

**CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH
[DRAFT] PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
SEPTEMBER 10, 2014**

A Regular Meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Manhattan Beach, California, was held on the 10th day of September, 2014, at the hour of 6:30 p.m., in the City Council Chambers, at 1400 Highland Avenue, in said City.

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Andreani, Bordokas, Conaway, Hersman, Chairperson Ortmann
Absent: None
Staff Present: Richard Thompson, Community Development Director
Angelica Ochoa, Associate Planner
Erik Zandvliet, Traffic Engineer
Rosemary Lackow, Recording Secretary

2. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION - None

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – July 9, 2014

A motion was MADE and SECONDED (Hersman/Bordokas) to **APPROVE** the minutes of July 9, 2014, as submitted.

AYES: Conaway, Hersman Chairperson Ortmann
NOES: None
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: Andreani, Bordokas

4. PUBLIC HEARING

- 09/10/14-2. Consideration of a Use Permit to Remodel an Existing Multi-Tenant Commercial Building for a New Pre-School (Daycare), Playground and Parking Lot at 1114-1126 22nd Street (Chalk Preschool)

Director Thompson made introductory remarks and introduced Associate Planner Ochoa who gave an oral report using a slide presentation. Ms. Ochoa summarized the staff recommendation that the Commission conduct the public hearing, accept public testimony, discuss and provide direction to staff on the subject proposal. Her slide presentation covered the site plan and map including surrounding streets and uses, the details of the project site and proposal, existing conditions including current/past commercial uses, driveways, site photos, public and City department comments, recommended conditions if approved, and findings that need to be made for a Use Permit.

Chairperson Ortmann invited the Commissioners to direct questions to staff.

In response to questions from Commissioner Andreani, Associate Planner Ochoa noted that: California State DSS (Department of Social Services) establishes the number of students that can attend based on the amount of outdoor play area provided (1 student per 75 square feet outdoor play area) and based on this, attendance is capped at 98 children. Ms. Ochoa advised Commissioner Andreani that questions regarding the preschool operations (e.g. food preparation and expected number of part time vs. full time students expected) would best be addressed by the applicant and questions regarding the traffic and parking lot circulation should be directed to the City's Traffic Engineer.

In response to an inquiry from Commissioner Conaway, Ms. Ochoa indicated that she did not know the disposition of the businesses that are being replaced by the school except that she had notice recently that the businesses have vacated the site.

Chairperson Ortmann invited the Traffic Engineer to make a presentation to the Planning Commission.

Erik Zandvliet, Traffic Engineer for the City gave the Commission an overview of the project and summary of the findings of the Traffic Impact Study prepared for the project which includes several operational recommendations to be contained in a TOMP (Traffic Operations and Management Plan), and this plan would be incorporated into the conditions of approval.

Mr. Zandvliet noted that he agreed with the report's overall conclusion that there would be no significant traffic impacts. **Mr. Zandvliet** also explained how drop-off and pick-up would occur, with access solely from a two-way driveway on Cedar and the use of a staff monitor(s) to ensure flow in and out of parking spaces and on and off the site, with no loading or unloading recommended off-site on adjacent streets. **Mr. Zandvliet** emphasized that a preschool unlike elementary schools has staggered arrival and pick-up times is why it is expected that the area on site including the amount of parking spaces, will be sufficient to accommodate 98 students. **Mr. Zandvliet** stated that he does not expect there to be undue amount of cut-through traffic in the adjoining residential neighborhood to the east nor does he think it is necessary to impose parking restrictions on the adjoining streets. Should unanticipated problems arise, additional measures can be implemented administratively.

In response to Commissioner Bordokas **Mr. Zandvliet** noted that while it is not typical for a Use Permit to restrict commercial parking in front of a business for its customers, some restrictions or conditions on adjoining street use have been imposed in use permits for some schools. There was a brief discussion as to a condition proposed by staff that the school be prohibited from teacher parking and student unloading on the 22nd Street frontage adjoining the site. Development Director Thompson explained that location is very important and he believes the proposed condition to limit parking for loading/unloading students only on private property was borrowed from a prior application by Chalk for a school proposed on Manhattan Beach Boulevard which is a much busier street. **Mr. Zandvliet** summarized that this type of condition is at the discretion of the Commission, and from a traffic engineering perspective it is possible to allow use of 22nd Street west of Cedar Avenue for parking.

In response to a question from Commissioner Andreani, **Mr. Zandvliet** stated that he believes that 17 spaces should be sufficient even with 10 staff on the premises because not all staff members, nor all 98 students are expected to be present simultaneously during the peak use times. **Mr. Zandvliet** clarified that the zoning code for preschool parking takes into account the staff parking needs. He also stated that the net increase in vehicle trips is not considered to be significant because the streets adjoining the school site (Cedar Avenue and 22nd Street) currently operate at a level of service "A", far below their capacity and the number of vehicles amount being added is relatively small.

In response to a question from Commissioner Andreani regarding possible impact on Cedar after Manhattan Village is developed, **Mr. Zandvliet** acknowledged there could be some impact, depending on whether traffic exiting the mall would be allowed to cross Marine.

In response to a question from Commissioner Hersman regarding loss of revenue from the existing businesses being vacated, Director Thompson noted that the loss of City revenues was not studied in this case, but it is not expected to be significant due to the relatively small size of the existing businesses that would be replaced by the school.

In response to a question from Commissioner Conway, **Mr. Zandvliet** indicated that although the intersection of 18th Street and Cedar Avenue was not analyzed in the traffic study, it is his professional opinion it will not be significantly impacted and will remain at its current high level of performance because it is well under its capacity.

In response to a question from Chairperson Ortmann **Mr. Zandvliet** explained that the traffic study's conclusion that there would be no net additional adverse traffic impact is based on the assumption that all of the commercial spaces on the site would be occupied.

There being no other questions from the Commissioners, Chairperson Ortmann invited the applicant to address the Commission.

Pat Killen, project architect explained the background and planning process for the proposed school, including the site was being considered for medical office uses which would require 60 parking spaces. **Mr. Killen** summarized the site layout including the play area, access and parking, and proposed improvements to existing structures (main classroom building and motor skills development space). **Mr. Killen** stated that the applicant hosted a neighborhood meeting on August 28th. He noted that Chalk has substantial experience as they operate five other similar schools. Two local schools (Westwood/Venice) average a 50/50 breakdown in the amount of students that will be part time and full time. **Mr. Killen** also explained that there will be a small kitchen but it will not be used for preparing but rather the distribution of lunches brought from home. He concluded by stating that, by comparison with the Manhattan Beach Boulevard location for the previous Chalk proposal, this is a much better site.

In response to an inquiry from Commissioner Andreani, **Mr. Killen** summarized the neighborhood meeting: 6 residents attended and he felt that their concerns regarding noise and traffic were addressed. He felt that it helped for the neighbors to understand the proposed operations, including how the parents and staff would be involved, with staff closely monitoring and supervising the arrival and departure of students during peak times. Regarding noise **Mr. Killen** had explained to the neighbors that only one class at a time will be using the outdoor area. **Mr. Killen** responded to Commissioner Andreani that "special events" while possible are not programmed for the school, that the playground surface (but not the parking lot) will be permeable and there will be a low-impact drainage system (already required through the city's "Green Building Code") and drip irrigation.

In response to Commissioner Conway, **Mr. Killen** explained the location of the school office on the east side of the site. He emphasized that the play areas will be located adjacent to all of the classrooms. Access will be from the office, then to classrooms and play areas. Children will be kept away from the streets. The frontage along 22nd Street will not have an entrance but will be greatly enhanced aesthetically so as to engage the building façade with the street, and not appear as a back of building. Commissioner Conway encouraged **Mr. Killen** to investigate using more landscaping especially on the east side for acoustical benefit.

Mr. Killen clarified to Commissioner Hersman that the play areas will be completely fenced and will not be accessible to the parking lot.

Angela Johnson, representing Chalk as the proposed school's Director, responded to questions. **Ms. Johnson** explained the operation in more detail, and that the number of teachers will be dependent on the number of children present in each classroom, but that their goal is a 10:1 ratio of children to teacher. **Ms. Johnson** explained that the school uses a key fob program so that they know in the case of an emergency, where each child is and there will always be someone on a full-time basis to staff.

In response to a question from Commissioner Bordokas, **Ms. Johnson** explained that the process whereby the state DSS certifies the school in advance to opening its doors.

In response to a question from Commissioner Andreani, **Ms. Johnson** stated that both Chalk schools in Venice and Westwood have close to a 50/50 ratio of part vs. full-time students and this was the basis for their proposal for Manhattan Beach. Regarding the protocol for children to bring their own food, **Ms. Johnson** noted that the school provides snacks but they have found that parents prefer to provide food because it is common for children to have a special diet and allergies.

Ms. Johnson confirmed to Commissioner Hersman that Chalk does not require potty training as a condition of admittance and that 10 children in a classroom, depending on the age, may only need one teacher. With 2-year olds the ratio of children to teacher is generally less than older children.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Chairperson Ortmann invited the public to address the Planning Commission.

John Dumond, 1135 22nd Street for 17 years, is concerned mainly about on-site parking and possible impacts to traffic due to congestion in the on-site parking lot for the school. He noted that there is no parking on the north side of 22nd Street and on the east side of Cedar. Specific concerns are that 17 parking spaces provided on site will be needed mainly for the staff which he estimates will be 13 (10 teachers, 2 per classroom plus 3 non-teacher staff) which will leave only about 5 parking spaces on and off the site that will be available for the parents to park and drop off or pick up their children. He is concerned that the process will involve up to 50 people at a time needing to drop off children and with spaces already occupied by staff this could result in congestion with cars backing up into the street. **Mr. Dumond** also noted concern that there will be special events as noted on their website that mentions a carnival to be held soon at their Venice location.

Chairperson Ortmann asked **Mr. Dumond** whether he thought this type of use could, as a tradeoff for the neighborhood, serve as a good transition between the commercial uses on Sepulveda and the residences to the east, as opposed to continuing to have uses similar to the five businesses that have existed on the site. **Mr. Dumond** responded that the pre-existing uses are now gone, and at this time he feels a medical use is a more viable replacement use. He would prefer a medical office use because he doesn't think it would cause parking congestion like the school. In addition **Mr. Dumond** stated that he believes that noise from the outdoor play areas will be for at least 8 hours a day because each classroom will be using the play area throughout the day and he confirmed to Chairperson Ortmann that the Schooner's bar was an existing use when he bought his property.

Claudia Elliot, resident on 22nd Street, east of Cedar requested and received clarification that the students are proposed to be dropped off in the parking lot and not in 22nd Street. She is concerned that with parking already limited on 22nd Street that if there is additional parking in her block coming from the school, she will lose a parking space typically available in front of her house that she needs for her disabled husband. She is also concerned that 21st Street would be used as a loop to get back to Cedar. Chairperson Ortmann responded that staff does not believe that such traffic intrusion will occur, however staff will be monitoring the school and adjustments, if needed would be made.

Monica Griffin, 20th Street east of Cedar expressed concern regarding parking and traffic and in particular that Cedar would be used as a bypass to avoid the intersection at Marine and Sepulveda. Because the drop off could be occurring in the peak "rush" hours, she asked that the City carefully consider the traffic study. She asked if other traffic studies have been done for other preschools in the City.

Director Thompson noted that the City has a lot of experience with preschools including the drop off and pick up process, and noted it is common for adjustments to be made for operations. However, staff doesn't expect there to be a need for all of the teachers to be there at the same time and believes this site is a good location, and staff is comfortable in assuming that at no time will all 98 parents show up at the same time at the school.

There being no other speakers: Chairperson Ortmann closed the public hearing and invited the applicant to address the Commission and respond to public comments.

Pat Killen addressed street parking and noted that two additional spaces on adjoining streets (one on 22nd and one on Cedar) will be available for public parking. **Mr. Killen** stated his opinion that regarding potential optional commercial uses for the site, a medical office use would be more intensive (requiring 60 parking spaces for this site) and he believes a retail use would generate considerably more traffic. Therefore he believes that the proposal by comparison to other commercial uses, would be a good transitional use. Furthermore, the City of Manhattan Beach has very high development standards for preschool parking compared to other "high end" cities. Mr. Killen confirmed that Chalk will be doing a ground lease and concluded by stating that he believes that Manhattan Beach is lucky to get this new preschool development because cost of land and land requirements for schools are usually disincentives.

Angela Johnson clarified that the staff works on staggered schedules and not all the teachers will be on-site the entire school day, from 7 am to 6 p.m. **Ms. Johnson** also stated that not all teachers drive to the school and some parents bring their child in a stroller, not a car. For example, at 7 am there will likely be only 1 or 2 classrooms in use with 2 or 3 staff members. Regarding play area noise, Ms. Johnson explained that the children will be in the play area only 2.5 hours in the am and 2.5 hours in the pm.

COMMISSION DISCUSSION

There being no more persons wishing to speak, Chair Ortmann closed the public hearing and invited the Planning Commission to discuss the project.

Commissioner Bordokas stated that she is excited about the proposal, noting there is a real shortage for preschools in Manhattan Beach. Many children have to be taken to schools outside of the City.

Commissioner Conaway stated his support for the project and believes that this location is superior to the earlier Chalk application on Manhattan Beach Boulevard and believes the preschool is sorely needed in the community. He doesn't think the relatively small incremental traffic being generated will create problems although he is sympathetic with neighbors who are concerned. He agrees with Commissioner Bordokas that the proposed condition would limit the school's use of the adjacent streets is too restrictive given that he believes there is opportunity for parking along 22nd Street, and suggests that condition be struck. Commissioner Conaway does believe that special events are a concern and suggested that the TOMP specifically address potential impacts such as parking by event attendees are to be handled. Regarding play area noise, he encourages the school to consider ways to increase the acoustic design of the site to prevent sound from bouncing off the lot and traveling east.

Commissioner Hersman stated she is in agreement with Commissioners Conway and Bordokas. She believes that the south side of 22nd Street west of Cedar is an appropriate place for the teachers to park and will be beneficial for the neighbors because it will free up space on the site for the parents to use. She questioned having a limit on the amount of staff allowed. Director Thompson stated that staff would re-examine whether the proposed restrictions on both street parking and a cap on staff should be imposed on the project. Commissioner Hersman also endorsed the idea of providing more landscaping to buffer sound.

Commissioner Andreani noted that she is sorry to see long term local business go away, but agrees that the Chalk school is much needed and will be a good transitional use for the site, and is more desirable than a retail or medical office. Commissioner Andreani has concerns about the number of students which she would like to see limited to 98. She would like to see staff look into allowing one or two parking spaces on adjoining streets for drop off and pick up. Commissioner Andreani's other concerns include how Cedar Way may be impacted by improvements to be done at Manhattan Village Shopping Center (i.e. should plan for that) and that special events be appropriately limited. She applauds the overall design, use of green building codes landscaping to address noise.

Chairperson Ortmann stated he agrees with comments made by his fellow commissioners and added that he believes that this is a reasonable and appropriate transitional use for the neighborhood. He shares concerns about traffic and parking but is also encouraged by the confidence that staff has that the traffic and parking will not be a problem.

Development Director Thompson indicated staff has noted the concerns and direction of the Commission and will return with a draft resolution of approval for consideration and adoption.

Commissioner Andreani stated her appreciation for the neighbors including Mr. Dumond in giving their input and encouraged the neighbors to also attend the next meeting when a draft Resolution will be presented to the Commission for action.

Director Thompson indicated that this matter will be returned to the Commission on September 24th.

6. DIRECTOR'S ITEMS

Development Director Thompson provided the following status reports:

- 900 Club: The City Council conducted an appeal hearing and took action, directing that staff prepare a resolution that supports the PC decision with a couple minor changes.
- Shade Hotel: The City Council conducted a hearing and there were a few changes in the conditions, including a requirement for an automatic public hearing before the City Council (not Planning Commission) within one year.
- Manhattan Village Shopping Center: The City Council has supported the project subject to some additional requirements. The applicant has not yet responded to those conditions. Good news is that Apple will be opening a new store in the mall this weekend.

7. PLANNING COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner Conaway asked and Director Thompson responded that the Plache Minor Exception appeal was approved by Council.

Chairperson Ortmann: 1) Status of Mobility Plan: Director Thompson reported it is scheduled to be reviewed by the City Council at a study session on September 23rd. After that, it will go to the Planning Commission. 2) Downtown RFP Status: Director Thompson reported that an RFP has been released for a Downtown Specific Plan, and meanwhile there is a moratorium that prohibits any change in use downtown.

Commissioner Hersman: Status of Pier fishing: Director Thompson summarized that after the City Council passed a moratorium on fishing, the City was informed that other state agencies had jurisdiction on fishing, and subsequently the City has been working with those agencies. Fishing has been restored on the pier. The City is monitoring the situation.

8. TENTATIVE AGENDA – September 24, 2014

Director Thompson indicated that there are no items scheduled so far with the exception of the adoption of a resolution for the subject preschool.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm to Wednesday, September 24, 2014, in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 1400 Highland Avenue.

ROSEMARY LACKOW
Recording Secretary

ATTEST:

RICHARD THOMPSON
Community Development Director