



**OFFICIAL MINUTES
MONTEREY PARK PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
CITY HALL – COUNCIL CHAMBERS
320 W. NEWMARK AVENUE
September 24, 2013
7:00 P.M.**

Planning Commission

Michael Hamner
Larry Sullivan
Ricky Choi
Rodrigo Garcia
Stephen Lam

Staff

James Funk, Lead Planner/Economic and Development
Special Projects Manager
Karl Berger, Assistant City Attorney
Samantha Tewasart, Acting Senior Planner

CALL TO ORDER:

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Michael Hamner.

ROLL CALL:

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chair Hamner, Vice-Chair Sullivan, Commissioners Choi, Garcia, and Lam

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

None

STAFF:

Lead Planner/Economic and Development Special
Projects Manager James Funk, Assistant City Attorney
Karl Berger, Acting Senior Planner Samantha Tewasart

**AGENDA CHANGES
AND ADOPTION:**

None

**ORAL AND WRITTEN
COMMUNICATIONS:**

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

None

PUBLIC HEARING:

OLD BUSINESS:

1. CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT – 133 EAST GRAVES AVENUE (CU-13-02)

Planner Tewasart: Provided a summary of the staff report.

Chair Hamner: Asked if staff means the maximum occupancy of existing facility is 30 to 40 students.

Planner Tewasart: Replied yes.

PUBLIC HEARING OPENED: Chair Hamner opened the public portion of the meeting.

PROJECT APPLICANT:

John Page
2009 S. Garfield Avenue
Monterey Park CA 91754

Introduced himself as the founder and executive director of Meher Montessori School. He stated that they were currently leasing a Christian education building at St. Paul's church, and that they have been there for 30 years. He stated that since they do not have a middle school program, parents of those who graduated from school always had a desire for a middle school. He stated that after deciding to take a leap for a middle school, they thought the subject site 133 E Graves would serve them very well as a middle school. He stated that they just started the middle school temporarily at their existing site right for four students and they hope to enroll more students in the future. He also spoke about the importance and necessity of a new middle school for the community. He stated that a traffic study was conducted showing a minimal impact to the surrounding community, and that the school requires parents to drive their children to the parking lot and sign the children in.

He spoke about several mistakes in the resolution. He claimed that the conditional use permit for preschool care was never in his request. He explained that there will be extended child day care before and after school time but not a preschool program. He also explained that the school will not be doing any addition.

Commissioner Garcia: Asked about the opinions of additional traffic.

Applicant Page: Replied that he cannot answer the question.

Commissioner Garcia: Asked how the applicant was going to regulate the drop-off policy.

Applicant Page: Replied that there will be a staff member there to see parents sign in their children. He stated that this would serve the interest of the children, school and surrounding community.

Commissioner Choi: Asked if the applicant was anticipating students from the nearby areas to walk to school.

Applicant Page: Replied yes, if students lived close enough.

Commissioner Choi: Asked if there is no sidewalk on Graves.

Planner Tewasart: Replied not on the north side of Graves.

Commissioner Choi: Asked what maximum occupancy is for the existing facility.

Applicant Page: Replied that according to the CUP issued in 1984, it is 175.

Commissioner Choi: Asked if they hit the maximum occupancy yet.

Applicant Page: Replied no, about 110 to 115 students for right now.

Commissioner Choi: Asked how many middle school students they have right now.

Applicant Page: Replied four.

Commissioner Choi: Asked the applicant how the parking issue would be handled, if the facility reaches its full potential.

Applicant Page: Replied that the parking space would be enough.

Commissioner Choi: Asked the number of staff that will be on-site.

Applicant Page: Replied that he would not expect more than three or four staff.

Chairman Hamner: Asked where the administrative staff of the school will be located.

Applicant Page: Replied that it would still be in Saint Paul's.

TRAFFIC CONSULTANT:

Brian Marchetti
1100 Corporate Center Drive,
Suite 201
Monterey Park CA 91754

Illustrated the traffic study their company has done, which is a technical memorandum that analyze the potential trip generation of the school based on private school rate and the number of students proposed to be in this facility. He stated that the study was based on 50 students. He explained that the study was based on the peak hour on Graves. And he stated that according to their traffic study, the level of service won't be changed by the proposed school.

Chairman Hamner: Asked what the current level of service is.

Consultant Marchetti: Replied B.

Chairman Hamner: Asked what the current level of service would be after the proposed middle school.

Consultant Marchetti: Replied B, and he explained that the level of service has not changed.

Commissioner Lam: Asked how the vehicles per hour get counted.

Consultant Marchetti: Replied that the peak hour count on Garfield and Graves was done visually with a technician at the intersection for a two hour period, two hours in the a.m. and two hours in the p.m. The count on the road was done by a machine counter during weekdays for 24 hours.

Commissioner Garcia: Asked if the study was based on 50 students.

Consultant Marchetti: Replied yes.

Chairman Hamner: Asked if the study was based on worst case scenario that all the students came by cars, and that traffic generated by another school will not shrink because of the new school.

Consultant Marchetti: Replied yes.

PROPERTY OWNER:

Pastor Kwan Ho Lo
133 E Graves Avenue
Monterey Park CA 91754

Introduced the current condition of the church, that they have seven activity rooms and big church hall. He stated that most of the religious activities happen during Saturday afternoon or evening and Sunday, and that the church is mostly vacant during weekdays. He stated that the church is very glad to provide one activity room for classroom use since the church wanted to contribute to the community.

- Commissioner Garcia: Asked if the 100 members would attend service during the week.
- Pastor Lo: Replied very rare.
- Commissioner Garcia: Asked the maximum occupancy of the church.
- Pastor Lo: Replied 70 to 80.
- Commissioner Garcia: Asked the ways of transportation for the attendants to the church.
- Pastor Lo: Replied by cars, and stated that they parked there.
- Commissioner Garcia: Asked how many years the church had been in place.
- Pastor Lo: Replied about thirty years.
- Commissioner Choi: Asked if there were any staff or volunteers would be on site during weekdays.
- Pastor Lo: Replied no.
- Commissioner Choi: Asked if there would be nobody using the church's parking during weekdays.
- Pastor Lo: Replied no.
- Commissioner Choi: Asked whether he lives on site.
- Pastor Lo: Replied yes, but he stated that he had his own car garage.

OPPONENT:

Paul Von Gough
522 Cecil Street
Monterey Park CA 91755

Stated that students on the east bound Graves would need to make a left turn to get into the parking lot, against cars coming down at the hill. He stated that he has lived in the city for 48 years, and the drivers need to break 1,000 feet ahead in order to stop. He spoke about the danger the proposed school may bring about.

OPPONENT:

Joy Rowe
615 Craighurst Terrace
Monterey Park CA 91755

Introduced herself as a profession having health and safety background. She claimed that the school would bring tragedy. She stated that Graves had been used for years for the path of another school. She stated that Graves already had a bad traffic condition on the way to school, and that the traffic study should look into the school rush hour traffic. She stated that the school's drop-off policy is good but not practical, and that parents would still leave their children on the curb. She stated that an accident could easily happen.

OPPONENT:

Nathan Shimizu
614 Craighurst Terrace
Monterey Park CA 91755

He stated that the Meher Montessori School had failed to complete the application and failed to reach out to the community and that the traffic report had failed to reveal the reality of the traffic burden on Graves. He stated that he had reached out for the community showing 119 residents completely against the school with complete addresses and names. He expressed strong disagreement towards the proposed middle school.

Chairman Hamner:

Read a letter from a resident Francis for more than fifty years, which is about concerns over the geographic conditions, the noise, and traffic generated by the proposed middle school.

OPPONENT:

Dick Rowe
615 Craighurst Terrace
Monterey Park CA 91755

Introduced himself as a resident from 1960s. He stated that the hilly geographic condition is a main cause for people to speed. He spoke about the inadequateness of left turning at 7a.m. to 8 a.m. on Graves. He spoke about the possibility of vehicle driving across double yellow lines when people are delayed by guard door during evening time. He emphasized the importance of safety for a school.

OPPONENT:

Joe Reichenberger
529 La Mont Drive
Monterey Park CA 91755

Introduced himself as a resident for over 40 years and a professional engineer. He spoke about the uniqueness of the project, which should not be dealt with on an average peak hour count as in the traffic study. He stated that when the engineer is evaluating a proposed middle school like this, specific method such as peak 30 minutes traffic count or peak 15 minutes count should be taken.

OPPONENT:

Pat Reichenberger
529 La Mont Drive
Monterey Park CA 91755

Stated that she was not given a clear vision of the project's scope, and that the site is not zoned for a school. She also talked about the concern for the immediate neighbors of the proposed middle school.

OPPONENT:

James Padgett
162 E. Graves Avenue
Monterey Park CA 91775

Stated that he did the traffic count in front of the church last Thursday morning, and counted 22 cars going eastward waiting in front of the traffic light at 7:50. He expressed his concern over the incredible speed when the car is heading down slope and non-stop cars in front of the stop sign over the top of the hill. He talked about kids riding skate boards and roller blades on the steep hill. He asked why this facility is needed and what percentages of students are from Monterey Park. He stated that the playground is only 12 feet away from the

condominium project, who needs to bear a lot of noise in the future.

OPPONENT:

David Sanchez
534 La Mont Drive
Monterey Park CA 91775

Stated that the parking lot is 10 feet from his room, and his concern is about the safety of his family, which will be interrupted by the kids.

OPPONENT:

Mr. Kamei
618 Cecil Street
Monterey Park CA 91775

Introduced himself as a 40-year resident, and stated his concern over the traffic condition. He said that he had witnessed several accidents.

OPPONENT:

Peter
131 E. Graves Avenue
Monterey Park CA 91775

Stated that the noise from the meeting in the church was already unbearable. He stated that the noise brought about by the new school would affect his life even worse.

OPPONENT:

Sheldon Chan
552 Cecil Street
Monterey Park CA 91775

Stated his concerned for the traffic condition as a new resident to this area.

OPPONENT:

Michael Sepulveda
5318 Acacia Street
Monterey Park CA 91775

Stated that he believed the location is inadequate because of traffic and safety issues.

OPPONENT:

David Chow
608 Cecil Street
Monterey Park CA 91775

Introduced himself as a resident living next to the church for 20 years. He recommends to take away the fence and to build a 10 feet high solid fence for safety and noise prevention purpose.

PROPONENT:

Clodia Chavez
5365 Somesset Street
Los Angeles CA 90032

Introduced herself as a parent of former students from the school. She expressed her great support for the middle school due to her children's achievement as a result of Meher Montessori School.

Chairman Hamner:

Suggested applicants to address some of those concerns from residents.

Consultant Marchetti:

Explained that the neighborhood's perceived speed and traffic accident was deemed the study's background, and the traffic study aimed to find out what can be mitigated and can be designed. He stated that the traffic count was done on the road and at the intersection on a typical day, when the schools around were in session. He stated that they are not looking at 15 minutes peak time traffic, but they are looking at the overall throughout the day condition to see if the neighborhood traffic control can handle the traffic.

Chairman Hamner:

Asked if the study was not done during that rush hour in the morning.

Consultant Marchetti:

Replied that the count was done 7 a.m. to 9 a.m. in the morning, and was done in May.

Chairman Hamner:

Asked if the study was done not on a school day.

Consultant Marchetti:

Replied that it was done on a school day.

Chairman Hamner:

Asked if the consultant has any explanations or concerns to the obviously west bound heavy traffic during the morning.

Consultant Marchetti:

Replied that every school has a 10 to 15 minutes peak, which is the operational issues and not the issue they are looking at, and that they are looking at the significant impact level, and guideline level.

Chairman Hamner:

Stated that the residents have concerns over the signals, the timing of which is too short, and asked if there are any mitigating measures that can be cooperated and if there are any regional issues in terms of the signals.

- Consultant Marchetti: Replied that even there is a 15 minutes peak time, the signals is designed for the majority of hours. And he stated that no significant impact had been identified at the intersection.
- Commissioner Choi: Asked if the study address the topic of safe and accident in that area.
- Consultant Marchetti: Replied that the city would study the number of accidents and speed limit periodically, which is included in this traffic study.
- Commissioner Choi: Stated that the traffic study did not address the problem of danger and traffic accident in that area.
- Chairman Hamner: Stated that the first speaker Von Gough's concern over the traffic had many echoes, and that maybe the traffic commission should look at this project in terms of the speed limit, the number of accidents, and geographic conditions. He concluded that the study was done at a rush hour time, maybe on the last day of school which makes different a typical school day that the number of students may be limited to 30 per building code, that only teaching personnel would be on site and administrative staff would be off site, and that parents are usually distractive, which may be mitigated by drop-off sign-in policy. He further recommended the consultant to look not only at the industry standard but also take the local condition and residents' opinions into consideration. He asked the staff if a school is permitted in a church per zoning code.
- Planner Tewasart: Replied that is the purpose of the Conditional Use Permit.
- Chairman Hamner: Asked if this is a Variance.
- Planner Tewasart: Replied no.
- Chairman Hamner: Asked if the Conditional Use Permit establish their ability to add conditions for this use for mitigating measures and so forth.
- Planner Tewasart: Replied correct.
- Chairman Hamner: Asked how many students would be from Monterey Park.

- Applicant Page: Replied that currently four enrolled students are all from Monterey Park, but he also stated that the school never tracked the geographic background of students so he has no idea how many percentage would be from Monterey Park, and that most of the students would be from Monterey Park.
- Commissioner Choi: Asked if day care is part of the proposed use.
- Applicant Page: Replied that day care is only provided to enrolled students, and that student can be at school as early as 7:00 a.m. to as late as 6:00 p.m.
- Commissioner Choi: Asked if the applicant had looked for other locations.
- Applicant Page: Replied that it is difficult to find a suitable place for a middle school.
- Commissioner Choi: Asked if the applicant would like to change the chain link fence to the block wall.
- Applicant Page: Replied yes as long as the property owner would like to do that.
- PUBLIC HEARING CLOSED:** Chair Hamner closed the public portion of the meeting.
- Commissioner Lam: Expressed his concerns of the noise and safety over the proposed school after hearing opinions from residents. He recommended postponing the decision to a later meeting.
- Commissioner Garcia: Stated that the condition there has been dangerous, and that he was not sure if the proposed use would make the situation even worse. He stated that he needed more information for the project. He recommended continuing the item.
- Commissioner Choi: Stated that Traffic Commission should look at this area, and stated that this is not the applicant's fault.
- Chairman Hamner: Expressed his appreciation to the residents' involvement into this project. He stated that the commissioners with different background worked together for a good decision for the community's best interest. He also recommended the applicant to reach out to the community and work

with them. He asked if the applicant would like to continue the item so that new commissioner would have more time to review this project.

Applicant Page: Replied yes and stated that he would like to know more about the dangerous condition and accidents history in that area.

Chairman Hamner: Replied that this information is more likely to be provided by peer review rather than another traffic study. He stated that it would be staff to work with PD to learn about accidents' history.

Lead Planner Funk: Stated that Police Department should be asked to provide more information about the accidents and investigation around at the street in terms of the terrain and different grades mentioned by the different speakers, that the new public works director may be asked about more input, and that a consultant that is on board can be consulted with safety and school issue. And he stated that accidents are usually not included in the traffic study. In addition, he suggested that street signs for speed limit should be put up, such as 25 mph when school in session. He also spoke about the problem of side walk on the north part of Graves, which is going to be reviewed by the Police Department, Public Works, and city's traffic engineer, and the problem of noise, which may be addressed by special setback requirement for play area. He asked if staff can answer what wall height limit is in residential area.

Planner Tewasart: Replied that the maximum height permitted in a residential area is 6 feet.

Commissioner Choi: Asked if the 6 feet is from the foundation.

Planner Tewasart: Replied above the grade.

Commissioner Choi: Asked if the applicant could ask for a variance.

Planner Tewasart: Replied yes.

Chairman Hamner: Stated that it makes sense if the project can be continued. He stated that in-house review for this project

can begin, and asked how long the process may take and which date next meeting should be continued to.

Attorney Berger:

Suggested to continue the meeting to a specific date after a 30-day period since the applicant is willing to continue the item.

Applicant Page:

Replied that 30-day period is good.

Planner Tewasart:

Stated that the second meeting in October would be October 22, and that if additional time is needed the meeting time would be on November.

Chairman Hamner:

Stated that the meeting would be in October.

MOTION:

Moved by Commissioner Lam, seconded by Commissioner Choi, to **CONTINUE** Conditional Use Permit to October 22, 2013. The motion was voted on as follows:

VOTE:

AYES: Chair Hamner, Commissioners Choi, Garcia, and Lam
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: Vice-Chair Sullivan
ABSENT: None

ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSION:

Lead Planner Funk:

Stated that during the commission meeting, staff makes recommendation prior to speakers' and applicants' speaking, and asked if it is necessary to swift the order for staff to read conditions of approval if the commission decides to approve the item.

Chairman Hamner:

Replied that he did not think they need the change, and asked opinions from other commissioners.

Commissioner Garcia:

Replied that he tended to support the staff, and that he understands staff is working very hard. He stated that as a commissioner, he also need take neighbors' opinions into consideration based on his own experiences and relationship with neighbors.

Commissioner Choi: Replied that he understands that he is here as an independent doing a review, and he had no problem to keep the meeting as it is.

Lead Planner Funk: Stated that sometimes planners tend to change conditions after the public portion.

Commissioner Lam: Expressed his appreciation to the staff, and stated that the commissioners need take the community into consideration. He stated that he would like to hear some opinions from the traffic commission.

ADJOURNMENT:

The Planning Commission adjourned the meeting at 9:45 p.m. on September 24, 2013, until the next regular meeting of October 22, 2013, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

James Funk
Secretary

Liping Zhang
Minutes Clerk