

Harbor Gateway North Neighborhood Special Board Meeting

Tuesday, May 4, 2021

Held via Zoom webinar

Present: Franz Rodriguez (Vice Chairperson), Rosalie Preston (Recording Secretary), La Juana Mitchell (Treasurer), John Ward (District 1), Joan Jacobs (District 2), Arvie Powell (District 4), Llewyn Fowlkes (District 5), Jackie Jackson (District 6), Angela Springs (District 8), Richard Lee (Youth Advocate), Janet Mitchell (Outreach/Communications Representative), and Eva Pace (At Large Representative)

1) Welcome/introductions/roll call of Board members: In the absence of Chair David Matthews, Vice Chairperson Franz Rodriguez called the meeting to order at 8:06 p.m. This was followed by the roll call of Board members.

2) Approval of a position letter and filing of a Community Impact Statement for Duke Brothers LLC (DBA Buddha Company South Bay) cannabis retail application, 13222 Estrella (Council 21-0420-S1), in District 4, as recommended by the Planning and Land Use Committee: District 1 Representative and Planning and Land Use Committee Chair John Ward read out the draft letter recommended by the Planning and Land Use Committee at their May 1 meeting. It was moved by Rosalie Preston and seconded by Joan Jacobs to adopt the letter as recommended. Various Board members commented on the potential impacts of the retail cannabis location, including on traffic along 135th Street, safety of the residential community to the west, lack of the report from Southeast Division of LAPD, lack of the required report from the substance abuse organization, and statistics on traffic issues along 135th Street.

Caitlin Muldoon, Council District 15 Field Deputy, said that she was present to listen and to clarify, as the staff member responsible for cannabis business issues, Aksel Palacios, was unavailable for this meeting. She acknowledged that the Neighborhood Council felt there was not adequate notification of the application, having received a notice from the Department of Cannabis Regulation in early March. However, she said that the City Council vote was not the final approval; it will go back to the Department of Cannabis Regulation first. Council District 15 did connect the Harbor Gateway South and Harbor City Neighborhood Councils to the applicant for the retail cannabis application proposed for the Torrance Healing Center, 1513 W. Sepulveda Blvd. in January 2021 because they reached out to CD 15. There was another applicant for the Harbor Gateway South area but they did not reach out to the community, so CD 15 did not contact them. She said that Duke Brothers did reach out to CD 15 and Alison Becker, CD 15 Senior Advisor, Aksel Palacios, CD 15 Planning and Economic Development Deputy, and David Matthews, HGNNC Chair, toured their facility in December 2020. Aksel talked with two HGNNC Board members today. Board members then expressed concern that CD 15 talks with certain Board members but not all and that such meetings should be in a public setting.

Stakeholders then commented. District 4 stakeholder C. Jordan said that he is a 40 plus year resident of the District 4 neighborhood and thinks that the proposed retail cannabis store is too close to the 135th Street School, 801 W. 135th Street, and the Home Assembly Church, 13515 S. Figueroa Street. There is already another retail cannabis location on Rosecrans. He also expressed concern about the lack of transparency from the applicant and the process of approval.

Jen Harris, Behavioral Health Sciences, 15519 Crenshaw, Blvd., said she commends the Neighborhood Council for doing their homework on this application. Behavioral Health Services has been operating as a non-profit since 1983. They have done education on the harm that the use of marijuana can have on community members, especially youth. Marijuana use has been linked to youth developing psychosis and schizophrenia as their brains are still developing until the 20's. She offered their expertise and services to the HGNNC community.

(Janet Mitchell left the meeting at 8:55 p.m.)

District 5 stakeholder Lu Watson clarified that Southeast LAPD Captain Louis Pagliolonga had made a statement that he would oppose Duke Brothers LLC application at the April 29 Southeast LAPD weekly conference call with the community. However, the notice from the Department of Cannabis Regulation was sent to the Chief of Police, rather than to the Southeast Division as the Department of Cannabis Regulation application requires.

The Board then voted 9-0-2 (Rodriguez Ward) to approve sending the letter of opposition and file a Community Impact Statement before the 10 a.m. City Council meeting on May 5, where the Duke Brothers LLC application is on the agenda as item 23. District 5 stakeholder Lu Watson recommended that the HGNNC send an email to stakeholders with the City Council meeting information and how to file public comment to the Council File.

3) General public comment on non-agenda items that are within the Board's jurisdiction:

There was no public comment.

4) Announcements: There were no announcements.

5) Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Minutes taken by Rosalie Preston, Secretary