

CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
CALIFORNIA

BOARD OF NEIGHBORHOOD  
COMMISSIONERS

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MINUTES

BOARD OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONERS

SPECIAL MEETING

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2014 – 1:00 P.M.

BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS SESSION ROOM  
200 NORTH SPRING STREET, 3<sup>RD</sup> FLOOR  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Karen Mack, President  
Leonard Shaffer, Vice President  
Joy Atkinson  
Lydia Grant  
Victor Medina  
Olivia Rubio

DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT

Grayce Liu, General Manager  
Joseph Hari, Senior Project Coordinator  
Janet Lindo, Executive Administrative Assistant

CITY ATTORNEY REPRESENTATIVE

Carmen Hawkins, Deputy City Attorney

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

**ACTION: President Mack gave the introduction.**

2. Call to Order and Commission roll call. (1 minute)

**ACTION: President Mack called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. Commission roll was called by Executive Administrative Assistant, Janet Lindo.**

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting – Board Planning Retreat of January 27, 2014, and the Regular Meeting of February 4, 2014. (Click on the link to view a copy of the document.) (3 minutes)

[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/01-27-14\\_draft-COMMISSION-MINUTES\\_.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/01-27-14_draft-COMMISSION-MINUTES_.pdf)

**ACTION:** Commissioner Medina moved approval of the Minutes of the Special Meeting – Board Planning Retreat of January 27, 2014, as written. Commissioner Atkinson seconded the Motion.

**VOTE:** Ayes – 6  
Nays – 0

**Motion passes unanimously.**

<http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/02-04-14-draft-MINUTES-COMMISSION-REGULAR-MEETING.pdf>

**ACTION:** Commissioner Grant moved approval of the Minutes of February 4, 2014, as written. Commissioner Atkinson seconded the Motion.

**VOTE:** Ayes – 6  
Nays – 0

**Motion passes unanimously.**

4. General Public Comments - Comments from the public on non-agenda items within the Board's subject matter jurisdiction. This agenda item will last a total of 15 minutes and no individual speaker will be allowed more than three minutes. (15 minutes)

**Public comment received from:**

**Pete Nicholas – stakeholder Rampart Village, want to again encourage you to get on the agenda discussion of how you handle stakeholders on each side of the borders where two Neighborhood Councils meet.**

5. Verbal update from a representative of the Office of the Mayor Eric Garcetti. (10 minutes)

**ACTION: No Mayor Office representative present.**

6. General Manager's Report. (10 minutes)
  1. Briefing on Departmental activities.
  2. Staffing, budget and other operational matters.
  3. Neighborhood Council 2014 Elections

**ACTION: General Manager, Grayce Liu, gave the General Manager's report.**

- We are all hands on deck for our Neighborhood Council elections.
- The first election starts in the Valley in Region 2 on Saturday.
- Across the city we're getting resistance from some Neighborhood Councils board members who feel that they shouldn't be the one doing outreach for candidates. That there is a conflict of interest for them to be doing that. That the City should be doing such outreach.
- Funding - we are working on getting the checking accounts open.
- Field – we have split up the duties of the Field. Leyla will take the Valley area and the East side and she will be taking some of the Neighborhood Empowerment Analysts and moving to the Valley office. Joe is taking the remaining parts of the city to oversee the field operations on those fronts. We did that in order to provide better service.

- **We are working to streamline the board orientation manual, to make the training shorter, put them online.**
- **The two Neighborhood Councils that are still in exhaustive efforts are MacArthur Park and North Hills West Neighborhood Councils. However we will be taking North Hills West Neighborhood Council out of exhaustive efforts. The Personnel Department did come back with their report on the harassment complaint that came through and they did not find that the harassment violated any laws. They felt that in general there was behavior that was not conducive to effective board management on both sides. We will be taking North Hills West out of exhaustive efforts probably this week.**
- **Last week 19 international visitors came to learn about the Neighborhood Council system. We co-hosted them with City Attorney, Mike Feuer.**
- **Everywhere we go people are very impressed with community impact statements, the fact that Neighborhood Councils can do community impact statements.**

**Public comment received from:**

**Pete Nicholas – one of the problems that is the greatest barrier to outreach is the language issue.**

7. Commission Committee Reports. (40 minutes)
  1. Ad Hoc Committee re Outreach (Members: Atkinson-Chair, Mack, and Rubio)
  2. Ad Hoc Committee re ability of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners to implement citywide policies (Members: Shaffer-Chair, Grant, and Medina)
  3. Ad Hoc Committee re Leadership Development for Neighborhood Councils (Members: Rubio-Chair, Medina, and Shaffer)

**ACTION: None.**

**Public comment received from:**

**Eli Lipmen – President, Palms Neighborhood Council, I definitely recognize your point that we should have been planning for many months but the same point you've done a presentation. Doug Fitzsimmons from SORO has this beautiful PowerPoint presentation that he came and did for my Neighborhood Council about the structure of an NC and how to do a new meeting, it was a new board orientation. I think there's stuff already out there and examples already out there that we can leverage right away and people who have done these trainings that way we don't have to reinvent the wheel and just take what other NCs have done in terms of new board orientation. There's definitely a lot of great stuff out there. It isn't even the need to put something in writing. I think we could reach out to a couple of the key or really well run NCs and they'll have something ready to go.**

**7.1 - Pete Nicholas - there are at least two levels for outreach. One that individual Neighborhood Councils bear and then one that the citywide organizations, DONE and the Board bear. I think DONE and the board are best at general outreach and I think then the Councils bear some responsibility for their local outreach.**

7.1 - Grant Reed, Harbor City Neighborhood Council, the last two mayors didn't like Neighborhood Councils, they didn't have much to say about us good, but the new Mayor, I think he appreciates the grassroots efforts that we are trying to do and I really think that if you talk to him and got him to do a couple of really slick commercials, if he said go meet your Neighborhood Councils and that's the way to get to me, put him on ABC and Telemundo we'd be inundated. We wouldn't know what to do with ourselves because all of a sudden people would discover us and discover the possibilities.

7.1 - Olive Reed, President, Harbor City Neighborhood Council, I am aware that the Mayor is interested in Neighborhood Councils because as President I was asked to attend a meeting at the Harbor with all our area Neighborhood Council Presidents to give some input on getting an Executive Director for the Port of Los Angeles and to have the Neighborhood Councils involved in something like that I think is vitally important so it tells me that the Mayor is supportive of Neighborhood Councils but I agree with what was just said that on channel 7, on channel 4, channel 2, anytime the Mayor has something to say they will listen to him. So I think it is vitally important that we encourage our Mayor to push Neighborhood Councils and talk about the elections.

7.1 - Rashad Rucker, Election Administrator for South LA and Harbor region, in a lot of the hard to reach areas it's a grassroots effort and the grassroots effort requires physically being there walking through neighborhoods. I think we are at a unique period where we have the Mayor on our side along with other departments too. I think we should as a Neighborhood Council system use that to our advantage by all of us going out there in some of the hard to reach communities and go door knocking and that is one of the efforts I am pushing in the CANN DUNC area as well as the Southeast. I would like to put that out there and ask you guys to perhaps join some of these Neighborhood Councils when they're visiting these communities and even encouraging the Mayor to take some time out of his schedule to join some of the Neighborhood Councils and just doing some simple door knocking and having someone on one with people.

7.1 - Ivan Spiegel – Venice Neighborhood Council, about the comprehensive outreach program, great idea, how you gonna enforce it? It should be part of the whole process with a strategic plan model in place and the outreach plan should be part of the strategic plan, not something else out here and then how you going to hold the Councils to do what they say they're going to do. Funding needs to be part of the outreach plan, how much money they're going to allocate for outreach. There's need to be an outreach plan for the whole city. You also need to talk to Neighborhood Councils about why is outreach important because they don't get it.

7.3 – Pete Nicholas – I'm in favor of any kind of leadership training whether it is the ability to lead a committee meeting, the ability to lead a board meeting, the ability to lead a retreat or the ability to have strategic planning and leadership sky high, but during this discussion a couple of things came up, one was about committees, all the boards have committees in their bylaws because of the way they were formed and then customized, but sometimes you end up with four committees with the same five people on it where you're paying an awful price just to structure and sometimes you need to delegate things just to those people. The reality is that with Councils that don't have active participation the committees fall away and all the business gets done in a monthly meeting. I would ask for a little leniency and tolerance about demanding how

much and how active committees can be in order for a Neighborhood Council to be in good status. The other thing is the ongoing threat that you have to have this training or you can't do this. Training should be made available, it should be invitational, it should be encouraged, it should be inspired, but enough of the threats that if you don't have this training you can't attend, you can't vote, you can't spend, you can't exist, you can't propose, you can't community impact statement.

7.3 - Ivan Spiegel – we had a meeting last week, Doug Epperhart and I and Grayce joined us we had lunch and we went over the whole idea of leadership training, putting a curriculum together. We came up with, I think, some very positive ideas. Commissioner Shaffer, training of committee chairs is part of it because we realize that has to be in there. We're thinking of calling it something like executive leadership seminars rather than leadership training cause then nobody will want it. Part of what's gonna have to happen is that we have to find a sexy way to get this out into the, that people will take the classes. My only thing is that this has to happen now. The first elections are this weekend which means boards will be seated starting in a month probably is not sooner and leadership needs to be part of it now. The other thing that's happening is the Department is gonna do this 90 minute training. They can barely cover anything in 90 minutes. So this is gonna be separate, there's no way this can really be part of that. We have to figure out a way to get it done, get it in and get started with it. So while you're busy making plans we're gonna start trying to do something that we hope will work with this committee and try to get it moving, but it gotta be fast for now. It gotta be a short term thing now.

8. Currently Neighborhood Councils are allowed to file Community Impact Statements (CIS) with a position of "for, against, or general comments" on the subject of council files. The value of those CIS would be enhanced if Neighborhood Councils could take more nuanced positions. In order to facilitate the development of criteria for such a process this item is referred to the Ad Hoc Committee on Implementation. The committee is requested to report back to the Commission at its March 17, 2014 meeting. (15 minutes)

**ACTION: None.**

9. Previously, the Commission established Regional Standing Committees to provide recommendations to the Commission regarding improvements to the Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils. The Regional Standing Committees, also known as the Neighborhood Council (NC) Plan Review Committees, have forwarded their recommendations to the Commission for review and action. Discussion and POSSIBLE ACTION by the Commission on the recommendations of the Regional Standing Committees and the Commission's positions with respect to the recommendations, including but not limited to drafting a communication or Resolution to the City regarding: (30 minutes) (Click on the links to view copies of the documents.)

[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Memo-re\\_Eight-Motions.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Memo-re_Eight-Motions.pdf)

[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Attachment-A\\_survey-results.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Attachment-A_survey-results.pdf)

[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Attachment-B\\_NC-Resolutions.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Attachment-B_NC-Resolutions.pdf)

[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Survey\\_8-motions\\_text2.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Survey_8-motions_text2.pdf)

1) Training and Leadership Development

NC Plan Review Committees' Recommendation:

- a) Neighborhood Council board members be required to complete Ethics, Financial Policy, Sexual Harassment, and ADA Compliance training, and that the Department offer classes including, but not limited to leadership, City government basics, parliamentary procedures, land use, and candidate training.
- b) There be a citywide standard period of time from date of seating, not to exceed 90 days, that a Board member will have to pass the required training, and that this be enforced by the Neighborhood Council bylaws, which shall prohibit voting on any matter coming before the Neighborhood Council board. Inability of any board member(s) to vote for failure to timely complete training will not affect quorum.

Additional Commission proposals:

- c) That the Commission may amend the recommendation regarding training to include consequences for failure to complete the training within the allowed period of time. The ultimate consequence being the removal by action of the Department of any offending board member.
- d) That the Commission may amend the recommendation regarding training to include Workplace Violence/Bullying Prevention training.

**ACTION: None.**

**Public comment received from:**

**Jay Handal – we're not volunteers, we're elected officials. So I'm so tired of hearing we are volunteers cause we're not. We ran, we got elected, we decided to do this and the people graciously allowing us to do it for them. So I don't ever want to hear we're volunteers again. I wanna hear that we are elected officials representing the stakeholders in our districts. Ethics, this is really simple guys. Ethics and funding has to be done before you get sat, if you don't take it you don't vote. If you miss three meetings in a vacant seat they throw you off the board in most bylaws. Well you know what if you don't represent your people in 90 days you're thrown off the board cause you've missed three meetings. Make it really clear, standardize it and be done with it. There is absolutely no reason to make this thing drag on for 12 more weeks, 14 more weeks, 18 more weeks, 4 more months, 12 more months. Your grievance policy can be enacted you've got enough people ready to move. The serial grievors are killing our system, absolutely destroying our system. Having to bring the police into meetings on a regular basis around this city is disgraceful. You should have a standard code of civility in everybody's bylaws which should be standardized bylaws because we're spending people's money. We're responsible. If you don't wanna do it, get off the board and let**

someone else come on and do it. If you don't like the rules go play in another park because this park has rules. Either do it or get out.

Pete Nicholas – I wanna specifically go on record against Jay's proposal for rigid standardization with no variation for all the Neighborhood Councils but above that I'd like mention some specific issues that my Neighborhood Council has had. We were designing an electronic logo so that we could present it in different media, in different format and then oops we see in the General Manager's newsletter that oh you can't contract to have that graphic done. When we tried to do translation we found out that oops you can't do that. When we tried to buy some emergency supplies the stockpile for our CERT people (Community Emergency Response Team) people the City Attorney came and oops you can't do that and one thing after another. We talk about developing initiative and leadership and activity in Neighborhood Councils but sometimes you feel like you're sitting at a very low valley with a huge pile of crap coming down telling you what you can't do and it gets kind of hard to maintain initiative and the broader view and an expansive view of your responsibility when almost anything you attempt sooner or later is gonna get overruled and then couple that with the fact that in recent months the Department and or the City itself has gone into current year fiscal funding and expenditures to take money for prior fiscal year.

Grant Reed – education and training is good, but you know we're just volunteers and by my reckoning what you're talking about there's like eight classes we're gonna take and then you me to be on how many other committees. I mean I do have a life, but I do care about my community. You know I have to juggle the two to a certain point. I think you're looking at problems that have happen with three, four, maybe five Neighborhood Councils, 95 of us no glove is going to fit any one of us. We're all gonna be different in a lot of ways. Democracy is a messy thing, none of this stuff goes well. You guys are heaping an awful lot of stuff onto us. Education and training is good, but make it pertinent, make it relevant, but don't overload us to the point of being crazy.

Olive Reed – I'm just gonna back up what he said (Grant Reed) because I agree with him 100%. Yes, there is no downside to education. Most of my board still work full time and to keep adding these thing onto them, we only have 13 board members and we have one open seat and now my treasurer's got an incredible opportunity so he's going to be leaving and it falls on me most of the time and trying to encourage people to do this stuff when like he said you know, I still work part time and I have to do ethics training for my job. I have to do most of the things that you've already listed I do for my job so let's look at what people do and what kind of training they already have and don't mandate that everybody has to do the same thing. If we have a lawyer on the board do they still have to do the ethics training when they already have to do it for their job? Let's look at individuals instead of just having a blanket and say everybody gotta do the same thing.

Ivan Spiegel – all of these trainings are important (sexual harassment, workplace violence, ADA, ethics, finance) but these are all trainings that basically are there to keep the City from being sued. It's the other things that are not being mandated that are really the issues. How do you run meetings, parliamentary procedures, leadership, what should you be spending your money on, how to do budgeting, how to deal with land

**use issues (that's probably the most important things that any of us do, is ruling on land use stuff within our communities.) If we don't include that stuff the City won't get sued and we won't be any further down the road. This thing of we're volunteers its garbage. That's why Councils are falling apart, they don't know what they're doing.**

10. Commission Business - Comment from Commissioners on subject matters within the Board's jurisdiction. (15 minutes)
  1. Comment on Commissioners' own activities/brief announcements.
  2. Brief response to statements made or questions posed by persons exercising their general public comment rights/ask staff questions for clarification.
  3. Introduce new issues for consideration by the Commission at its next meeting and direct staff to place on the agenda.
  4. Ask staff to research issues and report back to the Commission at a future time.

**ACTION: None.**

11. General Public Comments - Comments from the public on non-agenda items within the Board's subject matter jurisdiction. This agenda item will last a total of 15 minutes and no individual speaker will be allowed more than three minutes. (15 minutes)

**ACTION: None.**

12. Adjourn

**ACTION: Commissioner Atkinson moved to adjourned the meeting at 4:03 p.m.**

**####**