

Sunland Tujunga Neighborhood Council
Wednesday, December 13, 2006 Meeting Minutes
North Valley Neighborhood City Hall

68 in attendance (54 audience/14 board members)

- 1. Call to Order, 7:10 p.m. by Chairperson. Roll Call:** In attendance: Cindy Cleghorn, Lydia Grant, Chrissa Villaneuva, Dan McManus, Janet Linsalato, David Cain, Shirley Kellstrom (parliamentarian), Richard Stewart, Saro Minnasian, Jeannine Crowley, John Blue, Deborah Ray, Mark Seigel. Absent: Victor Castro (out of town), Nina Royal (family event), Timothy Jon Borquez, George Powell, John VanEs (ill), Penny Barcena & Joan Slater.

Pledge of allegiance observed.

2. Introduction of local dignitaries:

Jackie Keene (CD2) stated that the City passed a motion allowing the Outreach Committee to put up banners advertising the STNC along Foothill Blvd.

The City has sent out info about recycling Xmas trees. She suggested stakeholders cut up their trees when they are discarding them, so they fit in the green bin or use one of the designated locations to dispose of their trees.

The Mayor's One Million Tree initiative is in full swing offering free trees for stakeholders to make for a greener L.A. Dan McManus asked if they could receive free trees for the 25 empty tree wells along Foothill Blvd. David Cain asked who would be responsible for watering those trees and maintaining them. Jackie said the agency that oversees the tree distribution, will provide information about that.

Dale Thrush (CD2) announced that Home Depot has been served with a Stop Work order as a result of suspicious work that was being done on the parking lot. Since Building and Safety didn't have this work listed in their approved plans, they asked the project to be stopped. This includes work being done in other areas of the site. Home Depot told the inspector that the work they were doing was to build handicapped ramps. Dale said that if that is the case, they will be allowed to continue.

- Joe Barrett suggested that Councilmember Greuel use this Stop Work order to make a careful review of all HD's plans, checking for inaccuracies. In response, Dale said the Council office cannot stop the project on their own; they have to 'win' their appeal through Building and Safety. Paula Warner added that she had spoken with Mr. Ardoin at DBS and he said the Stop Order applies to work going on inside the building. John Blue asked how they can "show" reasons for a legitimate Stop Order. Dale said B & S would need to be shown that the permits were issued in error.
- David Cain asked about the change of use with HD's automotive area. He asked how they could prevent liability on the City's part if they find a change of use later on. Dale said there is no practical way of stopping a lawsuit. All you can do is build a case that will make this action defensive. David then asked if CD2 is building evidence of this. Dale said the evidence is being built by B & S and the Planning Department. Sheri Smith asked if there is anything new to report on No Home Depot's appeal. Dale said he hasn't heard anything yet.

- John Blue asked if STNC could delegate an individual to be the community's eyes and ears keeping an eye on HD's construction. Dale said no one can enter the construction zone without being invited by HD. He said he would ask the City attorney if someone could be designated as an "official" rep for the Board but he still felt it was likely that they would need permission from the property owner.
- Marcus Dodell asked if HD has purchased the property or are leasing it. Dale said he understands that HD controls the property for the next 40 years under the rights of their lease although he has not seen the lease documents.
- Deborah Ray asked what residents can do if they notice demolition taking place on the HD property on the weekends. Since inspectors aren't working, can stakeholders call the police? Dale said "yes" they could. However, it is still the inspector's job to follow up on what is taking place on that property.
- Joe Barrett invited Dale to the local protest tomorrow, Thursday, during rush hour in front of the HD/K Mart lot.
- Michele Sahfran said that inspectors should have some sort of report documenting any action they have taken.

Oro Vista – Dale said that the 5 acre parcel by Big Tujunga Cyn. (at Deadman's Curve), is going to go through an Environmental Impact Report. He said that while they cannot hold up development of that parcel due to the origin of an endangered species, there will be more intense scrutiny on the land's usage.

Elaine Brown announced a petition drive opposing development on that property. Dale recommended that stakeholders who are interested in that property support her petition.

3. Presentation by STNC Interfaith Rep. Richard Stewart presented Rev. Beverly Craig of La Crescenta Church of Religious Science with a certificate commemorating her service to the community with contributions to single mothers in the Sunland-Tujunga area, as well as other community services.

The Reverend announced a Jan. 14th blessing service at her church, inviting the public to bring their kids, dogs, horses but not elephants. She also announced a class taking place on Jan. 15 to help people manifest their dreams. The church is located on Dunsmore Ave. in La Crescenta.

Linda Quay, from the Church of Scientology in S-T, presented the STNC with a pledge plaque to work with the STNC in improving the quality of life in our community. The church just held a ribbon cutting to open their new in Sunland.

4. Public Comments:

- Deborah Acosta, the new Principal at Mt. Gleason Middle School, talked about improvements in performance at Mt. Gleason.
- David Cain announced his grassroots candidacy for CD2 (in opposition to Council member Wendy Greuel). The upcoming City election takes place March 6, 2006.
- Michele Sahfran spoke about her concerns for the homeless and new graffiti showing up in the community.
- Abby Diamond thanked the DAC and STNC for their support for the No Home Depot campaign with a holiday greeting card. She reiterated plans to picket in front of the K-Mart site during rush hours on Thursday.

- Elaine Brown explained her two petitions opposing development at the end of Oro Vista by Big Tujunga Canyon and also on the former Mario Sterlings property, where a condo development has been proposed. She also asked for support in opposing a cell phone tower proposal on Foothill.
- Mark Seigel announced, for Victor Castro, the winning status of the Verdugo Hills High School Football team.

5. Committee Reports

A. Outreach. Dan McManus announced the next Outreach committee meeting this Saturday at Joselito's West. He thanked CD2 for pushing through the light pole banners motion. Banners will not go up until after the holiday season.

B. Design Advisory Committee. **Saro Minassian read the motions recommended by the DAC for approval by STNC. The group of motions, as presented, passed with one abstention:**

1. DAC recommended approval of a proposed PetSmart (next to Do It Center at former Ralphs) signage proposal as presented.
2. DAC recommended approval of FAR/ICO hardship exemption for 10230 Mather Ave. owner Wayne McMahan contingent upon letters from adjoining neighbors.
3. DAC recommended support for change of use from office/dance studio to a take-out restaurant with outdoor patio for sit-down eating and new wall sign and village pedestrian sign at 10024 Commerce Ave. within Target Area 3 of the Foothill Boulevard Corridor Specific Plan.
4. DAC recommends support to convert auto bays to mini-mart at the Shell Station located at Apperson and Foothill Blvd.
5. DAC recommends approval of \$285 for Tujunga Watershed map and \$300 for DAC outreach to share in the cost of the November postcard mailing promoting the Nov. 6 DAC/STNC meeting.
6. DAC recommends approval of updated design plans at 6920-24 Valmont with a preference for the use of river rock as per the Foothill Blvd. Corridor Specific Plan and keeping the existing oak tree on the property (owner intends to relocate it at DAC request).
7. DAC recommends approval of new monument sign with LED at 9641 Tujunga Canyon Blvd., Canyon Harvest Open Bible Church. Sign is set back 25 feet and is 6 feet tall.
8. DAC recommends the City halt the "piece-mealing" of tenant improvement permits at 8040 Foothill Blvd. site of the proposed Home Depot.
9. The DAC of the STNC, in response to the November 6, 2006 meeting with the Honorable Councilmember Wendy Greuel and other City staff, hereby request that Councilmember Greuel bring the following matter to the full City Council and the City Attorney while the appeal filed by the No Home Depot Campaign is pending: **We demand a Stop Work Order be issued at the site of the proposed Home Depot at 8040 Foothill Blvd., Sunland, CA, based on the following justifications:**
 - a. Mr. Keim, Code Enforcement Bureau Chief of the L.A. Dept. of Building and Safety, stated at the November 6th, 2006 meeting that the auto repair use area must only be "no use," or a change of use application would be required. A Change of Use would trigger the "Project" definition of the Foothill Blvd. Corridor Specific Plan, which is a discretionary, not ministerial action;
 - b. The June 22, 2006 architect approved, July 21, 2006 Dan Scott, City Planning and July 24, 2006 Lily Teng, Metro Plan Check City approved plans being used on the job site show

inconsistent uses for the auto repair area. The uses indicated in the plans are either "storage, cash register check-out or pro-desk contractor area;"

c. The City approved plans indicate structural alterations to the existing building that should also be subject to the regulation of the Foothill Blvd. Corridor Specific Plan and the "Project" definition therein; and

d. The inconsistencies in the plans and the "no use" statement at the Nov. 6, 2006 meeting indicate an intent to "piecemeal" the project and avoid the full Project Permit Compliance Review and Environmental Assessment that this site requires for the public safety now and in the future.

6. Board Member Reports on subject matters within the Board's jurisdiction.

District Reps – updates & announce outreach events

David Cain reported that there is an excavation project underway next to Discount Tires on Foothill. He said it looks to be a multi-use office center. The developer has assured him that they have permits and would have them on site tomorrow for him to see.

In another matter, he stopped an unknown man from dumping an old couch and tires from the back of a pick up truck on La Tuna Canyon recently by pulling up behind the vehicle and taking photos of the truck and its license plate. He told the motorist he would turn him in to the police if the materials were left on the side of the road. He recommended other stakeholders become more active in protecting the area from dumping.

Dan McManus talked about the effectiveness of Neighborhood Watches in his district, particularly the one in which neighbors Belinda Woodruff and Ron Holm have participated.

Group reps – updates & announce outreach events:

Education rep, Michele Sahfran reported that the recent pancake breakfast held at Mountain Avenue Elementary School was a success due to the support of local community businesses.

Business rep, Saro Minassian thanked Ed Rock for helping clean up several bags of trash deposited on Day/Aminita.

John Blue pointed out to the Board that the STNC took a revolutionary position in regards to the election and that this was passed by other NCs through the 912 Commission.

Jeannine Crowley said she has received a call from Zack Friedman regarding some of their Tujunga Watershed projects.

David Cain, re: DWP Oversight Committee said he spent last Saturday at the Dept. of Water and Power reviewing their fall budget. He feels the increase in water rates is acceptable given the expense of the services provided. He brought the report back for public reading.

Mark Seigel commented that the City of L.A., as of yesterday, is returning water to Mono County as promised in an agreement made several years ago.

Mark Seigel, Bylaws, rules and elections committee, invited the public to attend their next meeting on Friday, 3 p.m. at North Valley City Hall. He then explained the process required prior to the next STNC election:

They will hold an initial election meeting, followed by the open election process in Jan.

On Jan. 10, there will be an election announcement meeting before the general meeting.

On Jan. 22, there will be the first of two Candidate info meetings/ Feb. 12 is the 2nd meeting for candidates.

Feb. 17 is the final date for filing STNC board applications.

March 2, the election committee will do a mass mailing to announce candidates for STNC offices.

March 8, a candidate's forum will take place.

March 10, there will be a STNC Mixer and candidate's forum.

March 14 they will hold a candidates forum at the STNC meeting.

March 19 (Monday) is Election Day from 4 p.m. – 8 p.m.

Applications will be available Jan. 3, 2007 (as well as through STNC) for Board positions. **Seigel/Ray moved to approve the changes to the election procedures. The motion passed unanimously.**

Mark also said the committee is holding discussions on the structure of the STNC board. He asked the public to join them for their next bylaws meeting if they have comments or questions.

Deborah Ray then asked what is going on at Mt. Gleason Middle School, in regards to police activity there recently. Lydia Grant said there have been disciplinary problems reported to the school district that hadn't been resolved. On Friday, December 8, eleven fights broke out at the school and as a result, there was a "lock down" of the school. The kids could not have lunch and some of them panicked, calling their parents from cell phones, asking to be picked up. Lydia said she called the School Supt. office and asked them to send representatives to the school on Monday. There were 15 to 20 school reps on Monday.

Deborah proposed that STNC look into this. Jeannine said she heard from one of the students that the "good" kids feel like they are being punished for actions by the troublesome kids. Jeannine asked why she had received a mailing naming Mt. Gleason as an "at risk" school. Lydia said that for the past five years, the school has dropped to the bottom ranking in educational performance. With the problems they are having and the low morale, she has concerns about the school reaching the needed scores.

7. Executive Committee Reports

Chairperson's Report: Cindy reminded Board about the upcoming deadline for completing their DONE ethics training: 12/31/06. The training is available online at <http://ethics.lacity.org/education/ethics/?audience=done>

She then combined discussion on two items pertaining to the City Controller's audit of DONE, DONE Interim General Manager report to Public Safety Committee and STNC's recommendations to the Neighborhood Council Review Commission. (www.ncrcla.org).

Cindy asked what they, as a neighborhood council, can contribute at the next 912 Commission meeting (of which she is a commissioner), in regards to the controllers' audit.

Bill Skiles recommended that the STNC discuss what their comments and input should be prior and attend a hearing of the 912 Commission, so they can speak with authority before the Commissioners. He reminded the Board that the recommendations the City auditor makes (based on the 912 Commission's report) will impact all the NCs.

(Seigel/McManus) moved to create a committee, with Bill Skiles as chair and committee members Dan McManus, Mark Seigel and Deborah Ray that will investigate Laura Chick's report (recently published in the Daily News) and how it applies to STNC and how they can proactively make requests to DONE. The committee will report back to the Board at the January general meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer, Linda Brand presented the Treasurer's Report stating:

As of Dec 1, 2006, there is a balance of \$56,796.00 in the treasury (this does not reflect the payment for police car cameras). There is also \$2,000 available in the credit card account and \$500+ available in petty cash. The budget needs to last until June 30th, 2007.

8. New Business:

1. **Billboard Blight:** (McManus/Brand) moved, "That all unpermitted billboards be removed and no new billboard permits be issued." The motion passed unanimously.
2. **City wide Budget Committee:** (Brand/McManus) moved to appoint Bill Skiles as an alternate member of the STNC's (ad-hoc) Citywide Budget representatives. (Note: John Blue and Michelle Sahfran currently serve on this committee). The motion passed unanimously.
3. **Holiday Lights Recognition:** (Seigel/Ray) moved that STNC sponsor a holiday lighting/decorations recognition awards. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Announcements

Cindy invited the Board and stakeholders to post their comments on the Neighborhood Council Review Commission (912 Commission) web site: www.ncrcla.org with regards to how the STNC is doing and any changes they would like to see. Everyone is invited to the upcoming public hearings in January 2007, which will be held in the South Bay and on the West Side.

The next STNC general meeting is Jan. 10, 2007 at Mt. Gleason Middle School at 7 p.m.

10. Final Public Comment

- Deborah Ray suggested moving the Board meetings to North Valley City Hall instead of holding them at Mt. Gleason. She said it is more easily accessible at N. Valley City Hall.
- John Blue asked if someone could be appointed to watch over Home Depot. Cindy suggested waiting for word from Dale Thrush after he speaks with the City Attorney.

11. Future Agenda items:

- Rick Grubb would like to present a power point presentation for the STNC on the City's tree program.
- Lydia would like an item on the agenda for the presentation of awards or certificates to outstanding teachers at Mt. Gleason.
- Rick Grubb asked about the environmental seat vacancy. Cindy said there is currently no vacancy but she will check with absent board members to see if anyone is leaving.

9:22 PM – Meeting Adjourned.

Minutes taken by Pat Kramer, Apple One