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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0530**

HENRY A. WAXMAN  
30TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

November 3, 2006

Mr. Charles Dorman  
Director  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System  
11301 Wilshire Boulevard, Building 500  
Los Angeles, California 90073-1003

Dear Chuck:

I am writing to obtain information about a number of current land use projects at the West LA VA. My office has received inquiries from veterans, employees and community members about certain land use arrangements at the property and the process being used to approve them. I am also interested in learning more about the Land Use Overview prepared by your office and its relation to the CARES process and the federally mandated master plan.

Direct benefits to veterans must be the highest priority for the West LA VA campus. As you know, a recent report released by the Veterans Health Administration indicates that more than one-third of veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars seeking medical treatment from the VA report symptoms of stress or other mental disorders. This represents a tenfold increase in 18 months, according to the study. Land use must be carefully planned so that the West LA VA is poised to deliver a comprehensive array of services, including health care, housing, psychological support and job training.

**Westside Shepherd of the Hills Church**

It is my understanding the Westside Shepherd of the Hills Church began holding weekly services in the Wadsworth Theater on Sunday, October 8. According to its website at [www.mywestsidechurch.com](http://www.mywestsidechurch.com), the Westside Shepherd of the Hills Church at Wadsworth Theater is "Your New Neighborhood Church." Veterans and community members have told me there was not a public process before the use was approved, nor have the terms of the arrangement been made public, including the length of the lease, type of lease, and amount of the lease payments to the VA. Please respond to the following questions:

- What process was used to permit the Westside Shepherd of the Hills Church to use the Wadsworth Theater to hold its services?
- Did the VA obtain input from veterans or the community during the review process?

- Is the arrangement a lease, a sharing agreement or another type of agreement?
- Who negotiated and approved the use?
- What are the terms of the use, including length of lease, fee paid to the VA and provisions for veterans' access to the Wadsworth Theater for their own uses on Sundays?

### **Drive-in Theater, Movie Shoots and Palazzo**

Other proposed projects that appear to be inconsistent with the intended use of the land are a drive-in movie theater, a Cirque de Soleil type event called Palazzo, and filming and other non-recurring uses on the property. As you will recall, I wrote to you on September 15, 2006 inquiring about the use of the property to fire 15 blank rounds from a 105mm Howitzer cannon during a Change of Command Ceremony for the U.S. Army Reserve. This use seems inappropriate for veterans who use this property to rehabilitate themselves as many of them suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Please respond to the following questions:

- What is the status of the Drive-in Theater and Palazzo requests?
- What are the descriptions and scope of the proposed uses for the Drive-in Theater and Palazzo?
- What is the evaluation and approval process for non-recurring uses?

### **Land Use Overview**

On September 8, 2006, you sent me a copy of the Land Use Overview you provided to Senator Feinstein during her visit to the West LA VA campus on August 30, 2006. In your letter accompanying the overview, you indicated, "that the information contained in this presentation is for *internal use only and it is not intended for release to the general public.*" I have been informed, however, that the VA has selectively released the document to community members. Please respond to the following questions:

- Who prepared the Land Use Overview?
- Has the Land Use Overview been released to a subgroup of interested parties? If so, who?
- Does the VA plan to release the Land Use Overview to veterans and the entire community?
- Are there rules or regulations that apply to the release of the Land Use Overview?
- Has the Land Use Overview been approved or its implementation begun?
- How are projects ranked in terms of priority?
- Has the Land Use Overview been incorporated into the CARES process?
- What is the current application and approval process at the West LA VA for land use arrangements?
- Is a competitive bidding process used for projects on the property?
- Who negotiates, evaluates and reviews requests for use of the West LA VA?
- Who approved the Enterprise rent-a-car operation on the property?
- How are potential environmental impacts on the surrounding communities being publicly evaluated and addressed?
- What types of uses have been denied access to the property over the past year?

- Who determined there is a \$26 million annual revenue potential for the West LA VA and how was that sum determined?

### **Brentwood Golf Facility**

The Land Use Overview indicates that the VA intends to enter into an Enhanced Use Lease with Robert Trent Jones/Sierra to develop the Brentwood Golf Facility. The overview contains a sketch of a preliminary plan, yet does not indicate how and whether the project has been evaluated and approved. Please respond to the following questions:

- Who developed the concept for the golf facility?
- What is the status of the proposal?
- Is the VA currently operating the golf facility or is Richmark Entertainment operating the facility?
- Will the veterans' Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) program be impacted if this proposal is implemented?
- What is the evaluation and approval process for this proposal?

### **UCLA and VA employee housing**

The Land Use Overview states a letter has been submitted to the VA Central Office to request an exclusion from the CARES process for a project to house UCLA and VA employees on the campus. As you know, our veterans suffer a significant absence of affordable short-term and long-term housing. Please respond to the following questions:

- Why was a request made for an exception from the CARES process for this particular project?
- Who made the determination that employee housing should qualify for an exception?
- Who developed the concept for the proposed project?
- What is the description and scope of the proposed project?
- If the project is approved, it appears to be sited at the Jackie Robinson Stadium. Are there plans to eliminate the stadium?
- What is the evaluation and approval process for this proposal?

### **Fisher House**

The Fisher House is another project that appears to have been approved without a public process. Please respond to the following questions:

- Did the VA consult with local veterans to determine if there are higher priorities for the campus than the Fisher House?
- What is the status of the project?

Mr. Charles Dorman

November 3, 2006

Page 4

- The CARES Business Plan Options refer to the Fisher House as a redevelopment option. The Land Use Overview states it is a land use project which is underway. Please clarify this discrepancy.
- The CARES Business Plan Options suggest a number of different parcels as possible sites for the Fisher House. The Land Use Overview indicates a specific site has been selected. Please clarify this discrepancy.
- Has the Fisher House Foundation approved the project for the West LA VA?
- Has the Fisher House Foundation funded the project for the West LA VA?
- What is the evaluation and approval process for this proposal?

### **Historic Trolley Stop**

The Land Use Overview indicates the trolley stop is an historic landmark with an opportunity for revenue generation through retail use.

- Has the VA determined whether the use of an historic landmark for retail purposes is consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act?
- Who determined that the historic trolley stop is an opportunity for revenue generation?
- What are the uses being considered for the trolley stop?
- What is the evaluation and approval process for this proposal?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I would appreciate receiving a response to these questions by November 24, 2006.

Sincerely,



HENRY A. WAXMAN  
Member of Congress

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