of the application to the Chair of our Planning, Zoning & Historical Preservation Committee, Mr. Kenneth E. Owen.

1. Regarding the extension of operating hours from 11:00 PM to Midnight, I asked why if other restaurants in our neighborhood were allowed to operate to midnight, should this one be put at a competitive disadvantage?
2. Regarding the seating expansion, I asked why if there weren't any building modifications being contemplated, was this an issue for a restaurant, which many times (especially on weekends) has a waiting line outside?

To item one, Mr. Owen advised the restaurant's patio area noise would be a disturbance to the "nearby neighbors" and to item two, the Board was informed it was a matter of parking availability in the vicinity—or lack thereof. As the right to reasonable peace and quiet for residents is always a priority, and the parking issues here are palpable, I voted to oppose.

Just prior to this writing, I now find Mr. Owen's previous statements fraught with key omissions. To the north of the location, there is an auto repair facility, which cedes additional parking spaces to the Applicant after business hours; to the south there is a single story retail store and parking lot. To the east there is a multiple dwelling unit buffeted by a nearly thirty-foot edifice (the restaurant's actual building). In the courtyard of this closest "nearby neighbor," I, personally, could not hear the din of the restaurant's lunchtime crowd, nor could I hear the

street noise from Hillhurst Avenue (a four-lane, 'secondary highway'); the street front directly to the west of the Applicant's premises.

The zoning application documents showing the site map, and other specifics were not provided to the Board at that time. Since, I have personally viewed said premises and noted these factors, and knowing what I know now, I would HAVE NOT voted to oppose this application, nor do I believe would some my other Council colleagues. In fairness, I thought it important this be made known, and I am at a loss as to why key specifics, clearly going to the foundation of the opposition, were omitted.

I am also aware a resident opposition mobilization effort was fomented regarding this issue, and against the Applicant's previous zoning requests. If so, I believe it's germane to your decision to ascertain how this mobilization was initiated and facilitated, as the GGPNC bylaws clearly state regarding stakeholder issues its policy is "To remain non-partisan..." (Article IV, 3) in order to be an objective advisory body to The City of Los Angeles.

I must also point out I am not writing on behalf of the GGPNC, but rather as an individual Board Member expressing my personal opinion after new information has been brought to my attention, thus reversing my previous opinion.

All best and thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M.F. Owen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

cc: Owen, K.  
File

# Ise Automotive Inc.

---

June 10, 2009

Ref: Case #ZA 2008-3701 (CUB)

To whom it may concern,

I received a call from one of my customers, who had attended a meeting on May 28, 2009. This person wanted to verify a statement made in the meeting regarding a "Conditional Use Permit" for Home Restaurant. During the reading of a letter, one sentence was in question. The sentence was, "To the north of the location, there is an auto repair facility, which cedes additional parking spaces to the Applicant after business hours." I would like to clarify that if the "auto repair facility" is referring to Ise Automotive, then this one sentence is incorrect.

The managers/owners of different restaurants on Hillhurst have approached me regarding parking. My response was always, "I do not want any cars parked on my lot NOR blocking my driveways during non-business hours." There are times, when I can't get in to my own lot during non-business hours, because my driveways are blocked by patrons of some of the local businesses. That's one of the reasons why I have signs posted, 'cars will be towed away if parked illegally.' It doesn't work, they ignore the signs and continue to block during business and non-business hours.

I want to clarify that Ise Automotive does NOT authorize any business to use the lot as parking spaces. Nor does anyone have any authorization to represent Ise Automotive, other than Gary Kuromi or myself.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 323-663-8013.

Sincerely,

Craig Kuromi

Vice-President / Owner

- via email account cobra\_shelby@yahoo.com

cc: Patricia Brown (via email: pat.brown@lacity.org)

- Office of Zoning and Administration

Kenneth Owen (via email: kenowen@ggpnc.org)

- GGPNC

*Same location since 1947*

1774 Hillhurst Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90027  
Phone: 323.663.8013