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November 12, 2014

Council File Number 14-0600-S142

Honorable Members of the
Los Angeles City Council
City Hall
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Honorable Members,

Over the past year, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (Commission) has witnessed the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (Department) suffer from personnel cuts and attrition until now when it has reached the point where it may no longer be able to fulfill its Charter mandated responsibilities to foster and support Neighborhood Councils.

Today your agenda includes approval of an ordinance to increase the number of citywide exemptions pursuant to City Charter Section 1001(b) from the current cap of 150 persons to 200 persons (Agenda item 24). The Commission supports this increase and asks that six new exempt positions be allocated to the Department.

We understand the challenges posed by this request in the current budget environment. However, adding the positions will not cost the city any new money as the Department's carryover from last year's budget amounts to \$484,000 -- more than enough to pay for the six Exempt or Emergency Appointment positions.

These six positions in a larger context might not mean much but they represent almost 25% of the Department's approved workforce. Only three of the all important Neighborhood Empowerment Analysts are in place to provide direct support to Neighborhood Councils. In 2004, the Department had a budget of \$4,500,000 and a staff of 68 to oversee and support 85 Neighborhood Councils. By comparison, today, 20 employees oversee and support 95 Councils with one more about to be certified. No other city department is being asked to do more than they did 10 years ago with a 70% cut in staff.

Not only is the Department supporting more Neighborhood Councils, it is now doing outreach for many other city departments including the Mayor's office, the LAPD and the Bureau of Street Services. For example, the Bureau of Street Services looks to

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Neighborhood Councils to help them with pothole and sidewalk repairs by gathering information on areas that need repair reducing the time and money that would otherwise be spent on surveying neighborhoods.

If the Department does not receive the additional positions, not only will it not be able to support other departments, it will not be able to fulfill its Charter mandate to assist Neighborhood Councils in carrying out their responsibilities, leaving the city vulnerable to litigation.

Thus, we ask you to please approve the additional 50 Exempt staff available to city departments and ensure that six of these are allocated to new positions in the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen G. Mack". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light green rectangular stamp area.

Karen Mack, President
Board of Neighborhood Commissioners