

University of California, Los Angeles
Graduate Student Association Forum #1, Winter Quarter
Wednesday, January 23, 2019, 5:30pm

Forum minutes taken by Jackie D'Almeida, Director of Communications

CALL TO ORDER – 5:41 pm

Consent Calendar:

1. Approval of Minutes - No Objections
2. Approval of Agenda – No Objections

UCLA Police Department Presentation

Kevin Kilgore, UCPD

- There were some concerns about the response by the police department to a student block party. It was a call to LAPD, who asked us to assist, we were met by over 500 in the street, cars were damaged, and bottles were thrown. It was necessary to clear the street.
- Any questions, comments, concerns?
 - Question – do you train your officers on the level of suspicion with regard to race or gender?
 - Answer – no we don't. When we get a call that describes race or perceived gender, then we have to stop people who meet that description.
 - Follow up – I am referring to a specific incident that occurred on Sunset.
 - Answer – This person is welcome to come speak with me. Our officers are often confused with other agencies, it may have been LAPD.
 - Question – what's an appropriate response when there is an incident in the University apartments? For example, someone there who is a non-resident.
 - Answer – you can always call us 24/7. If you think it's a non-student, give us a call and we will come out and have a discussion with that person.
 - Question – there was an incident in University Apartment South of racial profiling – not by UCPD – how is the information that the dispatcher gets relayed to ensure that there is no racial profiling?
 - Answer – the dispatcher asks a lot of questions, but we always have to respond to a call for service. We let people know why we're there and why we're clarifying the situation.
 - Follow up – is there ever a teaching moment where the officer can inform the caller that it wasn't a crime and that there may have been a moment of profiling?
 - Answer – There are many teaching moments, we often don't have the caller's call back information, but when we do we will give them a call back. We are seeing a rise in crime in the UA south apartments.

- Question – speaking of Weyburn and South apartments, can you give us an update on the situation there? Recently large wooden dowels were put in ground floor apartments. Is there a rise in crime?
 - Answer – we have seen a rise in crime, I don't know the specific reason why the dowels were put in. There are more crimes of opportunity in warm weather months when people leave windows open. In the last week we've taken an attempted robbery in front of Stan's donuts, and an assault with a deadly weapon in front of Starbucks.

Executive Officer Reports

Michael Skiles, GSA President

- Yesterday I went down to City Council's Planning and Land Use committee pursuant to a motion we passed last year – asking council to amend the city's de facto ban on all food uses but fine dining.
 - Because “fast food” is defined so broadly as to include everything from Starbucks to Tender Greens, there are 56 “fast food” restaurants in Westwood, when there are only allowed 40. There is a de facto ban on any new restaurants.
 - The Council Committee passed the preliminary motion, and I think it is possible to get full adoption within this calendar year.
- Also went to a discussion about the VA master plan with Congressman Ted Lieu.
 - The intersections of the 405 with the VA campus presents large pedestrian and bicycle challenges. I urged them to create safe crossings for pedestrians. The crossing at Constitution Avenue was closed in the post-9/11 hysteria due to unsubstantiated “security concerns” forcing pedestrians to have to cross at the much wider and more dangerous 405/Wilshire intersection which is further south and has a lot of one-and-off ramps with fast-traveling vehicles that often don't yield to pedestrians.
 - Many of the veterans they are housing do not have cars, so it would behoove the VA to reopen this crossing as well.
- Here tonight I have invited the represents of the Agora, which is a proposed student housing project.
 - This is the first of many projects that will appear before GSA, in what I see as an expanded role for students.
 - Before we created the North Westwood Neighborhood Council, the existing council was run almost entirely by home owners. Projects were previously forced to go through a gauntlet of homeowner meetings that met with a lot of disapprovals. No one asked what the elected representatives of thousands of students thought.
 - Projects that could have been affordable housing were talked down into small luxury apartments, and restaurants that would have been fun, affordable, and student-serving were forced into becoming expensive traditional sit-down restaurants in order to garner their support.

- As long as I am president of the North Westwood Neighborhood Council I am going to encourage proposals to come before the student representatives for a vote. You can ask questions and point out any concerns.

Eric Hu, GSA Vice President of Internal Affairs

- We have new office hours this quarter from 9:30 – 1:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- Ashley couldn't make it tonight. She's been working on two different programs the past few weeks. I'll attach her executive officer report in the next email I send out.

Keara Pina, Proxy for GSA Vice President of External Affairs

- Updates from her office – UC Path advocacy – Many students attended the town hall meetings. If you know anyone experiencing UC Path issues or reach out to me or Michelle.
- We are working on continued support for parenting students. UCOP has agreed to establish a task force. Asking the UCSA to update their survey to better capture the parenting student experience.
- We are going on a lobbying trip to DC to support extending grants to parenting students next week.
- We will send out an email invitation to the application to attend or present at a climate conference.

Presentation on Proposed Student Housing Project at 900 Hilgard Avenue

Aaron Green, President, Afriat Consulting

- We have Araj, Neil Brauer, and my associate Andrew with my firm. This is Araj's project so I will allow him to speak to it and then we will take questions afterwards.

Araj, Property Owner

- I grew up in Oakland, studied neuroscience at UCLA, took a year off to teach chemistry, then went to UC San Diego, did 4 years of medical school, then applied to a surgery program. Got lucky and got into Cedars-Sinai, trained for 6 years in general surgery, then specialized in surgery for morbidly obese patients. I finished in 2010 and have been in practice since then.
- My partner Ted and I discussed merging the health issues I address with housing. At its core, residential housing is sort of a waste of space. Space is very valuable, and so is time. In the classroom you gain a lot of knowledge and experience. Why not create a curriculum in a building that teaches about health and wellness? No one is saying, let's look at the health of grad students, how do we design these spaces, what food are we feeding them?
- First we called Gensler. They are probably the most reputable architectural firm in the world. We sat with them over two years ago. We had purchased property across from UCLA. They said there was no building that is both aesthetic, but that also serves the students in an incredible way that doesn't exist right now.

- We spent over a year designing the aesthetics and programming. The name Agoura means meeting place. We want it to create a meeting place for students. There is more shared space. Every floor has a lot of shared space. There is space for a garden, a library, a teaching kitchen. We want to have a weekly lecture series. We want to create a brand-new way of living when it comes to student housing.
- The building is at the corner of Hilgard and Le Conte.
- Instead of small rooms, all the units are three or four rooms.
- Double height common rooms every two floors.
- On the top floor there's yoga, Pilates, a dipping pool, place to stretch or meditate. Downstairs there is a juice bar. We want to create something that looks like it fits at UCLA – wanted something that meshed well with the community.
- We didn't go higher than the W, even though I wanted to.
- This will be a three year process while we develop this, so we will be reaching out to you again for your input. We will be forming advisory boards so if you have comments you can come out.
- I went to UCLA for four years, and I can tell you that UCLA has not changed.

Aaron Green

- This is supposed to foster a sense of environment and community.
- This is supposed to cater to a certain type of student. There won't be parties here.
- There are zoning issues – we are in a small area that allows for more density. We're asking for a lot of density from the city. We have to ask for certain entitlements, specifically changing the zoning to allow us to be taller.
- There will be an environmental impact report – an exhaustive study including everything from wastewater, power, how you deal with height and noise during construction, etc. to reduce the impact of this building as much as possible.
- Our projects always get better throughout the process as we get input from stakeholders.
- The cost of housing in Westwood is very high. This is the most expensive zip code to rent in California. We don't think we can solve this problem, but we think we can be a small part of the solution.
- When we build more housing, everyone benefits.
- We will have designated low-cost units, which we are required to do by the city.
- We can answer any questions and appreciate you hearing us out.
 - Question – this building requires a certain type of person to live here - will you have an application process?
 - Answer – we'll have to have a process of interviewing and will cater our outreach and messaging.
 - Statement – the price point is important. Over 50% of grad students say that their income doesn't cover their housing. I'm grateful to you for bringing justice to students.
 - Question - Is this only for graduate students? Will families be able to live here?

- Answer - This is not exclusive for graduate students. We're hoping to have both graduate and undergraduate. We're not legally allowed to exclude anyone. This won't only be for students. Most of the apartments have three, four or five bedrooms. Within each bedroom we're proposing to have two people live in each bedroom.
 - Statement – That was not made clear to us. Most graduate students don't want to share a bedroom.
 - Answer – I think some floors would be designated for undergraduate students and some would be designated for graduate students.
 - Living farther away from UCLA is expensive, you have to commute. We want to save students money by living closer.
 - Question – will there be shade issues?
 - Answer – there will not be any shade issues. Part of our study with the city will include this.
 - Question – Will there be accommodations for ride sharing companies to sit and wait, or what's the plan?
 - Answer - We're still in the beginning phase of this and determining what will work. That's a piece of what we're looking at.
- Aaron Green - If you like this, and you like this vision, it will be helpful to have your statement and feedback.
- Statement – we need affordable housing – the University has done nothing. We should file a motion to endorse this.
- Question – the price seems higher than other places.
 - We did a survey, and this was actually less than other places. Also, we are proposing more than a stucco building, but a holistic experience.
- Statement – Weyburn costs less and provides these amenities.
- Statement – you're charging a lot for a bed, not a room. People aren't getting a room for that price, just a bed.
 - Answer – there is a lot of shared space. Maybe a studio apartment is cheaper but you only get the small space, not the library and kitchen and meditation space. You don't get free lectures every week.
- Statement – You made it seem as though it was one bed per room. In this case we are not looking at affordable housing now. You are looking at probably zero graduate students who will spend that much on a single bed. You can give us the fanciest communal space in the world and they won't agree to that. \$1000-\$1200 for a bed is not affordable housing.
- Statement – I was also confused by this and no longer support it.
 - Answer – what I would say is that the change in affordable housing in Westwood has to start somewhere. The biggest reason that there is not affordable housing in Westwood is because there is not enough of it. We can't solve this problem, but we can start to address the issue. We're not proposing a panacea. If you enjoy the status quo, then don't do anything.

- Ernesto Arciniega moves to officially endorse this project and their promise of affordable housing– (seconded).
- Statement – I think that any amount of additional housing is better than nothing.
- Statement – Are there other companies who also want to build here?
 - Answer – Araj and his partner Ted own this land. There is not a competition. If you vote yes, it certainly helps. If you vote no, it doesn't stop the project. The ultimate authority is the city of Los Angeles.
- Statement – will there be staff cleaning this apartment? This question wasn't answered.
- Statement – I won't support this, it doesn't address the problem. This isn't what we need right now. All the bells and whistles are nice but I feel misled.
- Michael Skiles – For a lot of people in the room, their expectation for cost is based on University housing. The University doesn't support us enough to afford Weyburn rents, but they're still way below the Westwood market price. I encourage all of you to google Westwood rents. They are extremely high. Even if we don't call these rates affordable, even if we would rather that they focus less on amenities, this still is more affordable than many places in Westwood. Many developers would try to develop luxury condominiums here. At least they are trying to serve students.
- Statement – 870 Hilgard is \$2800-\$3500 for a one bedroom. This is actually below what you would find on that side of campus. I think this would be mostly undergraduate students, most places in Westwood are 2-3 people in a unit. I think it's disappointing that not many of us would live here, but I don't think we should vote based only on our own needs.
- Statement – I also think it's great that they are thinking about students, but I'm representing the first-generation students and most first gen students can't afford this. I'm neutral on this. Most students who live here will be undergraduates or wealthy.
- Question – what's your plan for accessibility?
 - Building code requires several accessible units.
- Statement – I lived here as an undergraduate and paid 800-900 to share a room. That was only a few years ago and considering that this is five years down the line I think this is a good price. We shouldn't only think about ourselves as graduate students. It is expensive, but we do live in Westwood. That's just what the price point is.
- Statement – I agree that it's important that we have more housing, and that this is geared more towards undergraduates. As a graduate student I want less bells and whistles and more concern for affordability and privacy.
- Call for a vote. 8 in favor, 7 against. 1 abstains.
 - **Vote: APPROVED.**

Discussion of Possible Student Fee Referendum to Make Public Transit Free for Students

Donald Shoup, Distinguished Professor of Urban Planning, UCLA

- We may have a referendum this year, asking students to vote to remove fees for public transit. Currently students pay 50 cents and UCLA pays the rest.
- All other Universities have a student fee to finance the program, and then students ride for free.

- The annual fee will be about \$53 per year. This is much lower than other universities. It's \$333 at UC Santa Cruz.
- The free public transit will actually be an increase in Financial Aid.
- In other universities this was passed with very high success – many of the students who vote are currently using public transportation.
- From an environmental point of view free transit is very good. Students can use the transit for free to ride anywhere, not just to campus.
- The next move is up to GSA, and I hope that you will put in a formal request for the referendum. Then it's up to the students to vote. Please ask the transportation department to move forward with this.

Michael Skiles

- We will be discussing whether we want to move forward with this in a future meeting. We want to see whether this cost will be covered with future fee remissions.
- One option would be the student fee referendum. A lot of people would pay, but GSR's and TA's might have that fee remitted.
- Another option would be to fund this with a modest increase in parking revenues. This is a discussion for us to have in the future.

Discussion of Student Representation in Westwood Advocacy Groups

Michael Skiles, GSA President

- A year ago I came before this forum to share the many harms befalling our community due to the Westwood Neighborhood Council. This forum was the first to support the Westwood Forward movement.
- I will now be discussing the Westwood Community Council and North Village Residents Association.
- Cameron has been the only voting student representative on this council for years and is often ignored.
- There is a problem of people claiming to represent the community, while not actually doing so.
- There have been many appeals filed by Sandy Brown (yellow) and Steve Sand (green) who got a JD but was never bar certified. As such, he knows how to walk just below the line of extortion. According to Rocco's owner, Josh Trifunovic, he offered Rocco's, in exchange for 30% equity, to represent them and make sure they were well received by the community. When they said no, he and his long-time associates began assaulting them with all sorts of opposition, appeals and challenges. The business had to change their windows, and are still to this day unable to offer reduced price drink happy hours, live music, etc.
- For a long time the only business able to offer live music and dancing was the operator associated with the W hotel, because Steve Sann had a stake in it.
- He has a lot of credibility because he is associated with the old Westwood Neighborhood Council, and because he maintains that he represents the Westwood Community Council, which by its name sounds like a legitimate representative body.

- Wolfgang Veith also files appeals to prevent practically all buildings over 45 feet in the North Village. He calls himself the president of the North Village Residents Association.
- North Village Residents Association is not a real association. I've asked numerous north village residents to reach out to him and ask when are their meetings. They don't appear to have any meetings or legitimate process of electing officers. He just claims this title and it carries weight because it sounds impressive.
- The Westwood Community Council gives seats to unrepresentative "organizations" like Wolfgang's and "UCLA Watch," which is also just a small group of people that oppose UCLA projects, and yet all of UCLA students are relegated to just one voting seat on the Westwood Community Council. I have worked with Cameron to increase student seats on this council from one to four seats.

Cameron (Westwood Community Council Student Representative)

- First they said our motion wasn't in the official language, then they had other excuses. We will be voting on this at March 19th meeting. They will almost certainly vote it down. I ask you to attend this meeting and voice support. They may give us one more seat.
- We may resign in protest if they don't give us this seat, because we don't want to lend legitimacy to this organization.

Michael Skiles

- This council was one of the main opponents to the Westwood bike lane. They wanted it on Gayley. Wolfgang now says that he thinks the bike lane should be on Weyburn place, which doesn't even go to campus. His view is representative of the whole council, I think. They also student-friendly businesses and housing.
- I still think that 4 student seats out of 20 to represent a community where we are nearly half the community is still not fair.
- We should go to give public comment, but be armed with a motion that if this is not granted, then the GSA does not recognize the Westwood Community Council as a representative body, and will not legitimize it by sending a student representative.

Cameron

- Elected officials attend these meetings to hear from the community – and when they are there I'm only allowed to speak once. The officials think they're hearing from the community.

Questions

- Is this organization completely independent or can the city change its makeup?
 - Answer: this is a private organization, it's not city sanctioned. I could snap my fingers and create a North Westwood Community Council, and it would have the same legitimacy that they have.
- Statement – I have been sitting on organizations. I wonder if withdrawing is the route to go, or if there is another form of civil disobedience.
 - I also want to make a motion to adjourn in five minutes.
 - Michael Skiles – If you'll withdraw, I'll be done in five minutes.

- I'll withdraw.

ADJOURNMENT 7:35pm