

Sunland Tujunga Neighborhood Council
Open House / Town Hall Meeting
North Valley Neighborhood City Hall
7747 Foothill Blvd, Tujunga, CA 91042
Tuesday, June 7, 2005

6:00p.m. – The Open House started, with material presented by Marathon Communications (Developer’s Representative) and MWH, Inc. (Developer). Two proposals to replace the Verdugo Hills Golf Course were presented. The first proposal described a retail shopping center that houses shops and restaurants, possibly including a movie theater, bookstore, and upscale market. The second proposal described a community of approximately 320 single-family homes.

7:00p.m. – Bob Schiele announced that the Town Hall Meeting would start in five minutes.

7:05p.m. – The Town Hall Meeting started. Bob Schiele acted as moderator of the meeting. He was there as a representative of the DAC, a committee of the Sunland Tujunga Neighborhood Council (STNC). He invited Mark Seigel to lead the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. Attendance for this event fluctuates throughout the evening but is estimated at well over 100 residents.

7:15p.m. – The next speaker was Dale Thrush, Planning Deputy for Councilmember Wendy Greuel. He discussed some of the basic information about the property in question. He explained that the Verdugo Hills Golf Course consists of 30 acres of golf course and 30 acres of steep hillside. The zoning is a combination of A1 (agricultural) and R8 (residential). He proceeded to answer a number of questions from the audience about zoning, the General Plan, and a brief explanation of the process of getting amendments and variances. He was also asked how the Canyon Hills Development impacts this new development plan.

General Plan land use designation on the golf course side of La Tuna Canyon. Low Medium One – low density family development. 3 acres on the other side of the street is limited commercial. Lots of oak trees on that side. The property owner is not participating tonight. Dale wants to get some answers from the owner to help the community understand what the options really are.

Q – Is the golf course gone? That is the plan but it certainly isn’t a done deal.

Q – What is the dividing line for the different zones? No, I haven’t seen it.

Q – Has the owner asked for the zoning to be changed? Not yet.

Q – Will there be an amendment to the General Plan? To do anything with this property, a zone change will be necessary.

Q – How do you get a zoning change? A brief description was provided by Dale.

Q – Will the Planning Department approve the changes if the community strongly opposes the plans? The Planning Department does not approve, the City Council does. Discussion follows.

Q – Has Wendy seen these plans and has she met with the developers? Wendy and I met with them about 1 _ years ago. She has not seen these current plans. Dale says that it is his hope to have this material presented to the community to hear which they prefer.

Q – Would a traffic study be required? Yes, even if a zoning change isn’t required.

Dale continued by saying that area currently is considered low traffic. (The audience clearly didn't agree with this statement) He amended that statement to say what he meant was that there is low traffic caused by the golf course.

Q – Does the city have any plans to improve Tujunga Canyon? No plan to do this.

Q – Did the owners buy the property knowing the zoning issues? Although I haven't seen the title, they must have known the zoning when they purchased the property.

Q – Will the fact that Canyon Hills managed to get around the General Plan make it easier for this developer to do the same? Some discussion followed but Dale did not believe this was the case.

Q – Zone change and Environmental Assessment – There is a minimum of 1 _ years and possibly much longer to go through this process.

Q – Is Wendy Gruell neutral on this issue? The Council wants the proposals to come from unified community and the developers.

7:35p.m. – Bob Schiele opened the meeting up to comments from the audience. He explained that everyone would be allowed two minutes to ask questions and/or make a comment. Any questions that could not be answered at the meeting would be captured in the minutes to be answered at a later time. There was almost one hour of comments from the floor, entirely in opposition of the development proposals presented. Questions and other options have been summarized in these minutes.

Louise – The traffic – it takes three times as long to get downtown. Dale said Canyon Hills would not be precedent setting. The Planning commission says this is the way it has been done for many years, even if we are right.

Mark Fogwell – 3rd generation resident.- It is surprising how few people know about this and you must get the word out. I've attended many hearings, the city is very polite and they listen to you and do what they are going to do. You need to write to Wendy and let her know what you think. You can't rely on the Planning Commission to do what you think is right. Do your homework.

Bill Eikland – Shadow Hills – Push for an Environmental Assessment. The Marathon people are asking for your comments. The STNC needs to get copies before it gets shoved back in your face.

Bob – STNC has its own questionnaire and encourages everyone to respond.

Nina Royal – STNC Safety Representative – She is opposed to the program. The Golf Course does not impact the safety of the community.

Steve Crouch, representing Canyon Area Preservation, gave an email address for those wishing to be added to his mailing list (capviews@comcast.net). He asked a question that could not be answered at the meeting - Who is the owner, president, or key decision maker of this organization?

Bob Schiele says the Developer did not want to be part of this meeting.

Gary Knowlton talked passionately (not easy to summarize his comments).

Heather Grissgall from Tujunga (Ranger Heather) teaches children about nature. Soon, she doesn't know what she will have left to show them.

Mary Lou Pozzo asked if the Developer comes from California or from out of State. Someone commented that this is all public information and the address should be listed on the County Assessor's records.

Mark ?? from the Glendale Voice – working with CAP, Falcon, Announced the Community Rally against Canyon Hills on Saturday and suggests that people go to this rally to get ideas about how to stop this development.

Electra Kruger from Foothills Trails – Our council has some individuals who want to join the DAC to work on this project.

Karen Simmerman from a part of La Crescenta that falls within Wendy's district. She suggested that you talk to your neighbors and let them know about this. I have done this for two weeks and only one family knew about either of these projects (Canyon Hills and this project). Make copies of the letters to pass around.

Joe Higgenbard – Also lives in same area and I use the golf course. I think it is important to have this in the community. I certainly know about the tremendous traffic in that area already. I would be adamantly opposed to this change.

Rob Warren read from Wendy Greuel's web page about her position regarding Preserving Open Space by Expanding the Verdugo Mountain Park (See attached). His question was would she stand behind those principles in this situation.

Philip Clifford from Tujunga – I hear that you don't want what the developer proposes. We need to be responsible and offer alternatives. How about a park in that area? Be responsible and think about viable alternatives to offer in place of the proposals we have been presented.

Angela Target Knowlton - This is the gateway to Tujunga. Things have changed. We need to work to get it purchased as a park land. The developer will probably skyrocket the cost. I would hate to drive through a condominium city to get to town. It will destroy the quality of life. This has to be a grassroots effort.

Ann Voy from Tujunga asked if that area couldn't be converted into a Senior Center with walking trails, picnic tables, lawn bowling, trying to keep the greenery.

Mary Whitman – Lives across the street from the golf course. I've called 911 for accidents. Traffic can't keep going like this. The street can't handle the additional traffic.

Rapheal ??? – New in the area - 9 years. Where I lived before (San Marino), if I fell, people would walk by. The people here are my friends and I want to keep it the way it is.

John Ewanus – moved here in 1980 for the same reason you all did. We live here because we don't want to live in Brentwood. Commercial development is fine – look on Commerce or Foothill.

??? Christianson – The Albertson development didn't come out the way they promised. We have to make them deal with us, not break promises and leave.

Linda Grekko – La Tuna Canyon Homeowners Association – You have our support. We see the traffic.

Candi Young – Tujunga. I'm a psychologist. Don't take the survey or it will be used against. It is very bias. She gives examples. This is extremely long process. At Canyon Hills, we are at the end and it is important that you all get involved. That will impact this development because the developer needs to see that we are a united community.

Debra Zimmerman – I thought this survey is very biased, too. We need to become community activists.

Jerry Rottinger – We have to think globally. I would like to see a farm there and at the Kmart site.

Daniel Evans – Verdugo Hills Golf Course President – A family oriented type of situation. I have enjoyed three generations there. I wouldn't want this any thing. Let's preserve this thing.

Jenny Benaro – lived here 35 years and we see the golf course every day. We watch this golf course by all ages, morning noon and night, seven days a week. Where else will we go. It is a family thing and get behind the effort to stop this development.

Nedd Brown – Principal of a local school that has a team that uses the golf course. It is one of the few places we can take the children.

Bob Schiele asked if there was anyone in the audience who wanted to speak up to support the developer or either proposals, since the discussion had been very much one-sided. Although others kept talking, no one spoke in favor directly of either proposal.

Nora Grubber – I think it is a funny thing to ask because I don't believe there is a single person in the room who supports the developer.

Mark Seigel – RLUC committee. A positive – at least they have looked at what may fit in with our neighborhood.

Debi Ray asked if there wasn't a way to sustain the golf course and possibly add some commercial buildings or housing around that.

Nina Royal said that they have been having tournaments at this golf course for over 20 years and wonders what will happen to those.

??? Intecia – Lived in Tujunga for 27 years. Very encouraged by the turnout at this meeting. Who is going to keep us informed?

Bob Schiele said that the DAC and STNC will keep the community aware, as well as the local paper. Everyone should make sure they check out the web pages and/or get on email/ mailing lists.

Taylor ?? – A student from the area said that if they put in more homes, the local schools will get even more crowded.

Sharon ??? from Montrose – The Golf Course provides a great outlet for the children of the community. If we can help increase the revenue from the golf course, maybe we can keep it.

Anna Maria Plannis – lived here 30 years. Just as we are getting ready to start golfing, it is going away. She asked everyone to drive 30 miles an hour on Tujunga because she knows what it is like to be in an accident there.

Illene from the Verdugo Hills Tuesday Club – I live in Glendale but this community is home. We all have to stick together and let this not happen.

Larry Plant from Tujunga suggested that representatives should try to meet with Wendy at her next breakfast in a couple of weeks.

Bill Eckland – spoke directly to the developer's representative still at the meeting. We will see you in court and we will win. We urge you to reconsider before closing escrow.

Not sure the speaker's name – He urged everyone to realize that the drawings are purely conceptual and are not the real things. I speak from experience – reality is often very different.

Julie McKissic – Shadow Hills. Where I live off Wentworth, it used to be peaceful but the noise has become very bad. This is what you are going to experience.

Lori Lusero – My house is on the map. What about the trash? Now we are going to have all this. It is out of hand.

Ben Vorshary – lived in the hills for 20 years. They are going to destroy the oak trees and the view.

Chick Lusero – I'm very proud of this community. Everyone works hard and the developers want to change what we have here. How much cement has to be built before we say 'enough is

enough'. I want a message to go to Wendy. She needs to listen to us because the same people who voted her in can vote her out.

Tom Ellely – Tujunga. – It is used by kids and seniors. How can we keep it as it is? Ask those organizations (collegiate, LPGA) to help.

Someone asked if the golf course is making a profit? The developer answered that it is not making a profit.

Dorothy Luonis suggested keeping it as is currently exists, but add a miniature golf course to increase revenue.

8:30p.m. – The meeting was adjourned

Minutes provided by Elsa Waters
