

CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
CALIFORNIA

BOARD OF NEIGHBORHOOD  
COMMISSIONERS

KAREN MACK  
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LEONARD SHAFFER  
VICE PRESIDENT

JOY ATKINSON  
LYDIA GRANT  
VICTOR MEDINA  
OLIVIA RUBIO

JANET LINDO  
Executive Administrative Assistant  
TELEPHONE: (213) 978-1551



ERIC GARCETTI  
MAYOR



20<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, CITY HALL  
200 NORTH SPRING STREET  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

TELEPHONE: (213) 978-1551  
TOLL-FREE: 3-1-1  
FAX: (213) 978-1751  
E-MAIL: [EmpowerLA@lacity.org](mailto:EmpowerLA@lacity.org)

GRAYCE LIU  
GENERAL MANAGER

[www.EmpowerLA.org](http://www.EmpowerLA.org)

MINUTES

BOARD OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONERS  
SPECIAL MEETING – BOARD PLANNING RETREAT

MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2014  
12:30 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.

AUDUBON CENTER AT DEBS PARK  
DISCOVERY ROOM  
4700 NORTH GRIFFIN AVENUE  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90031

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

CITY ATTORNEY REPRESENTATIVE

Carmen Hawkins, Deputy City Attorney  
Alois Phillips, Deputy City Attorney

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

**ACTION:** President Mack called the meeting to order at 12:40 p.m. Commission roll was called by Joseph Hari. Commission Grant arrived to the meeting at approximately 1:15 pm.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 3, 2013, and January 7, 2014. (Click on the link to view a copy of the document.) (3 minutes)  
[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/12-03-13\\_draft-COMMISSION-MINUTES2.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/12-03-13_draft-COMMISSION-MINUTES2.pdf)  
[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/01-07-14\\_draft-COMMISSION-MINUTES.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/01-07-14_draft-COMMISSION-MINUTES.pdf)

**ACTION:** Commissioner Shaffer was absent from the room during the approval of the minutes.

**Commissioner Atkinson moved to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of December 3, 2013, as written. Commissioner Rubio seconded the Motion.**

**VOTE: Ayes – 4 (Atkinson, Mack, Medina, Rubio)  
Nays – 0**

**Motion passes unanimously.**

**Commissioner Rubio moved to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 7, 2014, as written. Commissioner Atkinson seconded the Motion.**

**VOTE: Ayes – 4 (Atkinson, Mack, Medina, Rubio)  
Nays – 0**

**Motion passes unanimously.**

3. Introduction of Board members. (5 minutes)

**ACTION: The Board members introduced themselves.**

4. Presentation by and discussion with a representative of the Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti of key priorities. (10 minutes)

**ACTION: Presentation and discussion with Rick Jacobs, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti. (See attached or click on the link to view a copy of the document submitted by Deanna Cherry, Facilitator.)**

[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BONC-Retreat-Notes\\_01-27-14.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BONC-Retreat-Notes_01-27-14.pdf)

**Public comment received from:**

**Alexia Teran – request that the City find ways to advertise in different languages.**

5. Discussion and Motion to adopt a current Board of Neighborhood Commissioners Code of Civility. (Click on the link to view a copy of the document.) (10 minutes)

[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Code-of-Civility\\_01-27-14.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Code-of-Civility_01-27-14.pdf)

**ACTION: Commissioner Medina moved to adopt the current Board of Neighborhood Commissioners Code of Civility as written. Commissioner Shaffer seconded the motion.**

**VOTE: Ayes – 6  
Nays – 0**

**Motion passes unanimously.**

6. Introduction of facilitator and identification of goals for the meeting. (10 minutes)

- Review the work of the Commission over the last year to acknowledge successes and challenges and lay a foundation for planning.
- Presentation on changes in the environment since last year.
- Set priorities for the coming year.
- Develop action steps.

**ACTION: None.**

7. Overview of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment's priorities with General Manager, Grayce Liu. (10 minutes)

**ACTION: General Manager, Grayce Liu, gave an overview of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment's priorities. See attached or click on the link to view a copy of the document submitted by Deanna Cherry, Facilitator.)**

[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BONC-Retreat-Notes\\_01-27-14.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BONC-Retreat-Notes_01-27-14.pdf)

**Public comment received from:**

**Robert Guevara – Eagle Rock stakeholder – what Ivan said and what Jay has said before are pretty much the problems that we have with Neighborhood Council system. The Neighborhood Council system right now really is not very close to matching what the Charter was created to resolve. We don't have a conduit from the Neighborhood Council to the City government so that people are actually empowered. The term empowerment really is pretty much a fiction when it comes to what's going on with Neighborhood Councils. You're looking for candidates to run for office. A lot of the candidates that I have seen have no knowledge about what a Neighborhood Council is about. Being recruited to fill out a slate or being recruited to resist another group's encroachment on a territory. We have a lot of people who don't have any history or any knowledge, so how can we blame them for not knowing what to do? They can know what to do if they would read their bylaws. We need to have the outreach be outreach. If we had done the outreach properly, we wouldn't be in here rushing for election outreach.**

**Jay Handal – one of the problems is what is the action plan moving forward to fix this? So if we have a metrics and it tells us who are the low-hanging fruit that are problems what is going to be the solution to sending them out there. We know that this Department has been set up to fail by the administrations. Taking the money away, taking the people away, adding more Neighborhood Councils, taking away staff support of the City Attorneys for the last three years has really been a hinderance. 1) If you want an action plan, get the metrics put together with the Department, analyze it and get a strategy to move forward. 2) Standardize bylaws. Make that your priority. Every NEA that goes out there, every C4C that goes out there everybody who goes out there have to deal with 95 different sets of bylaws. It's time to stop the nonsense and stop playing politics. Standardize the bylaws stand up to the five who come here and scream and yell at you and tell you grassroots, you know you're killing us, we're supposed to be independent. The grassroots is becoming tumbleweed little by little. If we're going to be effective, standardize the bylaws. 3) Funding issues, you need to fix the funding issues. You guys need to set a policy. When 90% of the money is being given away like a bank and 10% of the money is going to administration and 0% of the money is going to outreach, it's your fault, period end of conversation, the buck stops here. You set policy, it's your fault, so fix it. If you're looking at moving forward we need to incentivize our NEAs.**

**Denyse Selesnick - Tarzana Neighborhood Council. I am really here today because of City Watch. As you probably know Ken Draper has asked me to cover the activities and policies. I have been getting an awful lot of emails about the problems**

with the NEAs (Neighborhood Empowerment Analyst) and complaints and grievances and I know that a grievance was filed with the union against the C4C (Council for Councils) program and that three of the NEAs signed it. However, at least two of the three that signed it and I did not mention their names and I told everybody that I wasn't going to because the City Attorney's office, I don't know if they ever reached a conclusion or not. They are a little slow. I want to find out is, first of all, the relationship between EmpowerLA and the Commission, who's on top because BONC is an advisory and Empower runs the day-to-day operations and I sometimes feel from at least the research that I've done there is a disconnect. Some people feel that BONC is a strictly punitive body that will disqualify people and give out certificates and EmpowerLA has the power but they don't have the staff. But you have a staffing situation now where a lot of Neighborhood Councils are losing faith in the people that are supposed to come out and supervise them because they're giving them wrong information. What can we do to improve the bar or help Grayce improve the bar of staffing because complaints are coming in frequently, it's not just an isolated incident.

Ivan Spiegel - Venice Neighborhood Council. The Department is terribly understaffed. They need help. Where are they going to get help from? You guys have to try to help them. This is part of your job. Help them get resources. Why don't they have a full time IT person up there who can go out to the councils and make this stuff happen? In lieu of that, I bet there's about 50 trained web people within our Neighborhood Council system and why aren't we using them? We have councils, it seems like every other week another council is imploding around the city. We have an election cycle coming up now. If we don't train our new people, if we don't find a way to train them, if we don't force them to come in and get trained you're going to have the same problem again. You're going to have another generation of board members that really don't know what they're supposed to do and it is not their fault. Every new board member should be trained before they are seated. We have to train our people. It's the best prevention from councils falling apart, going into EE (exhaustive efforts) and maybe even getting decertified.

Alexia Teran – Greater Cypress Park Neighborhood Council. Probably most of you have great jobs. Have been through the Master's and Bachelor's whatever else so you know what you are doing. Not everyone who has that much education sometimes knows what they should be doing in the neighborhoods because some of them only care about themselves. Just want to get up there and do whatever and that's the difficulty and some of you may know this we are all different. Not everyone wants what the Plan told us we must do. If some of you can focus on how do we get training to these people who don't know how to work together? Just recently, the BONC decided let's do the ethics, it's a must, that is the only thing that has been accomplished after how many years, but at least that's one thing.

8. Presentation by facilitator on pertinent issues in the external environment. (10 minutes)

**ACTION: None.** (Click on the link to view a copy of the BONC Retreat presentation submitted by Deanna Cherry, Facilitator.)

[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BONC-Retreat-Presentation\\_01-27-14.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BONC-Retreat-Presentation_01-27-14.pdf)

9. Commission members have been asked to complete a brief survey requesting them to provide a brief outline of their objectives for the coming year.  
Presentation of survey results by facilitator. (5 minutes)

**ACTION: None.** (Click on the link to view a copy of the document submitted by Deanna Cherry, Facilitator.)

[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Survey\\_Retreat\\_Board-of-Neighborhood-Commissioners.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Survey_Retreat_Board-of-Neighborhood-Commissioners.pdf)

10. Discuss the priorities of the Commission for the previous year, and assess the successes, failures and challenges of the Commission in addressing its priorities. (30 minutes)

**ACTION: None.** (Click on the link to view a copy of the document submitted by Deanna Cherry, Facilitator.)

<http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2012-2013-Priorities.pdf>

**Public comment received from:**

**Robert Guevara –** When I'm looking at this I see that there is a lot of positive direction that you're looking for and one thing that came up to my mind when you're looking at metrics is from my experience as a teacher where you had rubrics. When you have rubrics you can have a predictably of what your outcome is gonna be what your assessment level will be because you have different levels that once they're accomplished your rating rises until you accomplish everything there and I think this may be something similar, but I'm not really sure, but in any event. I think we're not looking at the roles that the stakeholders play.

**Jay Handal –** Neighborhood Councils is a part of the City system, we're using taxpayers' dollars, yet everyone wants to act independently and do their own thing. Structure, structure, structure. What's missing from our system, how can you call a system a system if there is no structure in the system? It's in disarray and it starts at the top. Starts with you guys coming down. Neighborhood Councils who go out and say they represent people, they represent their community yet they have less than one-half of one percent of the residence in their areas coming out to vote and probably about .0001 percent showing up on items at their meetings. They don't represent anyone but their parochial interest and you're allowing them to continue to do that and it has to change. For 2014-2015, bylaws change, mandatory leadership training, mandatory outreach policies, expenditure guidelines, agreed upon matrix with the Department so it can be evaluated one by one, by one, and a policy to work with the Department that every single Neighborhood Council has somebody from either the Department, or the Department's partners at a Neighborhood Council meeting every single meeting, no excuses. NEAs are hired to support Neighborhood Councils.

**Eli Lipmen –** President, Palms Neighborhood Council. I wanted to say two brief points. About the metrics – I think it's important to think about outcomes, not

necessarily output. It's not about necessarily the numbers it's about what those numbers mean and how that's transformative in terms of change, in terms of the goals that you have set for the year. Don't get too hung up on the numbers. I know that the Mayor's office wants particular numbers but I think it's really thinking about what outcomes do you want to see. The other suggestion I would make, because we want to focus on outcomes and not necessarily outputs, I see the timeline along there and I encourage you to think a little bit longer than just 2014 because there is certain things that you're gonna get accomplished this year and we're all volunteers and we have to be pragmatic. What can we realistically accomplish in this year? Extend that timeline a little bit longer. You may set yourself up to fail if you try to bite off more than you can chew for just one year.

Denyse Selesnick – Bullying, adult bullying, adult abuse is a huge problem. I thought maybe I was overreacting so I went out and did some research and found out that what I thought was bullying was really a walk in the park compared to what some of the Neighborhood Councils are going through. The article that I did on adult bullying two weeks ago, Ken Draper, said had more reaction than anything else that I have done. It ran about 80% of people saying, yes. When I posted the article I think it wasn't ten minutes before he sent me an email because he was surprised. Everybody, all of a sudden the room changed and he was shock. He was visibly shocked that so many people had complaints. We have 32 councils in our alliance and almost everybody had a story.

Ivan Spiegel – all of this stuff is great. All of these things are important. It's about ten years worth of work. You've got to start somewhere. I'll tell you where I think you need to start. If you do nothing else in your term, Commissioners, you will make an impact by getting some teeth. You need to find a way to get the authority to be able to implement your policies or you are going to spend all you time here, you do great work, all this stuff up there, you can't make anything happen.

Alexia Teran – I do understand where you're sitting. All boards are the same. Not everyone is on the same level. Training have to be a must. The main thing is working together. A large percentage of people, all ages, they don't think about anyone else but themselves.

#### **BREAK**

11. Discuss priorities and key objectives to be addressed, and how the Commission will reach its objectives during the upcoming year. (90 minutes)
  - What should we do in the next year based on our vision for the system?

**ACTION: None.**

#### **BREAK**

12. Discussion with the Office of the City Attorney regarding the laws impacting Neighborhood Councils, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, including but not limited to a question and answer session regarding the Los Angeles City Charter, Los

Angeles Administrative Code provisions pertaining to the Neighborhood Council system, the Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils, policies and standing rules of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, the Brown Act and the Public Records Act. (20 minutes)

- What is the framework in which we can accomplish our work?

**ACTION: None.**

13. Discussion and possible action on the creation of ad hoc committees to accomplish the strategic plan priorities and objectives including the creation of a Committee to report on nominations to fill the Outreach Task Force. (30 minutes)

- How will we accomplish our objectives?

**ACTION: None.**

14. **RECAP** (15 minutes)

**ACTION: None. (See attached or click on the link to view a copy of the document submitted by Deanna Cherry, Facilitator.)**

[http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BONC-Retreat-Notes\\_01-27-14.pdf](http://empowerla.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/BONC-Retreat-Notes_01-27-14.pdf)

15. 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 forming an ad hoc committee which will report back to the Commission and include the identification of polices which will satisfy the goal of the following recommendation: (6 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) Review of delivery of City services

NC Plan Review Committees' Recommendation:

The Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, with the aid and advice of citywide Neighborhood Councils, will adopt policies establishing best practices for monitoring the delivery of City services.

**ACTION: This item continued to next agenda.**

16. Adjournment

**ACTION: Commissioner Medina moved that the meeting be adjourned at 4:30 p.m. Commissioner Atkinson seconded the motion.**

BOARD OF NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSIONERS  
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**VOTE:   Ayes – 6**  
          **Nays – 0**

**Motion passes unanimously**

**####**