

StudioCityPatch

EMOTIONAL HEARING OVER HARVARD-WESTLAKE BRIDGE at Land Use Committee

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ABOUT 75 PEOPLE SHOWED UP TO OFFER INPUT INTO A [HARVARD-WESTLAKE CAMPUS PARKING IMPROVEMENT PLAN](#) THAT WILL MEAN PUTTING UP A THREE-STORY PARKING GARAGE AND A BRIDGE OVER COLDWATER CANYON AVENUE.

PEOPLE FROM ALL SIDES SPOKE ABOUT THE ISSUE, AND HARVARD-WESTLAKE REPRESENTATIVES CORRECTED SOME MISPERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE PROJECT, IN THIS FIRST PUBLIC DISCUSSION AT THE LAND USE COMMITTEE OF THE STUDIO CITY NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL.

SOME OF THE TESTIMONY WAS EMOTIONAL FROM ALL SIDES OF THE ISSUE. (SEE ALL THE VIDEOS FROM ALL SIDES ABOVE.)

KEYIN YANDERSCHANS, WHO LIVES IN THE AREA AND HAS SONS IN THE SCHOOL, SAID, "THE BIGGEST CONCERN I HAVE IS SAFETY FIRST AND FOREMOST." HE TALKED ABOUT HAVING ATTENDED THREE MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR 16-YEAR-OLD YOUTHS KILLED BY CAR ACCIDENTS IN THE AREA OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. HE SAID HE IS SUPPORTIVE OF THE BRIDGE AND PARKING STRUCTURE PARTICULARLY BECAUSE IT WILL KEEP PARKING TO A SPECIFIC AREA. (SEE VIDEO ABOVE.)

THE 873 STUDENTS AND 230 COACHES AND TEACHERS WHO COME TO THE SCHOOL EVERY DAY HAVE A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF CAR-POOLERS AND MANY TAKE BUSES. THE PLAN CALLS FOR A 750-CAR GARAGE AND WILL ELIMINATE PARKING THE 40 TO 50 CARS ON THE EAST SIDE OF COLDWATER AND WILL AVOID STUDENTS PARKING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

"WE TAKE PARKING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD VERY SERIOUSLY," SAID VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SCHOOL JOHN AMATO. "WE HAVE TAKEN THE STUDENTS OUT OF SCHOOL TO HAVE THEM MOVE

THE CAR IF WE FIND OUT ABOUT IT."

IT IS MOSTLY SENIORS DRIVING TO THE SCHOOL, AND THEY WILL PARK ON THE SECOND AND THIRD LEVEL OF THE GARAGE AND WALK ACROSS THE BRIDGE, AND NO TRAFFIC LIGHT IS EXPECTED AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE SCHOOL OR PARKING STRUCTURE, AMATO SAID.

"THERE ARE ENOUGH STOPS ALONG COLDWATER, WE DON'T WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THAT," AMATO SAID. HE LATER ADDED, "I WANT TO CLEAR UP SOME MAJOR MISINFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT THAT IS OUT THERE."

HE SAID:

- * THE SCHOOL IS NOT GOING TO INCREASE IN SIZE OR AMOUNT OF CARS OR TRAFFIC COMING TO THE SCHOOL.
- * THE PROJECT IS NOT TWO YEARS AND NINE MONTHS OF CONSTRUCTION, AND THAT ALTHOUGH THERE THERE WILL BE SOME ROAD CLOSURES, IT WILL NOT BE AS BAD AS THE RECENT TRUNK LINE PROJECT.
- * ABOUT 135,000 CUBIC YARDS OF DIRT, OR 100 TRUCK TRIPS (50 IN AND OUT) WILL BE NEEDED.
- * ABOUT 104 PROTECTED TREES WOULD BE REMOVED, 10 LIVE OAK AND 94 CALIFORNIA BLACK WALNUT TREES (ABOUT 200 TOTAL TREES AND SHRUBS OVERALL), BUT EXPERTS HAVE SAID THAT THERE IS A FATAL DISEASE AFFECTING MOST OF THE TREES AND THEY MAY HAVE TO BE REMOVED ANYWAY. THE PROJECT CALLS FOR 416 TREES TO BE ADDED TO THE AREA.
- * THE TOP OF THE PARKING GARAGE WILL BE USED AS A GREEN FIELD FOR LACROSSE AND SOCCER AND LIT DURING THE WEEK UNTIL 8 P.M. IN WINTER MONTHS. AMATO SHOWED THE NETTING TO BE USED TO CATCH BALLS FROM FLYING OFF THE FIELD AND GOING DOWN ONTO COLDWATER.

AMATO AND SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVE RENEE SCHILLACI HAVE CANVASSED ABOUT 40 HOMES WITHIN 500 FEET OF THE PROJECT AND HAVE HAD "A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF SUPPORT," SCHILLACI SAID.

LOCAL RESIDENT JEFF MILLER SPOKE IN SUPPORT OF THE PROJECT AND SAID HE LIVES ON BLAIRWOOD DRIVE NOT FAR FROM THE PROPOSED FACILITY. "I'M NOT LOOKING FORWARD TO COLDWATER BEING CLOSED AGAIN, BUT THIS IS GOING TO BE GOOD FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD."

JENNIFER ROYMAN, A RESIDENT OF VAN NOORD AVENUE IN THE AREA, SAID SHE REPRESENTS 80 MEMBERS OF SAVE COLDWATER CANYON WHO ARE AGAINST THE PROJECT (SEE VIDEO). "THIS IS IRREVOCABLE AND WILL FUNDAMENTALLY ALTER THE NEIGHBORHOOD." SHE OBJECTED TO THE BRIDGE AND STRUCTURE CHANGING THE THE "HALLMARK SCENIC HIGHWAY" AND THE PRIVATE BRIDGE OVER A PUBLIC STREET.

ROTHMAN CALLED THE PROJECT "CANYON-GEDDON 2" (A TAKE-OFF OF WHAT PATCK DUBBED THE RECENT CLOSURE OF COLDWATER CANYON FOR NEARLY A MONTH).

ALEX IZBECKI, ANOTHER NEIGHBOR AGAINST THE PROJECT, SAID, "THIS IS A PRICE OF NATURE THAT WILL NEVER COME BACK ONCE IT IS DESTROYED."

REV. DAN JUSTIN OF THE ST. MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS EPISCOPAL CHURCH HAD HIGH PRAISE FOR THE SCHOOL, WHICH THEY SHARE PARKING LOTS WITH, BUT SAID HE WAS SPEAKING AGAINST THE PROJECT.

"I TALKED TO ONE OF THE PEOPLE PLANNING THIS AND THEY SAID THAT THERE MAY BE SOME CLOSURES, BUT THAT WILL ONLY HAPPEN DURING THE WEEKENDS, AND I SAID THAT THAT WAS WHAT I WAS CONCERNED ABOUT," SAID THE PASTOR, WHOSE CHURCH WAS CLOSED AROUND EASTER TIME THIS PAST YEAR. (SEE VIDEO ABOVE.)

DANA WITT SAID SHE SAW SNAKES, DEER, RACCOON, SKUNKS AND MANY OTHER WILDLIFE CREATURES AROUND HER HOUSE ON POTOSI AVENUE FOR THE PAST 16 YEARS.

SHE POINTED TO THE DRAWINGS OF THE PROJECT AND SAID, "THIS LOOKS LIKE LAS VEGAS TO ME."

TIM HYDE, A RESIDENT OF GOODLAND AVENUE FOR 17 YEARS, POINTED OUT THAT HARVARD-WESTLAKE HAS BROUGHT UP STUDENTS OF GOOD CHARACTER AND MENTIONED THE RECENT COMING OUT OF JASON COLLINS, WHO WENT TO SCHOOL THERE.

KARO TOROSSIAN OF LOS ANGELES COUNCILMAN PAUL KREKORIAN'S OFFICE SAID THE COUNCIL MEMBER WASN'T READY TO TAKE A STAND UNTIL THE FULL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT IS COMPLETE, BUT SAID HE WOULD LIKE COMMITMENTS FROM THE SCHOOL THAT NO GARAGE ACCESS SPILL OUT TO ANY OF THE SIDE STREETS IN THE AREA, NOR THAT CONSTRUCTION TRUCKS BE DRIVEN THROUGH THOSE STREETS. THE SCHOOL OFFICIALS SAID THEY WOULD AGREE TO THAT REQUEST.

MEANWHILE, MANY OF THE LAND USE COMMITTEE SPOKE AGAINST THE IDEA OF THE PROJECT, BUT NO OFFICIAL ACTION WAS TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE.

COMMITTEE MEMBER MEL RANDALL SUGGESTED THE SCHOOL FIND SOMETHING THAT "IS LESS ENVIRONMENTALLY DAMAGING AND PROPOSE THAT," WHILE BOARD MEMBER JOANN DEUTSCH POINTED OUT THAT HARVARD-WESTLAKE HAS NOT BEEN MUCH INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY.

COMMITTEE MEMBER RICHARD NEIDERBERG SAID HE SPENT MORE THAN AN HOUR QUIZZING ENGINEERS ABOUT THE PROJECT AT A RECENT INFORMATIONAL MEETING AND SAID, "THE SIGHT LINE OF THE TOP OF THE GARAGE WILL NOT BE VISIBLE FOR MANY OF THE HOMEOWNERS AND THIS SEEMS LIKE IT IS A GOOD WAY TO STASH AWAY THE CARS AND GET THEM OFF COLDWATER."

Committee chairperson Lisa Sarkin pointed out that some of the suggestions by the public wasn't feasible, nor within the authority of their committee. She pointed out that high water tables prevent underground parking in the area, and that shuttling to a place like the Sportsman's Lodge parking area wasn't possible.

"I can't think of a place around here that could possibly be a place to shuttle that many people or hold that many cars," Sarkin said. "But we have a long period of time for this, and there will be many more public hearings and discussion about this issue."