

Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations
Minutes
July 6, 2011

I. Call to Order

President Marian Dodge called the meeting to order at 7:05. Members introduced themselves.

Guest Speaker: Retaining Wall Ordinance - David Olivo

David Olivo of the City Planning Department and intern Nicole Sanchez are creating a draft ordinance for retaining walls. It will dovetail with the Baseline Hillside Ordinance. They are currently gathering input from the public.

There are several issues with the current 2005 Retaining Wall Ordinance. The definition of a retaining wall is unclear and open to interpretation. The number of retaining walls allowed (2) is restrictive and encourages excessive grading. The maximum length of retaining walls is not defined resulting in walls 1,000 + feet long. The horizontal distance between retaining walls (3 feet) does not allow for appropriate landscaping.

Members gave numerous examples of inappropriate retaining walls; you should send pictures to David.

David gave examples of codes in other jurisdictions which have slightly different definitions and restrictions. The city is evaluating all to see which concepts work well in LA. A few cities include aesthetics in their determinations. The city has numerous ideas to clarify. Should large lots have the same requirements as small lots? Should you regulate the surface area of a wall? What if the wall is attached to the building? Should garden walls (under 4 feet) be included? Members suggested that aesthetics should be a consideration, that landscaping should be mandatory.

After they complete initial public outreach they will compose a draft ordinance. They will hold workshops on the draft ordinance before it goes to the City Planning Commission by the end of the year. Comments and photographs can be sent to David Olivo at david.olivo@lacity.org (213) 473-9769.

II. Approval of minutes

The minutes of June 1, 2011 were approved as corrected.

III. Officers' Reports

A. President's Report

Marian thanked the members of the Executive Committee who make an extraordinary team.

She received a thank you note from Jerry Daniel for the Federation's emails to keep the State from selling Ramirez Canyon State Park. Jerry will organize a tour of the park for anyone who is interested.

The Federation advised Tujunga residents on their appeal of a project on Sister Elsie Street.

Wendy-Sue Rosen gave an update on the "clean hands" ordinance, which the Federation unanimously supported last month. There was a joint meeting of the Audit Committee and PLUM on June 28 to discuss Councilmember Zine's three motions to address recent problems with Building & Safety inspectors. Clean Hands was one of them. They will hold workshops on Clean Hands. Wendy will send the dates to Marian when they are confirmed. Wendy wants a good turnout to show politicians why clean hands is really necessary.

Announcements: Fire Station 97 serving the Laurel Canyon/Mulholland area is holding a memorial and pancake breakfast on Saturday, August 13 for firefighter Glenn Allen who was killed during a fire where the roof fell in.

There is a lecture on Griffith Park and the Great Depression on Thursday, July 14, at the Los Feliz Branch Library sponsored by Friends of Griffith Park. Author Mike Eberts will discuss the

role Griffith Park played in the WPA and CCC camps to keep men occupied and the art they created.

B. Treasurer's Report

Marian read the Treasurer's report that Don Andres sent. We have 30 paid memberships plus two tonight that said they would join. He's paid all bills. We need more paying members to attend the holiday party in order to keep within budget.

IV. Old Business

A. Cell Phone Towers - Chris Spitz

The Hillside Federation supported a motion for new regulations on cell phone towers last year; many other organizations have followed suit. Pacific Palisades formed a working group as suggested by Jane Usher to make recommendations to the city. There were full page ads in the Sunday LA Times by AT&T, "We're putting in 40 new towers." Last month the report, which included enhanced aesthetics, came out of the City Attorney's Office. Chris reminded us that according to federal law you can't bring up health issues, and you can't outright deny towers; they have a right to install towers. People want better coverage; however they'd like to work with the companies rather than have towers appear within 6 inches of someone's home. She recommends a joint meeting with PLUM. Glendale has a good ordinance. San Francisco passed an ordinance recently; however T-Mobile has filed a law suit. Los Angeles doesn't want a legal challenge. Donna Messinger suggested the use YouTube to get community support.

B. La Rocha Trail - Alexa Iles Skarpelos

Alexa reported that Tom LaBonge found \$225,000 to go toward the purchase of the vacant lots. They are within 90% of their goal. A lot of people in their neighborhood donated money. It helped convince LaBonge that he should be part of it. They are partnering with People for Parks, which is already a 501(c)(3), to establish a charity auction web site. They are looking for people in entertainment who could donate passes to premiers or set visits to the auction.

C. Modified Parking Requirement Districts - Wendy-Sue Rosen

Wendy reported that many of the Federations's requested were included in the amended motion. MPRDs cannot be established in a specific plan area. The minimum size was increased. Benefits were added for low-income housing. The hearing is July 14 at City Hall. Wendy urged members to attend.

V. New Business

A. 8350, 8352, 8354, 8356 Grandview Drive - Jim Nelson

Grandview Drive is a substandard street that can't handle the houses that are on it already. In some places the street is only 9.5 feet wide and is collapsing. Permits should not be granted on Grandview without street improvements. Jim had a copy of Municipal Code Section 12.21A17(e) (3), Special Order 007-04 from the Bureau of Engineering which states that no permits be issued unless there is a minimum 20-foot wide paved roadway. This is to ensure emergency vehicle access. Developers are going to the zoning administrators who are waiving the requirement.

There are questions about whether it is a by-right project or discretionary; whether it is on Grandview Drive or Crisler Way; and were bonds required. Grandview resident Joe Williams said Dave Tompkin of Help You Sell is trying to build 4 houses where there used to be two. Wendy thinks if you are building four houses you need a secondary access and an EIR. The city earlier told Joe he could not subdivide his lot. Carol Sidlow said Grandview was the street where the 1979 Laurel Canyon fire started. After the fire the city allowed the entire street to be developed without widening the road.

MOTION: Wendy-Sue moved that the Federation write a letter similar to last month's Crescent Drive letter but based on the facts of the Grandview Drive project and addresses their

concerns. The motion passed unanimously. The letter will be copied to Koretz. Wendy requested that Jim and Joe provide the Federation with copies of all documentation related to the project.

B. 1400 Linda Flora - Steve Twining & Carol Sidlow

Eri Kroh is proposing to build a 46, 659 sq. ft. single-family residence on Linda Flora. About 17,000 of that is below-grade basement. The project has 4,523 sq.ft. of separate building for servants' quarters, which is bigger than the average house in the area. It was featured in an article on mansionization written by Jessica Garrison in LA Times (6/12/08); at that time it was only 38,000 sq ft. This is a by-right project on a ridgeline with no EIR required. Kroh got an MND in 2007 for the grading. He will have 2 ten-foot retaining walls 1,000 feet long separated by three feet. Bel Air/Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council (BABCNC) is requesting an EIR because of the 70,000 cubic yards of grading in an area prone to landslides. BABCNC had an independent geologist, Slosson and Associates, do an engineering geology review of the site. The geologist determined that it would not be prudent to built that project on that site. The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has taken a position requiring an EIR for the project.

MOTION: Wendy-Sue moved that the Federation write a letter similar to the Crescent Drive letter with the facts of the Linda Flora case. The MND is out of date and was for a smaller project. It requires an EIR. There are roadway and retaining wall issues. The motion passed unanimously.

C. By-Right Notification - Carol Sidlow

Carol chairs the Planning & Land Use Committee of the Bel Air/Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council. They have requested that the Department of Building and Safety provide neighborhood councils and homeowner associations with notification of all by-right projects in high-fire-danger areas and landslide areas so they can address environmental issues. The Westside Regional Alliance Council (WRAC) requested notification of all projects five years ago. A consulting firm is developing a centralized notification system, but nothing has happened yet.

MOTION: Wendy-Sue Rosen moved that the Federation request notification of by-right development to neighborhood councils and City Council offices of all development in areas designated by the City of Los Angeles as High Fire Severity Zones and Landslide Areas. The motion passed unanimously.

Announcements:

There is no meeting in August. The next meeting is September 7.

Steve Twining announced that there is a meeting regarding Upper Stone Canyon Reservoir on July 12. Steve will send Marian the information and she will forward it to all.

Janet Turner: LAFD Chief Peaks said the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in not in compliance with the fire marshall and brush clearance requirements. Fire protection in Pacific Palisades was cut 33%. Wendy said the Conservancy is exempt from fire clearance unless you are in a Benefit Assessment District.

VI. Adjournment - The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 pm.

Submitted:

Donna Messinger,
Recording Secretary

Members Present:

Bel Air Skycrest Barbara Dohrmann

Benedict Canyon	Nickie Miner
Hollywood Dell	Alexa Iles
Hollywood Heights	Donna Messiner
Kagel Canyon	Kit Paull
Laurel Canyon	Jim Nelson
Los Feliz Impvmt	Marian Dodge
Nichols Canyon	Madeline O'Donnell
Resid. Beverly Glen	Gillian Calof
Roscomare Valley	Steve Twining
	Shirley Cohen
Studio City Resid.	Claudia Freedle
Upper Mandeville	Wendy-Sue Rosen
	John Binder

Guests Present:

Planning Department	David Olivo
	Nicole Sanchez
Chair Emeritus	Patricia Bell Hearst
Pacific Palisades Res.	Chris Spitz
Pacific Palisades	Janet Turner
Community Council	
Laurel Canyon	Joe Williams
	Shannon Nishida