

Granada Hills North Neighborhood Council

Planning and Land Use Management Committee

**Special Meeting Agenda. Thursday, June 11, 2009. Knollwood Methodist Church
12121 Balboa Blvd, Granada Hills, CA 91344**

Committee members present: Ralph Kroy, Wayde Hunter, Ray Pollok, Bill Hopkins, Barbara Iversen, and Anne Ziliak.

Approximately 25 people were in attendance in addition to the PLUM Committee members.

At the April GHNNC Board meeting the PLUM Committee agreed to hold a special meeting and invite the applicants for **ZA-2008-2304(ZV)(SPR) to permit the conversion, use and maintenance of two medical buildings into 147 affordable housing units plus two manager's units with 149 parking spaces.**

Anne Ziliak called the meeting to order at approximately 2PM.

Announced that this was a special meeting and that the applicant would first give us a presentation and then concerns/questions would be addressed. Asked those wishing to speak to write their names and affiliations if desired.

The proponents spoke as follows:

Toni Reinis from New Directions: New Directions has six sites. One is located on the West Los Angeles Veterans Administration property. For the Sepulveda Veterans Administration property they have a 75- year lease to build 147 apartments with separate kitchen facilities for veterans that are disabled and need housing.

Lee Milman, Director of Housing from A Community Of Friends (ACOF): Explained that this housing would be for Veterans only and the funding they plan to use to complete this project. State legislation SB1220 was passed and would ensure this. HR322, a Federal bill, would reform the IRS code to allow tax credit for those projects that house Veterans. ACOF asked the Veterans Administration to amend the lease to clarify that the housing would be for Veterans only.

Ben Rosen from ACOF: Explained that lead paint, asbestos and a seismic retrofit are needed to comply with new building standards. They plan to have a cool roof and install all new energy efficient appliances.

The funding of the project was discussed further. They will apply for a low income tax credit program, which is administered by the IRS. Also, CA State department community development loans, Los Angeles City low interest loans and use the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rental subsidy program.

One member of the audience spoke in favor of the proposal. He thinks that New Directions program is good and that these housing units are needed.

The members of the committee asked several questions to clarify comments made related to the funding and literature.

It is clear that the funding is all through tax dollars. After the April GHNNC Board meeting, an investigation of the organizations that are listed as supporters of the project was done. Of those listed as supporters most were either financially tied to either New Directions or ACOF or were organizations

that do not have Veterans in them. Some did not know that members of their organization had written letters of support on their behalf.

New Directions representative Toni Reinis offered to send copies of the letters sent in support. As of June 24 we have not received any response. If received we will pass the information on to the Board.

Then ten speakers spoke in opposition to the project and many represented larger groups.

Summary of the comments/questions:

- We need our hospital back.
- Vets have to travel too far to get medical attention.
- VA land must remain in VA hands and should not be leased.
- This is a land grab.
- The current lease can be changed at any time without public input.
- Why didn't this go through a competitive bid process?
- What happened to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was drafted? It was suppose to come back for the community to review.
- Use of the enhanced lease should be ended.
- The West Los Angeles VA has given some of the VA land for a public park and leased some for private business, which decreased the land available for Veterans use.
- If this is approved the flood gates will open to allow more outside development to take over VA property.
- Developers have no right to be on VA property that was donated for VA use.
- If they bought homes they would also own the land, which would cost less than what they are proposing at the Sepulveda VA.
- They could buy apartments ready to go for \$40,000,000 and there is no guarantee the cost will not far exceed that price.
- We need the Federal Government to represent us.
- Originally the 20th District American Legion supported the project. Once they read the lease agreement they voted to oppose it, especially to the enhanced use agreement.
- To be a candidate for the housing you must graduate from the New Directions program.
- The lease states that the Sheriff will remove a renter if they fail to pay on time, but the Sheriff has no legal jurisdiction on the VA property.

North Hills West NC (NHWNC) spoke and asked the GHNNC to support them in their opposition to this project. They presented photographs taken of buildings 4 and 5 to support their claim that the buildings are in good condition. The studios have been using these buildings for filming and are safe. The NHWNC list the following as reasons for other NC's to support their position on the VA project:

- The zoning of the Sepulveda VA is PF-1 (public facilities). Apartments are not allowed in the PF zone.
- The land on which the Sepulveda VA sits was donated to be used for a Veterans Hospital and Medical Center.
- Even if the apartments were exclusively for veterans, they would house only 147 veterans. If reopened as medical buildings they would serve over 300.
- Veterans are entitled to receive care within their immediate area. The Sepulveda VA serves veterans that have to travel from as far north as Santa Maria to receive medical care and if they have an emergency or need hospitalization they have to drive to West Los Angeles or Long Beach.

After comments New Directions and ACOF were asked to reply to some of the comments.

- What happened to the draft MOU?

Toni Reinis from New Directions was not aware of any MOU.

- To be eligible for housing will graduation from New Directions drug program at the West Los Angeles VA be required?

Her answer was no, the tenants will be chosen from referrals from many non-profit organizations including the New Directions program at the West Los Angeles VA.

The Committee was asked if they wanted time to consider what was presented and discuss it further at our regular monthly meeting or if someone wanted to propose a motion. The Committee voted to make a motion at this time.

The following motion was proposed:

Motion: That the GHNNC oppose the New Directions/A Community of Friends or any other private project at the Sepulveda VA. Further that the GHNNC support reestablishing a full service VA hospital at the Sepulveda site.

Rationale: Local Veterans feel that private companies should not be allowed to lease land that would prevent its use for medical facilities. That it is unfair that Veterans and their families have to travel to West Los Angeles or Long Beach from as far away as Ventura County for hospitalization. The Sepulveda VA was once a thriving hospital. Local Veterans have been lobbying to reestablish the hospital and if we allow development like this, the opportunity for a full service hospital may be lost.