



Minutes of the
**NORTHRIDGE WEST NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL (NWNC)
PORTER RANCH NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL (PRNC)
JOINT TOWN HALL MEETING**

Tuesday, March 15, 2011

at Nobel Middle School, 9950 Tampa Ave., Northridge, CA 91324

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

PRNC President Mel Mitchell called the meeting to order at 6:44 p.m.

2. Roll Call and Introductions

Total NWNC Board Members present, eleven (11) of twelve (12): Jerry Bloom, Pamela Bolin, Ken Futernick, Robert Graf, Tom Johnson, Craig Michayluk, Freddie Rymond, Juativa Spurlock, Don Ward, Chris Williams and Glen Wilson. NWNC Board Members absent: Gerry Malais. One NWNC Board seat was vacant. The NWNC quorum (the minimum number of Board Members needing to be present to take binding votes on Agendized Items) is seven, so the NWNC Board could take such votes.

Total PRNC Board Members present, eight (8) of eleven (11): Mel Mitchell, Paula Cracium, Maha Batta, Mandhata Chauhan, Becky Leveque, Pat Pope, Dick Rippey and Vas Singh. PRNC Board Members absent: Bright Aregs, Ali Dabirian, Sue Hammarlund. No PRNC Board seats were vacant. The PRNC quorum (the minimum number of Board Members needing to be present to take binding votes on Agendized Items) is seven, so the PRNC Board could take such votes.

Approximately 400 (four hundred) other Stakeholders were also in attendance.

Mr. Mitchell introduced himself and described that this was a joint Meeting of the Northridge West and Porter Ranch Neighborhood Councils. He noted that it was “a Neighborhood Councils Meeting and we follow certain rules.” He described the Wilbur Working Group composed of Board Members from both Neighborhood Councils, City Council District 12 and the L.A. Department of Transportation [LADOT] that worked on revising the Wilbur Avenue road diet plan.

Mr. Mitchell introduced Mitch Englander, Chief of Staff for L.A. City District 12 Councilman Greig Smith and CD12 Councilman-Elect (818-756-8501; Mitch.Englander@LACity.org; <http://CD12.LACity.org>), who asked that Stakeholders “respect” the Neighborhood Council Board Members, noting that “they’re your eyes and ears.” He reviewed some of the Wilbur Ave. restriping history and noted that “CD12 has more Neighborhood Councils than any other [City] Council District in the City.” He described how the Wilbur Working Group formed, “met four times” and “looked at other alternatives . . . to give input to [the] DOT” regarding “what could work for . . . safety . . . and to protect the character of the community.”

3, 4 and 5. [See page header.]

6 and 7. LADOT Presentation, and Questions and Answers

[Answers to Board Members' questions are included in this section.] NWNC President Tom Johnson introduced Amir Sedadi, Interim General Manager, LADOT (213-972-8422; Amir.Sedadi@LACity.org; www.ladot.LACity.org), who observed that there're many users and needs for the transportation system and a need for "a safe means of getting around . . . many observations were done" of Wilbur Avenue.

Tim Conger, Transportation Engineer, LADOT (L.A. Dept. of Transportation) (213-928-9664; Tim.Conger@LACity.org; www.ladot.LACity.org), presented the new official revised Wilbur Avenue road diet plan to both Neighborhood Councils. He described possible Wilbur Ave. configurations, saying "we're using standard lines and widths . . . [that are] State and City approved . . . all of this is per guidelines . . . [it would take around] six to eight weeks . . . [and] \$35,000 to \$40,000" to implement the revised plan; "a policy decision was made to install that bike lane."

Kang Hu, Senior Transportation Engineer, LADOT (213.972.4962; Kang.Hu@LACity.org; www.ladot.LACity.org), said "a secondary highway is intended to carry local traffic and some through traffic . . . and is the backbone of the City's Bicycle Plan."

Mr. Sedadi clarified that if "this plan is turned down, it [Wilbur Ave.] stays the way it is." His "staff looked at" the issue of traffic that has started using surrounding streets. "The City Council voted" to do the re-striping. If the Neighborhood Councils voted in favor of the re-striping plan, the striping would change from Chatsworth St. to Devonshire St.; south of Devonshire would remain the same. If the Neighborhood Councils vote to oppose the re-striping plan, there will not be any changes.

Mr. Englander described that "we're kind of stuck" now because of the process in place that "can be changed . . . the Councilman would like it to go back to the way it [was] . . . that's not possible right now." He described an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) between the DOT and Neighborhood Councils that's been worked on for a long time and has not yet been signed; the MOU could've helped prevent this situation.

Amelia Herrera-Robles, Project Coordinator, L.A. Dept. of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) (213-485-1360; Amelia.Herrera-Robles@LACity.org; www.EmpowerLA.org), relayed that the L.A. City Attorney "established" that a quorum (the minimum number of Board Members needing to be present to take binding votes on Agendized Items) is "a majority of the whole . . . 50% plus one" of the Board Members present. Both Boards were instructed that a vote to "abstain" equals a "no" vote. The Boards were instructed that ten "yes" votes were required to pass the LADOT compromise plan.

8. Presentations in support and opposed to the plan

PRNC Stakeholder and Wilbur Working Group Member Guillermo Seta confirmed that “all these questions were” considered by the Working Group. He remembers that then-LADOT General Manager Rita Robinson spoke at the October 5, 2010 PRNC General Board Meeting; she said “if this doesn’t work, I’ll do everything I can to put it back to the way it was.” He believed that this revised plan is “an improvement over what we have, not what we want.”

NWNC Board Member and Wilbur Working Group Member Don Ward described that “car crashes were a common thing [before the re-striping] . . . the speed limit has gone up from 30 miles per hour to 40 miles per hour.” He suggested traffic calming measures “maybe without a bike lane” and described safety concerns, including for pedestrians.

9. Public comment

[Following are some of the many public comments by Stakeholders.]

It was suggested to combine a lower speed limit and go back to four lanes [two north and two south]. Phil Baron said he has “a petition signed by over 500 people to put [Wilbur Ave.] back to the way it was.” “Robert Boulware has “had three accidents in front of his house under the four-lane configuration; it’s much better with the new configuration. Thanks Rita Robinson.”” Mary Finley spoke in favor of the current road diet because it added a center turn lane for left turns into and out of the street-locked communities that adjoin Wilbur. Alex Thompson asked “what would be an acceptable number of fatalities?” Peter Lasky is a bicycle rider who believes the bike lane is unnecessarily wide. Jerry Askew, speaking for himself and Bob Stevens, said “there are . . . numerous other things we can do” and encouraged voting “no” so that Neighborhood Councils can further consider other alternatives. Al Ciplickas suggested “left-turn signals on major cross-streets.”

Carol Haas said a study showed very few bicyclists on Wilbur and more accidents. Lance Larson believed “a stoplight at Mayall might solve the problem . . . and put it back to four lanes.” Paul Klrk said “85% of the 110 homes” in his street-locked community along Wilbur “like what’s out there” because they feel it’s safer, that the road diet makes the school crosswalks that lack traffic signals safer, and “we should be encouraging people to walk.” Milad Girgis, speaking for Alexander Rubenstein, said Mr. Rubenstein “didn’t like it . . . [but now believes] it’s slowing me down and improving my property values.” Laura Alvarado “was walking” by her house on Wilbur “and was hit by a car.” Brian Reff is “a bicyclist and I pay my car taxes.” Parent Christine Stanford said she’s “seen cars slow down . . . it’s safer for kids.” Joseph Oswald suggested bicyclists “use the bike lane on Louise.”

Susan Zambetti-Ruda said “it’s so bad, it’s scary coming out onto Wilbur.” Paul Di Simone, who lives on Wilbur, spoke in favor of the new configuration and added “the Plummer light needs to be timed better.” An LAPD Sergeant clarified that “you can ride a bike on a sidewalk in the City of Los Angeles as long as you do so with due care.” LAPD Officer Krumer quoted Devonshire Division officers as saying “incidents are down since the road diet was implemented.” Lauren Maxine described extra driving done to navigate increased traffic. Stephanie De Tiege said “it’s much safer

now” for bicyclists and drivers. John Genna suggested “let’s keep it the way it is and go to our Councilman and Mayor and make a change.” Amelia Robinson suggested suspending “the bike lane for a two or three block area.”

10 and 11. Vote by Neighborhood Council Board Members

A cumulative [written] vote of For, Against, or Abstain was taken from the combined Northridge West and Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council Boards regarding the revised LADOT plan.

Mr. Johnson assured that the vote “will be available for anyone who wants to see it” and described the voting procedure. “Votes will be tallied . . . and sent to Councilman Smith to advise the DOT.” There was discussion regarding the meaning and application of an “abstain” vote. Mitch Englander noted that “in the City Council an abstention is considered a “no” vote.” Amelia Herrera-Robles said “an “abstention” vote is pretty much what you . . . want it to be . . . in the City Council it’s a “no” vote.”

Several members of the Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council objected to both alternatives presented by the DOT and said they would abstain from voting instead of endorsing either plan.

12. Tallied votes presented to NWNC and PRNC to forward to CD12

The written votes were tallied and counted out loud in front of Mel Mitchell, Tom Johnson, Maha Batta, Pamela Bolin and other Board Members.

It was announced at the Meeting that the NWNC and PRNC Boards **FAILED** to pass (voted down) the revised LADOT Wilbur Avenue road diet plan by a written vote of nine (9) in favor (“YES”), three (3) opposed (“NO”) and seven (7) abstained (“ABSTAIN”). The Neighborhood Councils were advised to count the abstained votes as “no” (opposed) votes. Therefore the Motion failed by one vote (nine out of the ten needed) to get a majority 50% plus one, or ten (10) votes out of the nineteen (19) votes cast needed for the Motion to pass. Below is a vote breakdown.

VOTE COUNT by NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

PORTER RANCH NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL (PRNC)

- 1) Maha Batta = ABSTAIN
- 2) Mandhata Chauhan = YES
- 3) Paula Cracium = ABSTAIN
- 4) Becky Leveque = ABSTAIN
- 5) Mel Mitchell = YES
- 6) Pat Pope = ABSTAIN
- 7) Dick Rippey = YES
- 8) Vas Singh = ABSTAIN

Total number of PRNC votes in favor (“YES”): three (3)

Total number of PRNC votes opposed (“NO”): zero (0)
Total number of PRNC votes abstained (“ABSTAIN”): five (5)
Total combined number of PRNC votes: eight (8)

NORTHRIDGE WEST NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL (NWNC)

- 1) Jerry Bloom = YES
- 2) Pamela Bolin = YES
- 3) Ken Futernick = YES
- 4) Robert Graf = YES
- 5) Tom Johnson = NO
- 6) Craig Michayluk = YES
- 7) Freddie Rymond = YES
- 8) Juativa Spurlock = NO
- 9) Don Ward = NO
- 10) Chris Williams = ABSTAIN
- 11) Glen Wilson = ABSTAIN

Total number of NWNC votes in favor (“YES”): six (6)
Total number of NWNC votes opposed (“NO”): three (3)
Total number of NWNC votes abstained (“ABSTAIN”): two (2)
Total combined number of NWNC votes: eleven (11)

COMBINED VOTES of BOTH NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS

Total number of votes from both NCs in favor (“YES”): nine (9)
Total number of votes from both NCs opposed (“NO”): three (3)
Total number of votes from both NCs abstained (“ABSTAIN”): seven (7)
Total combined number of PRNC and NWNC Board Member votes: nineteen (19)

The tallied votes were presented to the combined Northridge West and Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council Boards to be forwarded to CD12 Councilman Greig Smith. The vote ballots and Stakeholder Speaker Cards were given to Tom Johnson.

Adjournment

MOTION (by Mel Mitchell, seconded by Becky Leveque): to **ADJOURN** the Meeting.

MOTION PASSED without any objections.

The Meeting was **ADJOURNED** at 9:18 p.m.