

Little Italy Residents Association

Meeting Minutes: June 19, 2007

The members would like to thank the Tango Wine Company (2161 India Street) for their hospitality and exceptional wine choices. We would also like to thank Flexcar for their generous sponsorship of the evening.

Crudo

Ken Cluskey summarized the process thus far

- Crudo's original application for a Conditional Use Permit to operate the "entertainment" aspect of the establishment described the business quite differently than what it has now evolved into.
- The alleged negative impact of the "nightclub" aspect of the restaurant / bar has been reported by a substantial number of residents and businesses.
- The CCDC hearing on this issue and their recommendations
- The subsequent rebuttal of the complaints and denial of responsibility for the problems by the attorney representing Crudo, and the appeal of CCDC's recommendations by the owners of the establishment

The issue was then discussed by the membership. The main points were as follows:

- Great respect and appreciation for the Busalacci family (part owners of Crudo) was expressed. Many acknowledged their significant contribution to the neighborhood.
- Great disappointment was also expressed that the initial understanding provided for in the CUP was subverted, compromises with the community and CCDC were rejected, and the negative impact on the neighborhood by Crudo and their patrons has been essentially ignored.
- Numerous complaints concerning the loud music emanating from Crudos were voiced. It was noted that even when the music itself is not to an excessive decibel level at the surrounding properties, the "base" penetrates the walls and creates an disturbance.
- The patrons of Crudo who leave the nightclub at late hours are themselves causing disturbance on a regular basis. There were several complaints that the patrons leaving the restaurant and walking to their cars parked in the neighborhood are frequently intoxicated and boisterous, and vomit and urinate in the streets of the surrounding blocks.

- Of utmost concern is the probability that the entertainment CUP obtained by Crudo will be sought by more nightclub owners since the alcohol consumption in this type of venue is extremely lucrative. The possibility that the residents would be forced into an ongoing fight with the lawyers of future nightclub establishments was considered intolerable.
- If anyone would like to report a disturbance or unlawful behavior, please call the SDPD non-emergency phone # : 619.531.2000. It is important to ask for an Incident Report #.
- The membership requested information on the most effective way to voice their concerns. It was strongly suggested that anyone with a concern attend the upcoming CCDC Board hearing (date still be announced), and write letters and emails to CCDC and to Councilman Kevin Faulconer. Mr. Smith noted that two similar cases had existed in East Village, and with active neighborhood participation, the entertainment CUP was revoked for both establishments. Ken Cluskey agreed to format the requested information and distribute to the membership via email.

The following motion was unanimously supported:

As residents of Little Italy, we appreciate and support the urban mixed-use establishments in our neighborhood. The overwhelming majority of businesses are responsible assets to our community. Unfortunately, this is not the case with Crudo, where the concerns of the neighborhood have not been respected. The filing of an appeal of the recommendations made by the CCDC Hearing Officer, and the rejection of the advise from CCDC is confirmation of bad faith. Therefore, we vote to request that the Entertainment CUP for Crudo be immediately revoked.

Quiet Zone

Gary Smith, president of the Downtown Residents Group, provided an update on the progress of the work being done to institute the “Quiet Zone” in the downtown area. The “Quiet Zone” is a designation for an area within the train route where the conductor is not required to blast the horn at each intersection. Many safety features and traffic controls are required to be constructed at every intersection along the tracks if the area is to qualify as a “Quiet Zone”.

The full amount of the anticipated costs are earmarked in the CCDC budget. The estimated cost of the project has significantly increased due to a demand that the upgrades for the railroad crossing now also include pedestrian gates.

The construction is scheduled to begin in August.

Traffic Light

The traffic light that is to be located at Cedar Street and Front Street was approved in February and should be installed in the near future.

Washington Elementary School Site Redevelopment

This is a community project supported by CCDC, the San Diego Unified School District, Little Italy associations, and several downtown civic organizations. The intent of the project is to investigate and explore the physical and programatic resources of the Washington School site. The goal is to improve the utilization of the site, to expand the educational opportunities of the neighborhood children, and to create a resource for the community itself. Public workshops will be scheduled in the next few months to obtain input.

Fundraiser

LIRA is cosponsoring a fundraising event to benefit "Transcendence" which is a nonprofit group which works with high school age students, who would otherwise be on the streets, and provides classes in dance, music, and poetry. More information will be sent out in the next few weeks.

Flexcar in Little Italy

Tiffany Walker, a representative from the company Flexcar (and a resident of Little Italy) provided information on the company's services. There are now three vehicles in Little Italy for members to use. Please visit their website for further information: flexcar.com or contact Tiffany directly at: tiffany.walker@flexcar.com

The next meeting is scheduled for September 21, 2007.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kathleen Hallahan