

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES OF JUNE 22, 2009**

**2009-0367 - Chung Tai Zen Center of Sunnyvale** [Applicant] **Chung Tai International Chan Buddhist Association** [Owner]. Application for a Use Permit to allow an existing place of assembly to continue operation beyond a four year conditional approval for a site located at **750 East Arques Avenue** (APN:205-32-007) RK

**Trudi Ryan**, Planning Officer, presented the staff report. She provided two corrections to the report advising that Attachment B, condition 2.D should include the language that the major assembly halls shall not be used concurrently "except for monthly and approved special events". She said that condition 2.E should refer back to "#11" and not #1L.

**Comm. Hungerford** discussed with staff whether condition 2.A.1 should be subject to 2.A.2 with staff advising that the condition can be modified in the motion if the Commission thinks the condition should be changed.

**Comm. Sulser** confirmed with staff that the Previous Actions table on page 4 of the report should be corrected to reflect the Planning Commission hearing date 8/8/2005 instead of 8/8/1995.

**Chair Rowe** discussed with staff, condition 2.D and the capacity of the three halls if used concurrently, including the concern of accommodating parking and traffic for increased capacity and the possible impact to surrounding areas.

**Chair Rowe opened the public hearing.**

**Venerable Jian Hu**, applicant, discussed five points regarding the Zen Center project. He said the Zen Center use is consistent with the goals of Sunnyvale. He said the main purpose of the Center is to promote Zen meditation and Buddhist principles, discussing the many services offered by the Center. He said they place an emphasis on the multi-cultural direction of the participants and participate in many interfaith activities. He said the Center does not provide a lot of employment opportunities, but the participants do shop in Sunnyvale. He said secondly there are three major halls on the site with point three being that they do not present a negative impact to neighborhood discussing their efforts to be a good neighbor, including being an emergency evacuation site. He said point four is that they try to be a positive impact in the neighborhood by doing street cleaning, providing training at schools of many different educational levels, making donations to various charities, placing a large emphasis on going green including many solar panels on the Center, and taking many initiatives to educate. He said point five is that the current parking is adequate for most of

their activities, explaining what they plan to do to accommodate parking and traffic for future growth. He discussed a preliminary lease agreement for use of a nearby parking lot and said he is confident that they will be able to properly manage the parking. He said going green is a trend right now, and it is also in keeping with their 2500 year philosophy of Buddhist teaching to treasure the environment and to teach people to live simply.

**Comm. Sulser** discussed with the applicant the request for an increase in capacity, including future growth and a parking management plan.

**Comm. Hungerford** discussed parking with the applicant, including a preliminary parking lot lease for an additional 160 parking spaces.

**Diane Fisher**, Director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Silicon Valley and member of the Silicon Valley FACES interfaith group, expressed her support of the extension of the use permit. She said she has experienced the parking management and carpooling efforts of the Center, and that the Center is enriching for the community.

**Diana Ma**, Vice President of Technology at SunPower Corp., spoke in support of the project. She said this is the right location for the Center explaining the value of the teachings to reduce stress in hi-tech Silicon Valley, to live a balanced life, and learning to live for a more sustainable future.

**Robert Arne**, Headmaster of The School of Choice in Sunnyvale, spoke in support of the use permit extension. He said he likes this school at the current location, that he can bike to the site, and discussed the multiple values of the Center and the benefit of the teachings for the community.

**Lucille Liaw**, a Sunnyvale resident, spoke in support of the extension of the use permit. She said she used to have to carpool to Lafayette and having the Zen Center at this location is good, and provides support to the community.

**Richa Bhalla**, a Sunnyvale resident, spoke of the value of the Zen Center for her family, said carpooling is a practice for attendees of the Center, and said that she would like to have the Center stay at this location.

**Chu Lee**, a Sunnyvale resident, spoke in support of the Zen Center extension of the use permit. She spoke of the value of the teachings and said that she rides her bike to the Center.

**Cathy Martin**, Vice President of a semi-conductor company headquartered in Sunnyvale, expressed her support for the extension of the use permit and

explained the value of the religious, educational, artistic and cultural needs met by the Center.

**Sycheng Tsai**, the architect for the applicant, said that they are pleased with the conditions of approval and clarified several conditions including parking, and the Parking Management Plan. He said they agree and understand and the Center is willing to comply with the conditions of approval. **Venerable Jian Hu** added that they are grateful the City allowed them the original use permit and for the staff assistance the past couple of months.

**Chair Rowe closed the public hearing.**

**Comm. Sulser moved for Alternative 1, to approve the Use Permit with the recommended Conditions in Attachment A. Comm. Travis seconded the motion.**

**Comm. Sulser** said that the City has rezoned this property with a Place of Assembly (POA) zoning designation. He said he thinks this is the appropriate place to have this use and the only question is the intensification of the use, which appears to be adequately addressed with safeguards in place.

**Comm. Travis** said that he thinks this is the appropriate place for this use and it is evident from the community support in the audience this evening that others are supportive of this use at this site. He said he agrees there are adequate safeguards in place for any issues that might occur.

**Comm. Klein** said he would be supporting motion. He said he has attended several events at this site and the parking was adequately managed. He commended the applicant for their carpooling efforts and the community they have been able to develop.

**Chair Rowe** said she thinks this site is an appropriate location for this use, that the applicant has agreed to work with the City on the parking plan and that the applicant presented good solid facts.

**ACTION: Comm. Sulser made a motion on 2009-0367 to approve the Use Permit with the recommended Conditions in Attachment A. Comm. Travis seconded. Motion carried 6-0, with Comm. McKenna absent.**

**APPEAL OPTIONS: This action is final unless appealed to the City Council no later than July 7, 2009.**