

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:02 p.m. on Wednesday, October 6, 2010 in City Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Planning Manager Lodan.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Browning, Busch, Gibson, Skoll, Uchima, Weideman and Chairperson Horwich.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Planning Manager Lodan, Planning Associate Martinez, Plans Examiner Noh, Associate Civil Engineer Symons, Fire Marshal Kazandjian and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan.

4. POSTING OF THE AGENDA

Planning Manager Lodan reported that the agenda was posted on the Public Notice Board at 3031 Torrance Boulevard on Thursday, October 1, 2010.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None.

6. REQUESTS FOR POSTPONEMENTS – None.

7. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1 – None.

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Chairperson 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. CUP09-00023, GPA09-00001, TTM71250 (EAS09-00005): DAVID BOYD (OLD TOWN REDLANDS, LLC/DOROTHY CAKE FAMILY TRUST)

Planning Commission consideration for the adoption of a Negative Declaration, the approval of a Conditional use Permit to construct a self-storage building with underground parking and interim RV storage in conjunction with a Tentative Tract Map to create five lots to match existing parcel usage and a General Plan Amendment to reconcile a proposed new lot to match existing zoning on property located in the ML-C4 Zone at 20525 Hawthorne Boulevard.

Recommendation: Denial without prejudice.

Planning Associate Martinez introduced the request.

David Boyd, project architect, reported that the applicant considered several options for this site, including medium density housing, a business park and a commercial development, but determined that the proposed self-storage facility was the most viable because it would generate very little traffic and it would have the least impact on the adjacent mobile home park. He explained that the project will feature an attractive Spanish-style façade and landscaped buffers and while the proposed FAR (floor area ratio) of 1.2 exceeds the 0.60 maximum allowed under the Business Park designation, it is consistent with other storage facilities in Torrance. He noted that in conjunction with the project, the applicant will construct curbs, gutters and sidewalks along the project's frontage and dedicate a five-foot strip of land for street improvements. He reported that the applicant held a community meeting to inform residents of the mobile home park about the project and those who attended were very much in favor of it. He voiced his opinion that the project will benefit the community by cleaning up an underutilized, blighted property and providing much needed storage space.

In response to Commissioner Busch's inquiry, Mr. Boyd reported that the property has been owned by the Cake family since the 1960's and Old Town Redlands, LLC intends to keep the property after it has been developed.

Commissioner Busch noted that the City will benefit from increased property taxes should the project be approved.

Chairperson Horwich recommended that the Commission first address the Environmental Assessment before proceeding with the discussion of the project itself.

Referring to Initial Study EAS09-00005 (agenda material), Commissioner Busch noted his agreement with staff's conclusion that the project would not have a significant effect on the environment.

Commissioner Skoll noted that the Initial Study mentions that the proposed General Plan Amendment, which would change the Land Use Designation of Parcel 1 from Low-Medium Residential to Business Park, means that land that could have potentially accommodated 15 residential units will be converted to business use. He questioned whether there are other areas of the City that could make up for this deficiency.

Planning Manager Lodan advised that staff was fairly confident that there are other areas of the City that could accommodate these units, but it was ultimately up to the Commission to decide whether the General Plan Amendment was warranted.

Commissioner Gibson requested clarification regarding the interim RV storage.

Mr. Boyd explained that the applicant was proposing to use the site for RV storage while working drawings are completed and the site is prepared for construction; that this will take approximately 1-2 years; and that the applicant was amenable to a sunset clause for the RV storage.

Commissioner Gibson asked staff to recommend a time period for the sunset clause, and Planning Manager Lodan stated that he thought two years was a reasonable amount of time to allow for site preparation.

In response to Commissioner Browning's inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan confirmed that the Environmental Assessment could only be used for this project or a substantially similar project.

Commissioner Weideman stated that he was in favor of adopting a Negative Declaration, but felt it was important to recognize that this project will be eliminating a parcel that could contribute to the City's housing stock.

Commissioner Busch commented that he did not believe the fact that the current land use designation allows for housing was a reason to reject the project and doubted that a residential development was economically viable at this time.

MOTION: Commissioner Browning moved to adopt a Negative Declaration. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Busch, and the motion passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Commissioner Busch asked about the reason for staff's recommendation that the project be denied. Planning Manager Lodan explained that staff typically recommends denial when a project exceeds the maximum FAR.

Noting that the applicant has provided a list of five other self-storage facilities with an FAR that exceeds 0.60, Commissioner Busch asked if staff had also recommended denial for them.

Planning Manager Lodan recalled that staff had recommended approval of the Magellan Storage project (1.03 FAR) because it involved an existing vacant building.

Commissioner Busch stated that he considers this property to be an eyesore and questioned whether anyone else has proposed to develop it. Planning Manager Lodan stated that he was not aware of any other proposal.

Commissioner Skoll noted that there are several self-storage facilities in Torrance and questioned how the applicant plans to be competitive.

Assistant City Attorney Sullivan recommended that Commissioners focus on land use issues because the financial viability of a project was not within the Commission's purview.

In response to Commissioner Skoll's inquiry, Mr. Boyd confirmed that access for the mobile home park will be maintained. He reported that the impact on the mobile home park would be minimal and the project would actually improve the park by adding a new wall, sidewalks and gutters.

Associate Civil Engineer Symons noted that a reciprocal cross access agreement will be required in conjunction with the project.

Commissioner Skoll requested clarification of Condition No. 6, which prohibits the use of chain link fencing and razor/barb wire caps. Planning Manager Lodan explained that the Torrance Municipal Code prohibits razor/barb wire caps and staff discourages the use of chain link fencing for aesthetic reasons.

In response to Chairperson Horwich's inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan reported that the project's FAR would be 1.8 if the basement parking was included.

Keith Hagaman, De Longpre Holdings, an owner of the project, explained that they have been working on this project for over two years as it was delayed by the City's General Plan update; that they were informed by staff that a residential project probably would not be approved for this site; and that they need to exceed the maximum FAR in order to make the project financially viable. He pointed out that a storage facility is a very low impact use, as opposed to a residential or commercial development, which generates considerably more traffic.

Commissioner Browning asked about security measures, and Mr. Hagaman reported that entry/exits will be alarmed and will have motion-activated surveillance cameras.

Commissioner Weideman noted that the storage facility's hours of operation were not listed in the staff report.

Mr. Hagaman stated that he would prefer to be allowed to operate 24 hours a day, but would agree to shorter hours if this was not acceptable to the Commission.

Commissioner Gibson expressed concerns that residents of the mobile home park might be negatively impacted by a 24-hour operation.

Mr. Boyd reported that this topic did not come up at the meeting with the mobile home park residents.

Commissioner Skoll doubted that residents would be affected due to the distance between the two properties and commended the applicant for meeting with them to explain the project.

Ron Chan, 20816 Mansel Avenue, asked if any mobile home park residents would be displaced by the project and whether there was a demand for more self-storage space since there are several such facilities in the area.

Commissioner Uchima explained that the facility will be built on a vacant portion of the parcel so no residents will be displaced.

Chairperson Horwich advised that whether or not there is a demand for a business was not within the Commission's purview and indicated that he personally was not in favor of limiting competition.

MOTION: Commissioner Gibson moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Weideman and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the self-storage facility's hours of operation, and it was the consensus of the Commission not to restrict the hours of operation because the facility was designed to minimize the impact on nearby residents and Commissioners did not want to place this business at a disadvantage since other storage facilities in Torrance are allowed to operate 24 hours a day.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved for the approval of CUP09-00023 and TTM71250, including the 21 recommended conditions listed on pages 14-15 of the staff report and adding the following condition:

No. 22: That the interim RV storage operation shall be limited to a period of 24 months from the completion of public improvements.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to recommend that the City Council approve GPA09-00001. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Manager Lodan noted that Resolutions reflecting the Commission's action would be brought back for approval at the next meeting.

The Commissioner recessed from 8:15 p.m. to 8:27 p.m.

10. **WAIVERS** – None.

11. **FORMAL HEARINGS**

11A. **PRE10-00007: RTA ARCHITECTURE (DAVID JULIFS)**

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Precise Plan of Development to allow first and second story additions to an existing one-story, single-family residence on property located within the Hillside Overlay District in the R-1 Zone at 5630 Sara Drive.

Recommendation: Approval

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

Robert Treman, RTA Architecture, project architect, briefly described the proposed project. He noted that the second story was positioned in the middle of the house to minimize the intrusion on neighbors; that the project exceeds all setback requirements; and that the height of the project and the FAR are well under the maximum allowed. He reported that the applicant invited neighbors to an informal open house to view the plans and the neighbors who attended had no objections to the project, however, the neighbor at 5619 White Court subsequently expressed concerns about privacy impact and the applicant has agreed to modify windows as shown in the new drawing submitted for the record. Referring to Condition No. 7 (Requiring that east-

facing windows in bedrooms #3 and 4 be replaced with clerestory windows with a sill height of 5 feet), he clarified that the windows in question are south-facing, not east-facing and that the neighbor has agreed to a sill height of 4'8" instead of 5 feet.

Commissioner Busch commended the applicant for providing a detailed report listing each neighbor who had been contacted and what was discussed.

In response to Commissioner Browning's inquiry, Plans Examiner Noh confirmed that egress requirements would still be met if the sill heights of the bedroom windows were raised as required by Condition No. 7.

Vivian Sanner, owner of 20424 Cheryl Drive, reported that the proposed project would obstruct approximately 35% of the view from a bedroom window, submitting colored photographs to illustrate.

In response to Commissioner Busch's inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan reported that staff visited 20424 Cheryl Drive and concluded that the view from this bedroom is already obscured by existing trees in the area.

Marjorie Vilhauer, 5619 White Court, reported that she requested that windows be modified because she was concerned that the project would invade the privacy of her pool area and backyard. She confirmed that the revisions shown in the new drawing submitted by Mr. Treman would resolve her concerns.

Returning to the podium, Mr. Treman wanted to make clear that it is the south-facing windows in Bedroom #3 that are being modified and the new drawing shows the exact revisions the Vilhauers have agreed to. He indicated that he was aware of Ms. Sanner's concern about view impact, but did not feel the impact was significant since the primary view from this property is to the east.

MOTION: Commissioner Browning moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

MOTION: Commissioner Browning moved to approve PRE10-00007, as conditioned, including all findings of fact set forth by staff, with the following modification:

- No. 7 That the windows in Bedroom #3 shall be modified to reflect the drawing submitted by the applicant at this meeting and they shall have a sill height of 4'8" to the satisfaction of the Community Development Director.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

Planning Associate Martinez read aloud the number and title of Planning Commission Resolution No. 10-058.

MOTION: Commissioner Browning moved to adopt Planning Commission Resolution No. 10-058 as amended. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Uchima and passed by unanimous roll call vote.

11B. MOD10-00008: ROBERT SADEGHI

Planning Commission consideration for approval of a Modification of previously approved Conditional Use Permit (CUP68-32) and Precise Plan of Development (PRE05-00047) to allow the addition of a drive-thru carwash on property located in the C3-PP Zone at 5404 190th Street.

Recommendation: Denial without prejudice.

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

Robert Sadeghi, owner of West Torrance Union 76, 5404 190th Street, reported that the project has been through several design changes and expressed confidence that the few remaining concerns could be addressed. He explained that the proposed carwash is the quietest, most efficient and environmentally friendly carwash on the market and he was proposing to install roll-up doors to further reduce noise during operation. He noted that there has been a significant reduction in noise coming from the gas station since the auto repair shop was closed a few years ago.

Mr. Sadeghi contended that traffic would not be significantly increased by the carwash because it will draw mainly from existing customers and the volume is expected to be only 2-3 cars per hour. He explained that newer carwashes do not generate long lines of customers since they are more expensive at \$6.00 – \$11.00 per wash and it takes much longer for a carwash to be completed so people are unlikely to wait if there are more than a couple of cars in line. He stated that staff has expressed concerns that carwash traffic will conflict with parking, but customers usually park in the fueling stations or near the food mart rather than in back behind the building. He reported that the gas station has been at this location since 1969 and stressed the need to continue to upgrade in order to provide the services customers want.

In response to Commissioner Busch's inquiry, Mr. Sadeghi expressed his willingness to comply with recommendations in the staff report, including relocating the self-serve vacuums and providing additional landscaping. He clarified that the current hours of operation for the gas station are 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and while he would prefer longer hours, he would agree to limit the carwash to the hours recommended by staff.

Commissioner Busch noted that the staff report mentions past noise complaints from nearby residents concerning televisions located next to the pumps and has recommended that their use be limited to 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday, with no use on Sundays or legal holidays.

Mr. Sadeghi explained that the televisions were remaining on after the service station had closed, which resulted in complaints from nearby residents, and the problem has since been corrected. He stated that he was not sure the outside contractor who supplies the TVs would agree to have them turned off on Sundays and legal holidays. He reported that he has had a noise study prepared, which he would be glad to share with the Commission.

Planning Manager Lodan advised that the recommended hours for the use of the TVs were derived from the Torrance Municipal Code concerning the outdoor use of amplified sound.

In response to Commissioner Browning's inquiry, Mr. Sadeghi confirmed that his service station provides air and water free of charge as required by State regulations.

Commissioner Browning requested clarification of concerns about on-site circulation. Planning Manager Lodan explained that staff was concerned about traffic flow to the rear of the building due the stacking of cars waiting to use the carwash; that they were also concerned that cars exiting the carwash would conflict with cars entering via the 190th Street driveway; and that staff felt the only way this could be mitigated would be to close the driveway. He reported that as many as 15 different scenarios were considered for this site and staff felt this proposal was the best since the applicant did not want to close the driveway.

Mr. Sadeghi related his belief that the carwash would not cause any problems since only 2-3 customers are expected per hour and there would be at least 5-7 minutes between cars exiting the carwash.

Commissioner Browning questioned whether customers would need to wipe cars down after the carwash, and Mr. Sadeghi explained that cars will be completely dry when they emerge from the carwash due to state-of-the art equipment.

Commissioner Gibson stated that she had grave concerns about adding anything else to this already busy corner and she felt the fact that the project had undergone so many revisions was evidence that there was no viable solution.

Sean Nourani, AP & E Architects, project architect, recalled that only 7 or 8 different designs were considered and the main problem was the parking layout and not the carwash itself.

Commissioner Gibson voiced her opinion that even 7 revisions were indicative of a problem.

Richard Welter, 5410 190th Street, representing Woodlake Apartments, submitted information packets, which were distributed to Commissioners. He voiced objections to the project, citing the impact on tenants who would be living only about 15 feet away from the carwash. He noted that the acoustical study will not address loud music from car radios while customers are waiting for the carwash or vacuuming out their vehicles. He expressed concerns that the increased profits the service station will enjoy due to the carwash will come at the expense of the apartments since the added noise will drive tenants away. He also expressed concerns about the applicant's plan to install additional neon lighting, which could spillover into residences. He reported that the applicant made no attempt to inform nearby residents about this proposal and noted that three tenants who oppose the project were present at the hearing but did not wish to speak. He related his belief that the project would create long-term problems and that it was incompatible with the neighborhood.

Commissioner Busch questioned whether the apartments were built before the gas station, and Mr. Welter related his understanding that the apartments were built in the mid 1960s. Planning Manager Lodan reported the original CUP for the gas station was issued in 1968.

In response to Commissioner Busch's inquiry, Mr. Welter clarified that he works for Don Wilson Builders.

Mr. Srini, resident of Woodlake Apartments, reported on traffic accidents that have occurred at this intersection and related his belief that there is not enough space on this site to accommodate a carwash.

Michelle Rosenberg, representing Patio Creek Homeowners Association, expressed concerns that the project would adversely impact residents due to the increase in noise levels and added traffic on Entradero. She noted that most people don't know who to contact to lodge complaints about noise so by the time the City hears about a problem it likely has been going on for a long time.

Dawn Villarreal, manager of Woodlake Apartments, voiced objections to the project, contending that tenants would be subjected to loud radios, screaming and yelling, and foul language making adjacent apartments impossible to rent. She stated that she did not see how a carwash could possibly fit on this site and expressed concerns that the added traffic would endanger children walking to/from nearby schools.

Returning to the podium, Mr. Sadeghi reiterated his position that the carwash would have little impact on the surrounding neighborhood. He stated that letters were sent out to nearby property owners notifying them of the project and disputed the claim that the Woodlake Apartments would be only 15 feet away from the carwash, estimating that it was closer to 25 feet. He contended that the carwash would actually be quieter than the air/water dispenser and propane tank which are currently located closer to the property line. He offered his assurance that the new lighting will be designed so that it does not bother neighbors. He related his understanding that the Woodlake Apartments were constructed in 1972 after the gas station was built.

Commissioner Browning stated that he was having a hard time supporting the project since by Mr. Sadeghi's own admission residents are already subjected to noise from the air/water dispenser and propane tanks and the carwash and self-serve vacuum would only add to the problem. He also expressed concerns about the project's impact on traffic.

Commissioner Busch questioned whether the Commission should allow Mr. Sadeghi an opportunity to present the noise study since he has offered to do so.

Planning Manager Lodan recommended, if the Commission wished to consider the noise study, that the hearing be continued so that the appropriate staff could evaluate study and prepare a response, which would then be distributed to Commissioners prior to the meeting, so they would have time to digest the information. He noted that a continuance would also allow time for the applicant to meet with neighbors to try to resolve their concerns.

Mr. Sadeghi requested a continuance.

Commissioner Weideman stated that he had no doubt that the noise study would substantiate Mr. Sadeghi's claims about the carwash, however his main concern about the project was the internal circulation. He indicated that he was particularly concerned about having all the parking along the south end of the property near the entrance to the carwash and would not support the project as proposed.

MOTION: Commissioner Weideman moved to continue the hearing to November 3, 2010. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gibson 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**

Planning Manager Lodan reviewed the agenda for the October 20, 2010 Planning Commission meeting.

17. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2**

17A. In response to Commissioner Skoll's inquiry, Planning Manager Lodan reported that In-N-Out Burger has not filed an application for another location in Torrance and that building permits for the new Walmart will be issued shortly and construction is expected to take 4-6 months.

17B. Commissioner Busch thanked Planning Manager Lodan and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan for doing an excellent job.

17C. Chairperson Horwich reported that he and Commissioner Skoll recently attended an informational meeting for chairs/vice chairs of commissions that was very enlightening and offered to share the handbook that was passed out at the meeting.

17D. Commissioner Busch related his understanding that commissioners are required to attend ethics training and Assistant City Attorney Sullivan agreed to provide additional information regarding scheduling.

17E. Chairperson Horwich stated that he has attempted to run Commission meetings in an informal manner, but felt that they would run more smoothly if in the future, Commissioners would request permission from the Chair before speaking.

18. **ADJOURNMENT**

At 10:27 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to Wednesday, October 20, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Submitted November 3, 2010 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
