

REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

DATE: JUNE 8, 2005

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: GREG RAMIREZ, CITY MANAGER

BY: MIKE KAMINO, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SUBJECT: CONTINUED DISCUSSION OF THE HESCHEL WEST SCHOOL PROJECT

The County of Los Angeles Department of Regional Planning is currently reviewing an application to construct the Heschel West School, adjacent to the eastern City limits. On May 18, 2005, the Heschel West School Project was presented to the City Council as an information and discussion item. Staff provided a brief presentation of the Heschel School Project, including a summary of the key items in the May 16, 2005 staff-prepared letter on the project's Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR). The representatives for the applicant then spoke about the project, followed by public comments from attendees both in support and opposed to the development. City Council deferred discussion on the project until the June 8, 2005 meeting to allow council members sufficient time to review the various materials provided to them, including those of the project proponent, City staff, and City Attorney.

On May 25, 2005, a public hearing on the DEIR and the project was held before the Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission. A copy of the Regional Planning Department's staff report packet is attached hereto. City staff was in attendance at the Regional Planning Commission public hearing, and provided comments to the Commission as noted in the City staff letter, including concerns about traffic impacts and mitigation measures that directly affect the City as well as the lack of consultation with City staff in preparation of the revised DEIR. Due to the large number of speakers, the County has scheduled a second public hearing on June 15.

On May 31, 2005, City staff met with the Heschel West School's project proponents and team of consultants at City Hall. Also in attendance were two representatives from the County Public Works Department and the case planner from the County Regional Planning Department. The focus of the May 31 discussion was on traffic impacts and mitigations. The proposed Heschel West School is located entirely within the unincorporated area of the County of Los Angeles and all the entitlement permits will be issued by the County. However, as the main point of access to the Heschel West School, as well as virtually all the traffic mitigation measures, are in the City of Agoura Hills, it is vitally important that the mitigation measures are acceptable to the City.

Regarding site access, the DEIR identifies a signalized intersection at the westbound freeway off ramp or a roundabout at that location. Staff continues to have a number of issues with either

option, including potential congestion factor, right-of-way requirement, and design feasibility. Additional options besides these two must also be explored. Regarding the other traffic mitigations (both project specific and cumulative), staff questioned the timing of these mitigations and who will be responsible for their implementation. The Heschel West representatives agreed at the meeting to follow-up with our request for additional information addressing these issues, as well as other issues identified in our DEIR comment letters.

The County Regional Planning Commission has scheduled a second public hearing on June 15. At that time, provided that all public testimony has been completed, the Commission could either:

- find that sufficient information has been submitted for the project and thus direct staff to prepare the Final EIR, resolutions, and final conditions for the sake of project approval; or
- find that additional information is needed, and thus continue the matter further to allow the applicant to resolve outstanding issues.

Staff believes that the DEIR will remain inadequate until all the issues in our comment letter, as well as the City Attorney's letter, are reasonably addressed and resolved to the City's satisfaction. Therefore, staff finds it appropriate for the County Regional Planning Commission to further continue this matter to allow Heschel West to prepare and submit the information requested by staff, to engage in further dialogue regarding traffic impacts and mitigations, and to make further changes to the DEIR.

Additionally, City staff has been coordinating setting up a meeting between the Old Agoura HOA and representatives of the Heschel West School to occur prior to the June 8 City Council meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council take a formal position in opposition to the project until the issues raised in the City's comment letters are reasonably addressed and resolved. It is further recommended that the City Council direct staff to draft a letter for the Mayor's signature requesting the County Regional Planning Commission to further continue this matter to allow Heschel West to prepare and submit the information requested by staff, to engage in further dialogue regarding traffic impacts and mitigations, and to make further changes to the DEIR.

- Attachments:
1. City Council Report (without attachments) dated May 18, 2005
 2. Letter from City Staff to County Staff dated May 16, 2005
 3. Letter from City Attorney to County Staff dated May 18, 2005
 4. DEIR Executive Summary and Matrix
 5. County's Planning Commission Packet for May 25, 2005
 6. Phase 1 and 2 Site Plans of the Proposed Project