

**Sunland Tujunga Neighborhood Council  
Special Meeting Minutes for March 2, 2005  
Municipal Building – 7 PM**

The meeting was called to order at 7:14 p.m.

**Public Comment:**

- An individual commented that there seemed to be 200 people at the recent planning meeting regarding the White Bird Canyon Hills project and she didn't know why the city government didn't listen to the people.

**Board Comments:**

Julianne Maurseth gave an overview of the White Bird Canyon Hills Planning meeting:

- The meeting held was regarding making amendments to the general plan or not.
- Time was given for the appellants to speak regarding their appeals.
- People spoke for 30 minutes regarding why they were not in favor of the project.
- Council member Wendy Greuel spoke in favor of the community. It would have been better for her to come out more strongly regarding the Slope Density Ordinance.
- Commissioner Schiff seemed to listen very carefully regarding slope density. He disagreed with his colleagues on the Slope Density Ordinance interpretation.
- The decision was rendered: 230 homes on the North side of the property and zero homes on the South side of the property.

Various board members made the following comments:

- Some board members would have liked Council member Greuel to take a stronger position regarding the South side of the property and voiced dissatisfaction. Others stated that they felt that Council member Greuel has been very sincere and helped the community quite a bit and did not want to go on record as having been unhappy with her work.
- Concern was voiced that the South side of the property could be sold to another developer and be developed as it still had development rights. There was also a concern that there may be another compromise in the future wherein White Bird is granted an additional 50 homes in order to give up the South side of the property, making 280 homes in all on the North side. The lots could wind up being 5,000-6,000 square feet with homes that are about 4,000 square feet.
- If the homes are above the 210 Freeway, then strip grading could occur, rather than land form grading.
- A couple of board members stated that they felt that they had not been listened to.
- In November Council member Greuel's planning deputy, Dale Thrush, told the Foothills Trails that Council member Greuel did not want development on the South side and did want 280 homes on the North side only.
- 175 non-clustered homes (with 5 acres each) would be a better option and people would be better stewards of the land. There should be no special deals for White Bird.
- A City employee stated at the planning meeting that slope density had been being calculated this way for 18 years, so it couldn't be wrong. However this property is very unique and should be addressed uniquely.
- The purpose of Neighborhood Councils is to be advisory to City Councils.

Dale Thrush, Planning Deputy for Council District 2, made the following comments in response to statements that had already been made and in answer to a few further questions addressed to him:

- The role of the Neighborhood Council is to advise the City Council.
- The courts interpret ordinances. The Planning Department's interpretation of the Slope Density Ordinance may not be an accurate interpretation. The courts would look to see if the wording of the ordinance is susceptible to the interpretation that is proposed. Ordinances are interpreted the way the public body agrees with when first presented with a need to interpret the ordinance.
- The community's voice is the most important voice within the structure of the rules. The rules can't change unless there was an erroneous interpretation. The City Attorney is looking into this. It must be consistent case to case.

- In the abstract, a statute or ordinance is interpreted by a body and if the interpretation is reasonable under the wording, the court will not overturn the interpretation, even if there is another better interpretation.
- The City Attorney can overrule a city body, e.g. the Planning Department.
- There are about 230 lots on the North side of the property only, considering land form and grading.
- There are 50-55 acres of land in Development Area B with A1 zoning (minimum 5 acre lots). A developer could put 10 five-acre lots in the South side development area. To take these 50-55 acres of land would not require dedication.
- The South side crosses wildlife corridors. A Conservancy Representative testified in January asking that nothing be developed on the South side so that they wouldn't have to buy the land on the South side.

Board members made the following further comments:

- When the Planning Commission approved the General Plan Amendment the Slope Density Ordinance became irrelevant. Approving the amendment avoids the issues on the Slope Density Ordinance.
- The City made moot the community's involvement by giving a variance and a General Plan Amendment.

Dale Thrush commented that what is most important about this site is 1) preservation of open space and 2) the creation of large lots. The property is about 3 miles long. There is nothing like this land in L.A. City. If all of the South side is preserved it will be 85% open space.

Board members made the following further comments:

- White Bird edited the Scenic Preservation plan. That seems to be corruption within the City. All that Neighborhood Councils do is public, but that's not the case for attorneys. This board member felt that Council member Greuel is sincere, but that there is stuff in place from years ago which is "dirty pool".
- An MOU between the Planning Department and Neighborhood Councils was suggested.
- It was suggested to get an investigative reporter involved in the area of planning in the City to find out how the "back door" meetings take place and if there are any.
- If Neighborhood Councils can make small decisions, that is a beginning step. The City Council has opened a door for open dialogue.

Motion: I move that we have a committee of at least three draft a letter for presentation to the STNC at the meeting next week with the following points:

1. We do not agree with the decision and are disturbed by it, listing the reasons.
2. Ask the City Attorney to review the interpretation and legal history of the Slope Density Ordinance. If the history shows that it favors developers, then there is a problem.
3. There is a long-term problem with the City's planning process. We would like to be instrumental in organizing Neighborhood Councils to make an MOU with the Planning Department.

**Motion by Julianne Maurseth. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Public Comment:**

- An individual stated that she was at the PLUM meeting where the Interim Ordinance was passed on to the City Council.
- Dale Thrush commented that the PLUM approval acts as a recommendation to the City Council. The City Attorney will have to review the ordinance carefully. It was requested that this be expedited.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

*Minutes by Ava Wrightsman, Recording Secretary.*