

ADOPTED 08-18-14

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA

BOARD OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONERS

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MINUTES

BOARD OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONERS

SPECIAL MEETING

THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 2014 – 6:00 P.M.

**WALTER REED MIDDLE SCHOOL
LIBRARY
4525 IRVINE AVENUE
NORTH HOLLYWOOD, CA 91602**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Karen Mack, President
Leonard Shaffer, Vice President
Joy Atkinson
Lydia Grant
Eli Lipmen
Olivia Rubio

ABSENT

Victor Medina

DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT

Grayce Liu, General Manager
Joseph Hari, Senior Project Coordinator

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 6:15 p.m. Commission roll was called by Joseph Hari. Commissioner Grant arrived at 6:25 p.m.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of July 21, 2014. (Click on the link to view a copy of the document.) (3 minutes)

http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/07-21-14_draft-COMMISSION-MINUTES.pdf

ACTION: Commissioner Shaffer moved approval of the Minutes of the Regular meeting of July 21, 2014, as written. Commissioner Lipmen seconded the motion.

VOTE: Ayes – 6 (Atkinson, Grant, Lipmen, Mack, Rubio, and Shaffer)
Nays – 0
Abstention – 0
Absent – 1 (Medina)

TOTAL – Ayes 6 Nays 0 Abstention 0 Absent 1 Motion Carries X Fails

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 comments received from:

Monica Alexenko – I also live in Van Nuys. The concern that many of us have is that on our board we have people that are not living actually in Van Nuys. I would ask that this board really take a look at what the requirements are for people to be on Neighborhood Councils. They should actually have to live in the community that they are serving.

Glenn Bailey – provided an update on Neighborhood Councils not posting their agendas on the Early Notification System (ENS).

Pierre Bohamed – expressed disappointment in the Van Nuys Council. Asking that everyone be removed from the Van Nuys board who do not reside in Van Nuys.

Jay Handal, Budget Advocates, Budget Day is on August 16. On the list of your policies that you have on EmpowerLA I think it would be really good to be able to get updates on them. CIS filings when a board member is no longer a board member it does not drop them from access to CIS files. I would suggest that's something to look in to.

Mark Reed, Elected Congressional candidate for the West San Fernando Valley and I come here tonight to introduce myself.

Maria Scherzer – my comments really refer to what is best practices, specifically for the Van Nuys Neighborhood Council. Perhaps the best practice would be not merely to decertify the Van Nuys Neighborhood Council but perhaps to consider Van Nuys Neighborhood Council as a Neighborhood Council free zone.

Ron Ziff, Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Council – I heard these people talk about an area in Van Nuys that calls itself Sherman Oaks and that is just what it is. It's an area in Van Nuys that about six years ago went to council person asked to have their neighborhood renamed, It was renamed North Sherman Oaks. The area goes from Burbank Boulevard to Oxnard. They're not part of Sherman Oaks they're part of Van

Nuys. During the recent Neighborhood Council elections there were 93 challenges as to procedures. Of those 93 challenges 86 of them they were all rejected every last one of them. Of those 93 challenges 86 of them rejections were on the stationery from the Bureau of Neighborhood Commissioners. I read every last one of those 93 challenges. As I read them I saw some very real concerns of very concerned citizen individuals that were participating in the process and my question to you is of those 86 rejections that went out on your stationary how deep was the investigation of the challenges? What was the judgment that caused every last one of them to be rejected and why was it done that way?

5. General Manager's Report. (10 minutes)
 1. Briefing on Departmental activities.
 2. Staffing, budget and other operational matters.

ACTION: General Manager, Grayce Liu, gave her report, with input from Joseph Hari, Senior Project Coordinator.

- Funding - \$663, 685.77 was not spent by the Neighborhood Councils minus approximately \$60,000 of contracts that needed to be executed.
- The Department saved approximately half a million dollars.
- 95 Neighborhood Council checking accounts are open and functional.
- 62 Neighborhood Councils have their cards and are using their checking accounts, six are waiting to pick up their cards, 15 Neighborhood Councils are waiting for the card delivery to us, 11 are waiting for bank documentation and 1 is being held because they are in Exhaustive Efforts right now. Those who don't have access we have been deducting their expenses out of their account for them until they are functional themselves.
- There is now a tracker for the Commission policies on EmpowerLA.org.
- NEA's have been doing board retreats for Neighborhood Councils.
- There will be a training for ethics this Saturday in the Harbor at 8:00 a.m.
- Budget Day will be August 16th, each Neighborhood Council is asked to send two representatives .
- Another international delegation will be coming from Saudi Arabia.
- Had General Manager's review with the Mayor yesterday and he was all thumbs up for our work.

Public comment received from:

Jay Handal – I agree 100% with Pete Nicholas. Typically, we have four NEAs and maybe one supervisor around at any given time handling 95 Neighborhood Councils. That's ludicrous, you can't do it. It doesn't work. You can't get that number of people to do what's in the Charter. The Department is supposed to support Neighborhood Councils. That's the primary function of the Department. This City has let down all 1,800, not the Department, Neighborhood Councils.

Pete Nicholas, Rampart Village – encourage Department to develop an escrow account into which NCs can deposit money to smooth their annualized cost for elections. The Department should look at the assignment of NEAs and their location and try to regularized, normalize and make it a bit more reasonable where people are located.

6. Recognition and presentation of 10 Year Anniversary Certificate to the Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council. (10 minutes)

ACTION: Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council was recognized and presented their 10 Year Anniversary Certificate.

7. Discussion with various South Valley area Neighborhood Council representatives who wish to report best practices. Neighborhood Council representatives should complete their questionnaire in advance of the meeting. This matter will last a maximum of 20 minutes and the time will be divided among those representatives wishing to speak. (Click on the link to view a copy of the document.) (20 minutes)
http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/BEST-PRACTICES-QUESTIONNAIRE_03-19-14.pdf

ACTION: None.

Public comment received from:

Jill Banks Barad, President, Sherman Oaks Neighborhood Council, founder and Chair of the Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils – we're very proud of our reputation in the City and what we've done. (see attached completed Commission questionnaire)

Linda Grevani, President, Lake Balboa – emergency preparedness committee is actually doing a three hour class on map your neighborhood. That is going block by block to the community and saying this is what you need to do to prepare for a disaster, these are the people on your block that need help in case there is a disaster. We also have a safety committee and they are charged with organizing neighborhood watch on every block so that our neighborhoods become safe. What's happening is we are finding out who our neighbors are. Now that we are safe and now that we are prepared we are going to try to help our community flourish by targeting preferred retail establishments and we also want to enjoy our lovely Lake Balboa with art festivals, movies, theatres in the park. We have eight new councilmembers and we are all excited to dream big and see what we can achieve.

Steve Leper- gave the history of Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council.

8. Discussion and possible action by the Commission to review and amend Commission Policy Number 2014-01 regarding Neighborhood Council Posting Requirements. (Click on the link to view a copy of the document.) (20 minutes)
http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Neighborhood-Council-Agenda-Posting-Requirements_Policy-2014-01_Adopted-05-06-141.pdf
http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/NC-Posting-Policy_draft_adopted_07-21-14_item-no.-81.pdf
http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/NC-Posting-Policy_Draft_07-24-14.pdf

ACTION: Commissioner Shaffer moved to table this matter to the next meeting on August 18, 2014. Commissioner Grant seconded the motion.

VOTE: Ayes – 6 (Atkinson, Grant, Lipmen, Mack, Rubio, and Shaffer)

Nays – 0
Abstention – 0
Absent – 1 (Medina)

TOTAL – Ayes 6 Nays 0 Abstention 0 Absent 1 Motion Carries X Fails

Public comment received from:

Glenn Bailey – I would also like to say that I am also agreeing with Pete on this issue. There need to be some explanation. It would sure be helpful if maybe you could do strikeout and bold or somehow note where the change is so that we don't have to compare word for word what the changes are to see what that is and I certainly agree with Commissioner Atkinson that we need to bring this to a head and the City Attorney needs to make this a priority. It's been on the Commission agenda for months now. We need to get this so that we can tell all 95 Neighborhood Councils, all 1700 plus board members and all of their stakeholders what the final decision is on the policy. We know the major components of it. I really like to see this done well before the Congress, not a draft, a finalization.

9. TOWN HALL MEETING - The Commission will conduct a town hall meeting where members of the public are encouraged to voice concerns and offer suggestions and comments to the Commissioners regarding a proposed policy requiring Neighborhood Council board members to take the required training within a certain amount of time from being seated, e.g., 90 days. This policy may also include a mechanism for enforcement, including but not limited to, prohibiting persons from voting (without impacting quorum) and/or removal from the Neighborhood Council board. (Click on the link to view a copy of the document.) (60 minutes)
http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Training-Policy_Proposed_Draft_6-3-14.pdf
<http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Draft-Bullying-and-Harassment-Policy-051514.pdf>
http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/Commisison_Code-of-Civility_signed_01-27-14.pdf

ACTION: None.

Public comment received from:

Glenn Bailey – I recall speaking to the Commission about this issue at your May meeting which was in San Pedro or Wilmington. Thanks for the deliberative process on this. I think and I realize that this is probably even more of a legalistic item than the posting matter because you're dealing with people being removed from boards. Who is taking notes of all these meeting for the last four plus months? Who's taking notes of all your town hall sessions public comment? Are those being taken and compiled so that all these good suggestions you're hearing are you going to be reminded of them five months later?

Mary Garcia – I think that training should be prior to them becoming a member. I think it's way too easy to become a member, you get in. When someone is so vile and so awful on your Neighborhood Council and you can't do anything about it because there's

no teeth anywhere. I think that previous to that if they've taken this course and they can't abide by it, I think it has more meaning you've been told up front. The thing now with the Congress, six months after an election, we have to do something sooner than that letting them know what's required of them.

Jay Handal – I rarely see a whole board bullying people. It's typically one or two people who do the bullying or the harassing. I am a little concerned about all of these regulations and training. We're going to inundate people with so much stuff that they're not going to want to be a part of this. Ninety-five percent of this could be stopped if you actually had someone out there watching what goes on in Neighborhood Councils and letting people know they can't do it. No more mandated training for all boards.

Pete Nicholas – I do believe that this controversy is really one of word smiting. The policy should say it is in our general good interest that we all behave well, we're all civil, we are counting on you all to do this. We can all do this together.

Denyse Seles nick, Tarzana Neighborhood Council – I am still getting responses on the article I wrote about bullying and that was probably four or five months ago. One of the things you have not addressed is when you have a cabal on the board. If you can tie the grievance and bullying measure and kind of make it one thing it won't be so many regulations for the Neighborhood Councils, but it'll give us a solid look at how do we solve these things outside of the board.

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)

Public comment received from:

Glenn Bailey – first of all Commissioner Grant reminded me that I failed to thank her for coming for National Night Out to Northridge for Devonshire Division in Council District 12 and it was much appreciated by the five Neighborhood Councils that she made herself available to her North Valley Neighborhood Council folks that she represents. That was 5 out of 17. I want to say how disappointed I was that the North Valley Neighborhood Councils were not able to have the North Valley roundtable with their Commissioner that was in the works for a few months. I think it's really hurtful for the opportunity for those folks in the North Valley, for that matter for the whole City, for all

those Commissioners who want to do something similar to help you do your job as a Commission. I think it was really disrespectful to those board members, to those Neighborhood Councils, and frankly to the Commissioner that took the initiative to try to put this together.

Pete Nicholas – when the three people from Van Nuys left I stepped out in the hall to talk to them. They weren't familiar with their bylaws, they weren't familiar with ongoing community interest, they weren't familiar with the Department's longstanding recommendation that you revise your bylaws so that community interest people cannot vote for the majority of a board and can't take over a board and they didn't seem to know that some of their officers are or are not required to be residents and I told them that if you have any people on your board for which residency is a requirement the Department will readily assist in removing those people from the board but my larger statement was that during the meeting nobody stuck up for ongoing community interest and I want to commend the board, the Department, the City Council, and the Mayor for a recent revision in retention of ongoing community interest.

Denyse Selesnick – Co-chair of Program Committee for LA Neighborhood Congress – we go live for registration on Sunday. We're doing some new things. The Alliances are going to give a presentation. I come to your meeting and quite frankly I am embarrassed tonight. This is the South Valley we have 34 Neighborhood Councils in the Valley and nobody's here. I never got a notice. You were going to do outreach. I was so excited when I came to your January retreat and you talked about all these great things and I look around and I see all these live-wires and you're getting boring. You're sitting there and you're talking about the same things every month. You haven't come up with outreach and your outreach, you're not a good example. If you were a good example, this room would be full. There was no notice going out to all of the boards that you were having a meeting here tonight, what the issues were gonna be, what they should bring. I never got anything and we the facilities of a database and I am saying this to you not as City Watch covering Neighborhood Councils. I am giving you my opinion as an activist. The Congress, I'm gonna need help. I would like each one of the Commissioners to get on their mailing list and to send out. I need speakers from South LA and I need them from East LA for some of the workshops.

12. Adjourn

ACTION: Commissioner Shaffer moved that the meeting be adjourned at 8:50 p.m. Commissioner Grant seconded the motion.

VOTE: Ayes – 6 (Atkinson, Grant, Lipmen, Mack, Rubio, and Shaffer)
Nays – 0
Abstention – 0
Absent – 1 (Medina)

TOTAL – Ayes 6 Nays 0 Abstention 0 Absent 1 Motion Carries X Fails ___

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