

**EDUCATION AND NEIGHBORHOODS COMMITTEE, SPECIAL JOINT MEETING  
WITH THE BOARD OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONERS**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2011  
5:00 p.m.**

**JOHN FERRARO COUNCIL CHAMBER  
CITY HALL, ROOM 340  
200 NORTH SPRING STREET, LOS ANGELES, CA 90012**

EDUCATION AND NEIGHBORHOODS COMMITTEE

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Note: For information regarding the Committee and its operations, please contact the Committee Legislative Assistant at the phone number and/or email address listed above. Upon 24-hour advance notice, assistive listening devices, and other accommodations, such as sign language interpretation and translation services are available at the meeting. Contact the Legislative Assistant listed above for the needed services.

FILE NO.

SUBJECT

(1)

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Neighborhood Council (NC) Elections Task Force to present verbal report relative to recommendations on how to proceed with NC elections.

Materials related to an item on this Agenda submitted to the Committee after distribution of the agenda packet are available for public inspection in the City Clerk's Office at 200 North Spring Street, Room 395, City Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90012 during normal business hours.

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# Report of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council

## Elections Task Force

The Task Force was established by a resolution of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Coalition and met on January 26, February 5, February 13, and February 20, 2011. In addition to the city's neighborhood councils and regional alliances, invitations to participate were sent to the office of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, Councilman Paul Krekorian (as chairman of the Education and Neighborhoods Committee), City Clerk June Lagmay, Board of Neighborhood Commissioners and Department of Neighborhood Empowerment General Manager BongHwan Kim.

Individuals affiliated with 24 neighborhood councils and representatives of the Mayor's office, Councilman Paul Krekorian's office, City Clerk's office, and Department of Neighborhood Empowerment participated in discussions of the Task Force.

The intent of the Task Force was to respond to concerns raised following the 2010 neighborhood council elections. Near unanimous opinion of those participating in town halls hosted by Councilman Krekorian was expressed in his report: "There were a few points of consensus during the town hall discussions and one was that the City Clerk should not administer neighborhood council elections."

The city's ongoing fiscal emergency resulting from continued weak revenues coupled with rising costs suggest that minimal funding will be available to conduct elections in 2012. Therefore, cost was a critical point for the Task Force to consider.

### **Purpose and Objectives**

The purpose of the Task Force was to examine alternative systems of voting and recommend improvements in the electoral processes of neighborhood councils. Three specific objectives were agreed to:

- increasing the number of candidates running for board and officer positions,
- increasing the number of voters in every council's election, and
- identifying the most cost-effective methods for achieving these goals.

### **Criteria**

**Flexibility:** Neighborhood councils desire the ability to determine the time, date, place and method of their elections. Some councils want to be able to hold elections annually rather than being limited to once every two years.

**Integrity:** Neighborhood council elections must be conducted in a fair and transparent manner. The neutral third party must be able to ensure that rules and procedures are clear and concise. They must be able to certify that procedures were adhered to and election results are legitimate.

**Viability:** Election procedures and processes must be cost-effective so that public money is not wasted. Procedures and processes must not be so cumbersome and complicated that they create misunderstanding and discourage participation by volunteers, candidates, and voters.

**Democracy:** The election process must reflect the grassroots nature of the neighborhood council system. Elections should not be conducted using a “top down, one-size-fits-all” model that frustrates the intent of the neighborhood council movement.

## **Electoral Options**

The Task Force considered the following options (listed in no preferential order):

- City Clerk Administered Polling Place / Vote-by-Mail Option
- E-Voting
- E-Voting with Enhancements Option
- Independent Election Administrator Model
- Town Hall Model
- Suspend Elections

## **Recommendations**

1. The Election Task Force recommends that the city clerk’s authority be repealed and replaced with a more flexible and cost-effective system, including, but not limited to, polling place and town hall methods administered by some outside authority such as the independent election administrator system; and vote-by-mail, to be funded by neighborhood councils at their option.
2. The Task Force recommends that the preferred method for conducting neighborhood council elections is electronic voting, with a total cost not to exceed \$800,000, with the ability to include polling place and town hall; and vote-by-mail at individual neighborhood council’s expense.
3. The Task Force recommends that a vigorous effort to promote participation as neighborhood council candidates and voters be pursued regardless of the electoral process. For any of these options to succeed, it is necessary that adequate outreach be performed, using both a citywide awareness campaign and the resources of individual neighborhood councils.
4. The Task Force recommends that election challenges be considered, and decisions rendered, by an independent entity, to be determined.

## **Appendix A: City Clerk Proposed 2012 Neighborhood Council Elections Budget**

Document dated December 7, 2010 presented to City Council Elections and Neighborhood Committee

## **Appendix B: 2012 NC Elections Comparison Table**

Document dated February 17, 2011 prepared by Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

## 2012 NC Elections Comparison Table

Methodology	Description	Pros	Cons	Cost	Legal Issues
E-Voting	E-Voting offers its participants an electronic platform to vote. Voting could be extended beyond one day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Requires pre-registration of voters encouraging NC outreach</li> <li>● Safe &amp; secure voting online from any internet accessible location, including smart phones</li> <li>● Could potentially increase voter/candidate participation because of convenience</li> <li>● Voter information can be easily be provided to the NC to add to daily outreach efforts.</li> <li>● Additional options (phone/paper voting) can be added to an election tailoring it to each NC</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Pre-registration could potentially be problematic in areas of low civic participation</li> <li>● An IEA type figure would still be needed to do the “human” aspect of the work (e.g. qualifying voters and candidates)</li> <li>● NCs may still have to pay for any additional options to tailor their own elections.</li> <li>● May potentially disengage communities who are not electronically savvy or trusting of this technology</li> <li>● Drafting &amp; approval contract can take some time</li> <li>● Would need to develop a challenge process or hire arbiters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● E-Voting platform - prices vary depending on the size and experience of the company ranging from a few thousand dollars per NC to \$450,000 for a citywide platform</li> <li>● Costs for IEAs and arbiters</li> <li>● DONE - \$300k for staffing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Could require changes in the existing ordinance and Plan</li> <li>● E-Voting company and IEA's agreements would be subject to the City's contracting requirements, e.g. competitive bidding.</li> </ul>
E-Voting & Physical Day of Election with electronic voting tools	E-Voting platform which includes a physical “day-of” election site using computers/laptops to vote at the site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● In addition to the Pros of online voting above, adds opportunity for people to vote in person on an election day</li> <li>● Introduces stakeholders to a new concept of voting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Same Cons as above</li> <li>● More resources needed to staff the election site</li> </ul>	Same costs as above in addition to voting location costs and staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Could require changes in the existing ordinance and Plan</li> <li>● E-Voting company and IEA's agreements would be subject to the City's contracting requirements, e.g. competitive bidding.</li> </ul>

<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Pros</b>	<b>Cons</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Legal Issues</b>
IEA Model	Independent Election Administrators (IEA) are neutral third parties who qualify candidates and voters and provide supervision and oversight at the elections site on election day. The City Clerk could be the IEA, or DONE could work with a cadre of Independent Election Administrators (IEA's) to conduct elections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A neutral 3<sup>rd</sup> party would be responsible to qualify candidates &amp; voters</li> <li>• The IEA would remove NCs from the role of qualifying candidates and voters</li> <li>• Many NCs are familiar with the IEA model</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If City Clerk is not IEA, IEAs would need to be identified and trained – process takes time</li> <li>• This system relies moderately on volunteers</li> <li>• Election results may not be viewed as having the same credibility as those conducted by the City Clerk</li> <li>• Some NCs are wary of the IEA model given the past problems</li> <li>• Would need to develop a challenge process or hire arbiters</li> <li>• Increased costs because a single IEA cannot conduct more than 1 election per day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEAs - Cost would be driven by the number of IEAs needed. City Clerk stated \$136,416 for 9 regional IEA's; DONE spent \$800/NC on IEA's</li> <li>• Potential costs for arbiters</li> <li>• DONE – at least \$300k for outreach staffing and related costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could require changes in the existing ordinance and Plan</li> <li>• Could require an RFQ or RFP process for the E-Voting company and IEA's</li> <li>• Would require liability insurance for IEA's</li> </ul>
Selection Process (Town Hall System)	Per the Plan, NCs may hold a selection process if they do not opt to have an election.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal costs</li> <li>• Good for an initial “getting off the ground” boards, especially after certification</li> <li>• No secret voting</li> <li>• There are many styles of selections processes (e.g. pulling names out of a hat, selection people at random, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No secret voting</li> <li>• Not suitable for large turnouts – could discourage outreach</li> <li>• Not suitable for contentious situations</li> <li>• Would need to develop a challenge process</li> <li>• Various selection styles could affect uniformity within the system and thus the credibility of the process</li> </ul>	Any cost associated with staff time prior, during and after the process	No changes need to be made in the ordinance or Plan for NCs to use the selection process. NCs only need to change their bylaws.
Suspend elections for 1 fiscal year (FY)	Suspend the 2012 elections until 2012/13 FY. NCs can appoint vacancies or use a selection process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost savings of at least \$1.1 million</li> <li>• Provides time for the NCs and City to determine a more sustainable election system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attrition of Board members who don't want to serve additional years</li> <li>• Could affect NC outreach if Board members don't feel the need to outreach</li> </ul>	DONE staff - \$75k to support election planning and selections	Would require ordinance and Plan changes to suspend elections and extend Board terms.
Suspend elections for 2 fiscal years (FY)	Suspend the 2012 elections until 2013/14 FY. NCs can appoint vacancies or use a selection process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost savings of at least \$2.2 million</li> <li>• Provides time for the NCs and City to determine a more sustainable election system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attrition of Board members who don't want to serve additional years</li> <li>• Could affect NC outreach if Board members don't feel the need to outreach</li> </ul>	DONE staff - \$75k to support election planning and selections	Would require ordinance and Plan changes to suspend elections and extend Board terms.

This document was prepared by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment at the request of Neighborhood Council leaders. The Department has not taken a position on elections. The Pro/Con lists are not exhaustive, but represent various statements made by Neighborhood Council stakeholders during discussions about the Neighborhood Council system.