

Save Our Standards (S.O.S.) Glendora Update 87 – City Ventures In The Spotlight Trying To Lowball Glendorans / Annexation Comes To Council

September 22, 2012

Neighbors -

The beginning of fall still feels like summer to us, but hopefully the heat will start to go away as Glendora mellows into the fall harvest season. But the heat's just beginning for big developer City Ventures as they attempt to get by "on the cheap" with their development of the former Monrovia Nursery property in Glendora.

The September 4, 2012 Glendora Planning Commission meeting was packed with SOS Glendora members as rumors abounded that the "minor, technical changes" requested by City Ventures may be something more. Sure enough they were, as developer Bill McReynolds ignored concerns of the Trustees of the official Glendora Historical Landmark Fairmount Pioneer Cemetery plus dozens of local SOS members, and successfully persuaded most Planning Commissioners to forego some needed improvements and to let them delay the improvements that current residents will actually use until the end of the building phase and not the beginning.

The *San Gabriel Valley Examiner* newspaper did a good story on the meeting in their September 13-19 issue on Page B-2 here:

<http://www.sgvexaminer.com/images/2012/B2%20September%2013%20-%2019%2012.pdf>

The copy from the newspaper is provided at the end of this Update for those who can't access the electronic link.

The bottom line is that we need our City Council to override the Planning Commission in several areas including protection and support for the Cemetery and immediate surrounding area (no, just a fence around the Cemetery proper is not enough), and the outrageous digital salute Bill McReynolds and City Ventures gave everyone in Glendora in saying that public improvements like the linear park around the railroad tracks and the walkway/bike lane/ landscaping along Sierra Madre Ave from Barranca to the Azusa city line can wait till they are done building - instead of putting their money where their mouth is like they promised us in getting their Specific Plan approved by the Glendora City Council two and a half years ago when they told us all they would do these things **UP FRONT** so current residents could use them sooner.

Fortunately for us, our City Council wasn't born yesterday and has backed up the residents the entire time we have struggled to uphold high Glendora standards in this huge building project (ten years).

Kudos to Planning Commissioner Andrew Jared for blowing the whistle on this bait and switch scheme at the Planning Commission meeting and voting NO. Jared is our **SOS Glendora Ground Zero Hero** at the Planning Commission for seeing through Glendora Planning Director Jeff Kugel's staff report that just went along with whatever the developer wanted, and the developers' blandly uncaring and inaccurate assertions regarding these substantial and important changes.

It is noted there was no hearing with the community on the changes. The inside story is that certain key people thought the residents were too much trouble, and that a hearing was something to be avoided if they could. It turned out all they did is dump the problem on their bosses, the City Council, and the Council should be none too pleased to be in the headlights regarding things the developer and city staff should have resolved with the people a long time ago.

The on-line newspaper Glendora Patch has also picked up the developing story just in the last few days and ran this article below.

<http://glendora.patch.com/articles/residents-demand-improvements-for-local-historical-cemetery>

Again, this article will be copied in full at the end of this Update for those who need a little help.

The *San Gabriel Valley Tribune* was unable to attend the Planning Commission meeting, but may attend the City Council meeting where this Planning Commission recommendation comes up for final decision.

Another area of interest to them and the other press representatives is the toxic waste issue, and whether the City will require a more extensive Environmental Impact Report that includes full consideration of the abnormally high number of birth defects related to this property. Fifty years of toxic chemical use by former owners Monrovia Nursery, including DDT and other now banned substances, is causing increasing concern all over the City as the evidence mounts.

Stay tuned as more is coming.....

ANNEXATION IMMINENT

On Tuesday, September 25, 2012 at 7 PM in the Council Chambers, the Glendora City Council will consider annexation of the county area of the former Monrovia Nursery property included in the City Ventures proposed development.

This was not part of the deal for residents when the Specific Plan was approved. To be fair, the situation is not the fault of City Ventures or the City of Glendora. All parties, including SOS Glendora who monitored the whole thing, expected that local residents who live in the County and wanted to remain in the County would be allowed to do so.

However, the Los Angeles County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) threw a monkey wrench in the works in the summer of 2011 when they required that Glendora annex all the County areas within the development if it was to go forward.

This prompted a contentious meeting at Sandburg Middle School a year ago where understandably upset affected residents took developer McReynolds and city staff to the woodshed over this development. SOS Glendora leaders were there to explain what happened to the people and the meeting ended with more understanding, if not happiness. Most of those affected appear resigned to the situation by now, but some will be there with bells on to express their feelings to the Council

SOS Glendora has many members on both sides and will not get involved with what most people believe is a done deal at this point.

As always, this Update is available as a Word Document. Please feel free to share it with a friend or twelve.

Examiner Article

Glendora Planning Commission Overrides Local Residents

by Garrett Conrad

GLENDORA - The big item on the Planning Commission agenda Tuesday night was approval of developer City Ventures changes to the 2010 Monrovia Nursery Specific Plan. Despite vocal requests of 50 concerned residents in the room for more time to give input on the newly revealed changes, the Commission voted 3-1 to approve them and send the matter to the City Council for final approval. Commissioner Cliff Hawlow recused himself from voting as he lives on the border of the project area.

Residents expressed concern over inadequate protections given to Fairmount Pioneer Cemetery, a registered Glendora historic landmark. Two members of the Cemetery Board of Trustees and several neighbors of the Cemetery emphasized the history of vandalism and pointed out omissions in the Specific Plan in protecting the Cemetery. In response to these concerns, the Commission added a condition requiring the gap to be plugged in a proposed wall or fence along the westerly City boundary of the development. This measure will alleviate additional trespassing from a densely built out Rosedale project that will have over 1,200 residences just across the boundary in Azusa within several years.

Left unaddressed were City Ventures refusal to build a retaining wall along the east side of the Cemetery where they propose building a private roadway, and along the southern side of the Cemetery where a decrepit and crumbling "temporary" railroad tie barrier was built by the Nursery more than 30 years ago. Residents noted this was an eyesore and a public safety hazard. The developer said they weren't required to do more. Also approved was a debris basin at the corner of Barranca and Sierra Madre Avenues required by the Flood Control District to the chagrin of City Ventures as it takes away three proposed homes at that corner.

Residents are concerned that the basin be landscaped and people friendly, unlike the gravel pit at the corner of Barranca and Arrow Hwy in Covina. The final major concern was City Ventures quietly postponing public infrastructure improvements in the area while labeling it as a "minor, technical" issue, with City staff support.

The Specific Plan required the developer to make public utility improvements, install the linear park along the railroad tracks and widen/landscape dangerously narrow Sierra Madre Avenue early on in the project. The developer plan as recommended by City staff moved those improvements from Phase 1 to Phase 4 of the project, thus delaying them for a long period of time.

Commissioner Andrew Jared strongly opposed these provisions and called upon the developer to "put their money where their mouth is" by making improvements for public benefit up front. City Ventures Vice President Bill McReynolds said the issue was "pretty complex" and doing them by Phase 1 did not allow enough time to complete the public benefit work. He assured the Commission and residents that they were not trying to evade their responsibility to make public improvements.

McReynolds said their plan was to build out the southern portion of the project first, then move to the northern parcel. This sequence, or phasing, will take an undetermined number of years to complete.

After a motion by Commissioner Battaglia to approve the staff recommendation failed to garner a second, Commissioner Jared again tried to get the Commission to hold the developer to their commitments on the timing of public improvements.

But after much more discussion, a motion by Commissioner Terry Kent to approve the staff recommendation with a delay in building these public benefits from Phase 1 to Phase 3 of construction in the project and addition of fencing to close the gap by the Cemetery attracted votes from Battaglia and Jared for approval.

Final approval is up to the Glendora City Council. Residents vowed to take their case to the Council, where they hope to secure more protection for the Cemetery and ask the Council to require the developers to keep their commitments to residents to build public benefits up front, and not allow more delay.

Glendora Patch Article

Residents Demand Improvements to Local Historical Cemetery

Residents are hoping Monrovia Nursery developer City Ventures will meet their requests to help protect the nearby Fairmount Cemetery.

By [Hazel Lodevico-To'o](#)

- September 20, 2012

Members of S.O.S. Glendora, a group of concerned residents regarding the Monrovia Nursery development, have requested that City Ventures, LLC, the project's developers, consider making several improvements to Fairmount Cemetery as part of the building plan to ensure that the cemetery is protected from potential trespassers and vandalism.

"Kids are always going up there and having parties," said Doug Boyd, Glendora resident and cemetery trustee. "I can't tell you how many times we've discovered trash left behind by trespassers, graves that have been defaced."

The cemetery has significant historical meaning to both Glendora and Azusa. It was used as the area's burial ground from the mid to late 19th century. More than 200 of the area's early pioneers are interred in the cemetery, including veterans from the Civil and Spanish American wars.

Of the improvements cemetery trustees have requested from City Ventures include a six foot decorative block wall along Citrus Avenue near the future Gold Line station; a retaining wall on the east side of the cemetery; water, electricity and lighting for the cemetery grounds, and a monument sign on the southern base near the future development.

Cemetery trustee members believe the improvements will help keep out trespassers, a nuisance they say will increase with the number of new residents slated to move in to the nearby developments. Members say developers should be able to accommodate the input and concerns of local residents, especially regarding the well-being of a local landmark.

But city officials say under the Specific Plan, the developer, nor the city, are obligated to supply these improvements for the cemetery.

Planning Manager Dianne Walter said during a Sept. 4 planning commission meeting, the developer and city have done everything they can to make improvements to the cemetery, including adding a perimeter fence and drainage devices around the cemetery.

However, Walter said under the Specific Plan, the developer is not obligated to make the requested changes.

Still, cemetery trustee members and members of S.O.S. Glendora, attended the Sept. 4 planning commission meeting hoping that the commission would vote to include those improvements in the Specific Plan.

While those requests were not met, City Ventures representatives were granted an extension for the Monrovia Nursery project. They requested that several landscaping improvements be done during the fourth phase of construction rather than the first phase as initially planned, among other changes.

“It was like they’re saying, ‘We’re not going to do more than what the Specific Plan makes us do,’” said Boyd. “They’ll make changes that are favorable to them. But when it comes to us residents, they can’t make changes that’s favorable to us.”

City officials said cemetery trustees and the developer can discuss possible improvements to the cemetery as an agreement between the two parties.

“This does not preclude the developer from working with the cemetery to provide these items if the two parties agree,” said Walter.