

Mayor's Cabinet Meeting Highlights

Wednesday November 26, 2014

Below are highlights from the November 26, 2014 Mayor's Cabinet meeting, a monthly meeting with the mayor and City commission chairs or their representatives. Please note that this meeting is intended to exchange information on commission activities; no official actions are taken.

REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Architectural Commission – Chair Barry Bernstein

Many well-designed new projects that have come before the commission including a five-story, 20-unit condo project at Palm Dr. and Beverly Blvd. The commission is working on selecting projects completed over the past three years for the design awards. In the past few years, Rodeo Drive has been transformed with many new and remodeled stores.

Charitable Solicitations Commission – Vice Chair Murray Fischer

The commission evaluated and approved 23 permit requests and 13 financial statements. Seven charities are listed on the website as not meeting City's 50% requirement for proceeds to go to the charities. Six organizations are listed on the website as consistently failing to file a financial report. The commission is working with organizations that publicize fundraising events in the City to ask them to encourage the charities to obtain a permit. The commission would like more authority to cite and fine offenders. The commission is developing an awards program to recognize outstanding charities.

Cultural Heritage Commission – Chair Maralee Beck

The commission held two special meetings in November to consider proposed changes to the Historic Preservation Ordinance. They attended a Team Beverly Hills meeting to educate team members on the commission and encourage them to apply. In concert with the Recreation and Parks commission, they recommended that a plaque be installed in Will Rogers Park and the fountain renamed in honor of Margaret Anderson, the original owner of the Beverly Hills Hotel. The City Council did the first reading on an ordinance to create a new incentive program for owners of landmarked properties that would encourage them to restore and maintain their properties.

Design Review Commission – Chair John Wyka

The commission is considering recent projects for design awards. They have 15 candidates and the winners will be announced in February. The commission feels that

development in the hillside areas of Beverly Hills has gotten out of hand and would like to extend their authority to those areas. The commission recommended forming an ad hoc committee to study other similarly situated cities to create a comparative study of design review requirements, staffing resources and enforcement in hillside areas with a recommendation on how to expand design review. The commission will continue to focus on the many fences and hedges, which detract from the garden-like atmosphere of the City, especially between Sunset and Santa Monica Boulevards. The commission recognizes that there is an enforcement problem with existing hedges, but believes the real problem is the existence of fences and hedges separating front yards from the public domain. The commission will ask the City Council to take up the issue.

Fine Art Commission – Chair Sandy Pressman

Acquisition of the Carol Bove sculpture “Io” is moving forward. The commission is waiting to hear details about fabrication. The commission is looking to relocate the Joan Brown obelisk. The first reading of the Fine Art Ordinance was presented to the City Council on Nov. 18; the City Council raised several questions, which were discussed by commissioners and will be addressed at the Dec. 9 City Council meeting. The commission agreed to support a donation of a Woods Davey sculpture as a gift to the City from the estate of Carol Weisman. Answers to questions from the Marian Goodman Gallery about the William Kentridge piece “World on its Hind Legs” sculpture were discussed; staff presented a Photoshopped image of a possible siting on Burton Way to the commission. Slow but steady progress is being made on fencing for the Kusama piece.

Health and Safety Commission – Chair Myra Lurie

The commission co-hosted a successful seniors collaboration event at Greystone Mansion on Nov. 5; the event brought together all the agencies that serve seniors in the area and was a great opportunity for networking. A very successful two-day CERT training for local businesses was held at the Hilton; CERT classes for residents will be held in the spring. The new commission chair and vice chair are Myra Lurie and Lisa Kay Schwartz, respectively. Out-going commissioners Stacia Kopiekin and Gail Millan were recognized. The Healthy City program for Beverly Hills restaurants is being developed; the commission has many questions about the program. The November Healthy City Lunch and Learn event was well attended. The rate of children opting out of vaccinations in the school district is unusually high. The commission is looking to bring back the Health and Safety Awards. The latest Dangerstopper videos talk about avoiding dog bites and cyber safety.

Human Relations Commission – Chair Rochelle Ginsburg

The commission has selected the winner of the Embrace Civility Award, which will be presented on Dec. 9; the winner is a group of neighbors who have developed a block party program and institution that has created strong bonds for their neighborhood. Going forward, the commission will be focusing less on events and more on learning how to manage issues relating to landlord-tenant relations, if the City Council does decide to grand that responsibility to the commission. The commission will bring the Civil City/Civil Streets program under the umbrella of the Embrace Civility program.

Planning Commission – Chair Howard Fisher

The commission held a special meeting to set priorities, which will be presented to the City Council. The five priorities include establishing design review for the hillside areas, and changing ordinances to make it easier for residents to build gray-water systems and drought tolerant landscapes. Code enforcement is a serious issue; the current system is complaint based and many violations are not being addressed, e.g. a house off of Coldwater Park that is being rented for frequent events. The commission is supporting changes to the Historic Preservation ordinance, such as defining what it means for a building to be “published” in the digital age and providing incentives that better meet the needs of owners of historic properties.

Public Works Commission – Vice Chair Sandra Aronberg

The commission is evaluating options for finding more water locally, including shallow groundwater. MWD is offering a water efficient landscaping class to Beverly Hills water customers in West Hollywood. The commission will be promoting more conservation, including promoting water efficient landscaping. The commission has begun discussions about the pros and cons of artificial turf. A computer program called Triton that would detect leaks and display water usage is in the testing phase. Other issues discussed include keeping the public elevators functional and street and sidewalk improvements.

Recreation and Parks Commission – Chair Howard Rosoff

Robbie Anderson will appear at a Tea and Talk event at Greystone to promote his new book on the history of Beverly Hills. A holiday event will be held at Greystone on Dec. 14. The Firefighters Association held its annual senior luncheon. AYSO championships will be held Dec. 20-22. Two gateways at Wilshire and San Vicente and Olympic and Spalding will be completed in mid-2015. The theater at Greystone has been remodeled. The new playground equipment at Roxbury Park will emphasize obstacles and building upper body strength. A public-private project to completely restore the Electric Fountain in Beverly Gardens Park is almost completely funded. A public meeting to discuss renovations at La Cienega Park will be held Dec. 10. The commission is working through issues surrounding the proposed dog park.

Traffic and Parking Commission – Commissioner Jake Manaster

All the red light cameras have been removed in anticipation of the contract with a new company; there will be a trial period with the new radar-based cameras and notification in advance. Under the old system, the number of tickets issued exceeded 1,600 a month; the cameras are believed to significantly improve traffic safety at those intersections. The commission's suggestions for priorities include taxi franchising, regulating tour buses and traffic safety in Trousdale. The commission had a look at the first administrative citation that will be issued by parking control officers for certain violations. The commission has asked for clarity about types of permits required for large parties in residential areas. A lot of questions regarding preferential parking in residential neighborhoods have come before the commission. There have been a lot of complaints recently about traffic noise in certain areas of the City.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Two major issues coming up at the next City Council meeting are taxi franchises and Santa Monica Boulevard reconstruction. Happy Thanksgiving!

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