

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:01 p.m. on Wednesday, June 1, 2011 in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Gibson.

3. ROLL CALL/ MOTIONS FOR EXCUSED ABSENCE

Present: Commissioners Gibson, Polcari, Rizzo, Skoll, Uchima, Weideman and Chairperson Horwich.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Sr. Planning Associate Santana, Planning Associate Gomez, Plans Examiner Noh, Associate Civil Engineer Symons, and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to grant Commissioner Polcari an excused absence for the June 15, 2011 Planning Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous voice vote.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Sr. Planning Associate Santana reported that the agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Boulevard on Friday, May 27, 2011.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None.

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS – None.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1 – None.

Chairman Horwich reviewed the policies and procedures of the Planning Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to the City Council.

8. TIME EXTENSIONS – None.

9. CONTINUED HEARINGS

9A. MOD11-00004: FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF TORRANCE

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Modification of a previously approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP76-38) to allow the construction of a columbarium and memorial garden in conjunction with an existing church and school on property located in the R-2 Zone at 2900 Carson Street.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Associate Gomez introduced the request and noted supplemental material available at the meeting consisting of correspondence received after the agenda item was completed.

Dr. William Hurst, senior pastor of First Evangelical Lutheran Church, reported that the proposed Garden of Saints columbarium will provide for a peaceful and dignified repose for church members, as well as members of the community. He noted that the garden will feature plants native to the holy land.

Commissioner Skoll asked about the results of the informational meeting held by the church on April 27. Dr. Hurst reported that only one resident attended the meeting, a member of the HOA board of the residential complex to the west, and she left with a positive view of the project after being reassured that it would not impact traffic or parking and that no mortuary or crematorium was planned for the site.

Commissioner Skoll noted the letter of objection from Mr. and Mrs. Crawford dated May 15, 2011 (agenda material). Dr. Hurst explained that the Crawfords are long-time residents and their objections were related to the fact that this is no longer the quiet neighborhood they moved into in the 1960s.

Commissioner Skoll stated that his only remaining concern was the possibility of setting some kind of precedent because this would be the first columbarium in Torrance.

In response to Commissioner Gibson's inquiry about the on-site school, Dr. Hurst reported that approximately 150 children attend the early education center (6 weeks – 4 years of age) and 400 children attend the elementary school (pre-kindergarten through the 8th grade).

Commissioner Gibson questioned whether the children might find the columbarium to be scary. Dr. Hurst explained that the columbarium is on the other side of the campus and will look like an attractive garden as opposed to a cemetery. He reported there have been no negative comments from the over 400 families who are involved in the church and parents are pleased at the prospect of having a biblical garden.

Commissioner Weideman asked about provisions for perpetual care and maintenance of the columbarium. Dr. Hurst stated that the congregation understands that they are making a commitment to properly maintain the garden/columbarium into perpetuity and they take this responsibility very seriously. He reported that there will be a dedicated fund in the form of a trust to provide for the annual maintenance of the garden, which is estimated to cost approximately \$2,500 per year, noting that the sale of a single niche would cover this expense.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by unanimous voice vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Uchima moved to approve MOD11-00004, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Commissioner Weideman commented that while this will be the first columbarium in Torrance, he did not view this decision as precedent setting because he judges each case on its own merits.

Planning Associate Gomez read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-028.

MOTION: Commissioner Uchima moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-028. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

10. **WAIVERS** – None.

11. **FORMAL HEARINGS**

11A. **CUP11-00012: UFC GYM (KIR TORRANCE, LLC)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit to allow the operation of an indoor recreation center/fitness facility within the existing commercial space on property located in the H-PR Zone at 18900 Hawthorne Boulevard.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Associate Gomez introduced the request.

Christopher Wadleigh, representing UFC Gym, applicant, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He provided background information about the UFC Gym, explaining that it offers unique training regimens based on techniques used by the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) for people of all ages. He noted that the gym currently has locations in Corona and Rosemead and letters of support from the mayors of these cities were included in the agenda material. He explained that the gym has requested 24-hour operation because a lot of members are shift workers, noting that the gym offers discount packages to police and fire personnel. He emphasized that the gym does not allow any type of fighting to take place on the premises.

Commissioner Skoll noted that the material submitted by the applicant mentions that on-site security guards are provided “if needed.”

Mr. Wadleigh explained that security guards have not been needed at the other locations, but they are willing to provide them if Commissioners feel this is necessary.

Commissioner Skoll deferred to Commissioner Rizzo on this issue due to his background in law enforcement. Commissioner Rizzo stated that he did not believe

security guards were necessary because the applicant is removing exterior walls and replacing them with glass, which provides drive-by visibility for police, and this combined with other security measures should be adequate unless there are special events, which require crowd control.

In response to Commissioner Weideman's inquiry, Mr. Wadleigh confirmed that surveillance cameras would be installed for the entrance, lobby, retail and office areas as required by Condition No. 12.

Commissioner Weideman expressed his preference that cameras include a parking lot view, and Mr. Wadleigh agreed to this.

In response to Commissioner Gibson's inquiry, Mr. Wadleigh reported that the gym's involvement with UFC is limited to training techniques and the gym has zero tolerance for any type of fighting.

Commissioner Gibson expressed concerns about allowing the gym to operate 24 hours a day, noting that an In-N-Out Burger has already been approved for this shopping center.

Mr. Wadleigh stated that midnight to 5:00 a.m. is not a busy time for the gym, but it does provide an opportunity for people who would otherwise not be able to work out. He reported that a lot of police and fire personnel work out during this time period and being open 24 hours at other locations has not created any problems as evidenced by the letters from the two mayors.

In response to Commissioner Gibson's inquiry, Mr. Wadleigh reported that shakes and smoothies will be offered at the cafe, but not highly caffeinated energy drinks like Red Bull, noting that personalized nutritional supplements will also be offered.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Mr. Wadleigh reported that childcare is offered for children 6 months and older, which includes activities to stimulate them and get them in shape, and that memberships range from \$40-100 per month and this includes some form of training, either individually or in classes.

Commissioner Uchima asked about the purpose of the octagon and the bag room. Mr. Wadleigh explained that training classes will be held inside the octagon, which is designed to look like the UFC boxing ring, however, there will be no physical contact. He reported that the bag room will also contain other equipment, including monkey bars, and will be used for various training classes, including kick boxing.

A nearby resident (name inaudible/no speaker card) questioned whether the gym will use an existing building or construct a new one on this site and expressed concerns about being impacted by parking lot lighting due to the gym's 24-hour operation.

Sr. Planning Associate Santana advised that the gym will be located within the former "Linens and Things" building and will utilize the existing parking lot lighting.

Bill Brown, representing Kimco Realty, the owner of the shopping center, reported that parking lot lighting is already on from dusk to dawn so no changes will be needed and noted that the center's security management team will be working with the

applicant to ensure that there is adequate security. He explained that it is becoming more common for businesses with extended hours to locate in shopping centers due to the lack of demand for retail space; that the building in question has been vacant for 2-3 years; and that he's very enthusiastic about the UFC Gym and believes it will be complementary to nearby retail uses. He related his belief that the City's parking requirement (1 space per 100 square feet) was excessive and expressed confidence that there was more than enough parking at the center to accommodate the gym.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by unanimous voice vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to approve CUP11-00012, as conditioned, including all findings of fact, modifying Condition No. 12 to add that surveillance cameras shall include a parking lot view. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll, and discussion briefly continued.

Chairperson Horwich stated that he had reservations about approving a project that does not meet Code requirements for parking and he hoped that staff's assessment of the parking situation was correct.

Commissioner Uchima asked if there were other gyms in Torrance that operate 24 hours a day and if there have been any problems associated with them.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan reported that there are other gyms in Torrance that are open 24 hours a day and there have been no crimes associated with them, although gym-goers have had their vehicles broken into because thieves know that they will likely be in the gym for at least an hour and the Police Department has addressed this by enhanced patrols.

In response to Commissioner Uchima's inquiry, Assistant City Attorney Sullivan confirmed that it was within the Commission's purview to reconsider the Conditional Use Permit should any problems develop that are associated with the gym's operation.

Chairperson Horwich called for the vote and the motion passed by a 6-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Gibson dissenting.

Planning Associate Gomez read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-032.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-032 as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by a 6-1 roll call vote, with Commissioner Gibson dissenting.

11B. CUP11-00008, DVP11-00003, WAV11-00006: SOUTHBAY MOTORS, INC. (F&F MAHJOOR LIVING TRUST)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Conditional Use Permit and Development Permit to allow the construction and operation of a new car dealership with service and repair in conjunction with a Waiver to allow a reduction of the landscape setback requirement on property located in the H-PR Zone at 20460 Hawthorne Boulevard.

Recommendation: Approval.

Commissioner Gibson announced that she was recusing herself from consideration of this item and exited the dais.

Planning Associate Gomez introduced the request and noted supplemental material consisting of correspondence received after the agenda item was completed.

Jeff LaPlant, representing Southbay Motors, applicant, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval. He reported that the company currently operates an Audi dealership 50 yards away, which will be relocated to this site so operations can be expanded and then a smaller franchise will take over the existing dealership.

Commissioner Skoll asked if “green” building elements will be incorporated into the project. Mr. LaPlant reported that the new dealership will be LEED certified and in addition, the auto group has a staff person who advises on “green” practices with regard to the use of chemicals, paper products, etc.

Referring to the letter from Karl Walther who lives on Sara Drive (supplemental material), Commissioner Weideman questioned whether the dealership has submitted a test drive route for approval and Mr. LaPlant reported that the dealership will continue to use the current test drive route, which is on file with the City.

Commissioner Weideman asked about efforts to discourage employees from parking on nearby residential streets. Mr. LaPlant reported that the dealership has leased property across the street for employee parking; that the need to be a good neighbor is emphasized at weekly staff meetings; and that he personally patrols the streets each day on the way into work. He explained that in order to mitigate the traffic impact, vehicles are unloaded and stored at a site near the 405 freeway and they are only brought to the dealership when they’re ready to be sold. He noted that the company also owns the Porsche dealership on Pacific Coast Highway and related his understanding that there have been no complaints from neighbors about this dealership.

Commissioner Weideman encouraged Mr. LaPlant to continue to monitor the parking situation since it is a sensitive issue in this neighborhood.

Commissioner Uchima noted that Mr. Walther’s letter also expresses concerns about noise from the PA system and repair bays. Mr. LaPlant stated that there will be no PA system and in order to mitigate noise, repair bays will face Hawthorne Boulevard, sound-deadening materials will be used in their construction, and they will be completely enclosed with roll up doors and equipped with air conditioning. He reported that there have been no issues with noise at their other auto dealerships even when completely surrounded by residential uses.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous voice vote (absent Commissioner Gibson).

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to approve CUP11-00008, DVP11-00003 and WAV11-00006, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The

motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Gibson).

Planning Associate Gomez read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 11-033, 11-034 and 11-035.

MOTION: Commissioner Skoll moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution Nos. 11-033, 11-034 and 11-035. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote (absent Commissioner Gibson).

The Commission recessed at 8:00 p.m. and reconvened at 8:10 p.m. with all members present.

11C. PRE11-00008: JEFFERY DAHL (BILL HAGELSTEIN)

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow first and second-story additions to an existing single-family residence on property located within the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5447 Linda Drive.

Recommendation: Approval.

Planning Associate Gomez introduced the request.

Jeffery Dahl, project architect, voiced his agreement with the recommended conditions of approval and briefly described the proposed project. He noted that he shared the plans with neighbors on either side of the subject property and they are very supportive of the project.

Commissioner Weideman commended Mr. Dahl for designing a project that complies with the Hillside Ordinance and for sharing the plans with neighbors.

MOTION: Commissioner Polcari moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rizzo and passed by unanimous voice vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to approve PRE11-00008, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Polcari and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Associate Gomez read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-036.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 11-036. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Skoll and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

12. RESOLUTIONS – None.

13. PUBLIC WORKSHOP ITEMS – None.

14. MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS – None.

15. **REVIEW OF CITY COUNCIL ACTION ON PLANNING MATTERS** – None.

16. **LIST OF TENTATIVE PLANNING COMMISSION CASES**

Sr. Planning Associate Santana reviewed the agenda for the June 15, 2011 Planning Commission meeting.

17. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2**

17A. Commissioner Polcari thanked the Commission for granting him an excused absence for the next meeting, noting that he will be attending his daughter's high school graduation.

17B. In response to Commissioner Weideman's inquiry, Sr. Planning Associate Santana advised that neither special events held on school property, nor signs on school property require a permit from the City.

17C. Commissioner Skoll reported on his attendance at the ExxonMobil Community Advisory Panel meeting on May 18, noting that topics of discussion included the price of gasoline and the company's remediation of 10 properties on Del Amo Boulevard.

18. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:20 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, June 15, 2011 at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Submitted July 6, 2011 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
