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GRAYCE LIU
GENERAL MANAGER

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April 21, 2016

Honorable Members of the
Budget and Finance Committee
c/o, Richard Williams, City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Honorable Members:

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (Department) thanks and appreciates Mayor Eric Garcetti and his budget team and City Administrative Officer Miguel Santana and his budget team for working with the Department to provide staffing and resources to support and grow the Neighborhood Councils system for FY 2016-2017.

The Department respectfully requests the Budget and Finance Committee to consider the following changes to the Department's proposed budget:

A. BM4704 – Neighborhood Council Administrative Support (Outreach, Communications and Elections)

Requests:

1. Staff - 3 Project Coordinators and 1 Project Assistant to support ongoing outreach and field support for Neighborhood Councils.
 - a. 1 Project Coordinator (9 months funding) = \$50,582 x 3 positions = \$151,746
 - b. 1 Project Assistant (9 months funding) = \$38,426
2. \$50,000 for As-Needed salary for elections
3. \$100,000 for printing and binding for elections
4. \$150,000 for contractual services to continue online voting and voter registration database build out for elections

Total: \$490,172

Impact:

- Outreach and Field Support (\$190,172): The Department requires additional staffing to assist City electeds and departments to outreach to Neighborhood Councils on citywide projects. For the current fiscal year, our staff supported the following projects, which the Department was not funded for in the current budget: Great Streets, Clean Streets, Sustainability, El Nino, Vision Zero, DWP rate adjustment, My 311, Emergency Preparedness, Youth Outreach, Public Works Liaisons, Animal Services Liaisons and Homelessness Liaisons. All of these important projects will continue into the next fiscal year, and we anticipate additional directives and projects that include Neighborhood Councils next fiscal, which we must also support. Next fiscal year's ratio of Field staff to

Neighborhood Councils will be 1:10, but to be sustainable for both staff health and Neighborhood Council needs, the ration should be 1:7. If these requested staffers are provided, the ratio will be 1:8 with 96 Neighborhood Councils, though we anticipate more Neighborhood Councils created with the subdivision policy going into effect next fiscal year.

With no additional staffing, the Department's existing staff must choose to spend less time on providing Neighborhood Council meeting and training support, which Neighborhood Councils need to be functional. Nonfunctioning Neighborhood Councils create more work not only for the Department, but also for City electeds' staff as well. If Neighborhood Councils are not functional, then they cannot be the conduit to their stakeholders, which is why the City is partnering with them in the first place on these projects. Most affected by the lack of staffing assistance are areas that historically have lower civic engagement, e.g. lower income and/or immigrant communities, which are demographics that Neighborhood Councils are meant to specially include in the system.

- Elections As-Needed Staff and Outreach (\$150,000): After administering two election cycles, the Department has determined that it is not possible to adequately prepare for the necessary Neighborhood Council election outreach starting on July of the election fiscal year. Preparations must begin at a minimum one year before the start of the elections, i.e. for the 2018 Neighborhood Council elections, preparations and staffing must be in place by April 2017. To start in July 2017 negatively impacts the 34 Neighborhood Councils in the Valley because it takes at least five months to hire staff and prepare the outreach campaign before launching it. Therefore, the Valley receives little of the Department's outreach benefits since the existing time frame runs into their candidate filing period, disenfranchising one-third of the 96 Neighborhood Councils. Neighborhood Councils are also critical about the fact that the existing board members are expected to find candidates to run against them in their elections and have demanded that the Department must do the election outreach. To minimize the impact on the City budget each year, the Department is requesting to split a portion of the existing Neighborhood Council election budget (\$540,611) over two years instead of lumping it into one year.
- Elections Online Voting and Voter Registration Portal (\$150,000): This fiscal year, the Department piloted online voting for 35 Neighborhood Councils, including the build out of a voter registration portal so that we can begin creating polling logs of Neighborhood Council voters. The voter registration database would allow stakeholders to come vote without having to bring the necessary documentation to prove they can vote, which they currently must do every two years. Because this build out took additional time than planned this fiscal year due to the complexity of the Neighborhood Council board structure, the Department must continue the build out during non-election years in order to have both online voting and the voter registration portal available for all 96 (and counting) Neighborhood Councils in 2018.

Potential Funding Sources: Each fiscal year, the Neighborhood Councils have between \$300,000 to \$600,000 in unspent funding, which can be reinvested into the Neighborhood Council system.

B. BM4703 – Neighborhood Council Policy and Planning

Request: \$10,000 request for the Congress Networking and EmpowerLA Awards Event

Impact: This event, which invited Neighborhood Council members to City Hall to network and receive awards for best practices, was launched this fiscal year and was a big success

that filled City Council chambers to standing room only. Separate from the annual Congress of Neighborhoods training day at City Hall, the event was created because Neighborhood Council members requested more time to network and share best practices with one another because there was no time during the day long training sessions. The Department requests this ongoing yearly amount to support the Congress of Neighborhoods' important activities which educate and unite the Neighborhood Councils citywide.

Potential Funding Sources: Each fiscal year, the Neighborhood Councils have between \$300,000 to \$600,000 in unspent funding, which can be reinvested into the Neighborhood Council system. The requested amount is just a portion of the total cost as the Neighborhood Councils also contribute their funds toward Congress of Neighborhoods, too.

C. Staffing and Salary Savings

Requests:

1. Regularize and fund 2 existing filled Resolution Authority Project Assistant positions to prevent layoffs
 - a. Project Assistant Salary \$51,236 x 2 positions = \$102,472
 - b. Alternative Possibility: move one of the existing Project Assistants to the new Project Assistant position for Subdivision Policy below and fund for the full year instead of 6 months.
 - i. Project Assistant Salary 1 year = \$51,236
 - ii. Project Assistant Salary 6 months = \$25,617**Subtotal: \$76,853**
2. Exempt the Department from the 5% salary savings (approximately \$82,000) for FY 2016-2017
3. Provide for 9 months of salary for new staffing (2 Project Coordinators and 1 Project Assistant) instead of 6 months to implement the Neighborhood Council Subdivision Policy
 - a. Monthly Project Coordinator salary = \$5620 x 3 months = \$16,860 x 2 positions = \$33,720
 - b. Monthly Project Assistant salary = \$4270 x 3 months = \$12,810**Subtotal: \$46,530**

Total: \$123,383 new funds, if not including the \$82,000 salary savings

Impact:

- Potential Layoff of Filled Project Assistants: The proposed budget moves the Neighborhood Council Funding Program along with most of the Funding Team staff to the Office of the City Clerk. Two existing filled Resolution Authority Project Assistants assigned to the Funding Team were not transferred to the City Clerk and were not funded for next fiscal year. Elimination of these positions would result in a layoff of the staff in these positions. The Department requests both these positions be reinstated as Regular Authority and funded for the entire year for Neighborhood Council System Development and Administrative Support programs (4701 and 4704). Because the Department did receive a new Project Assistant position for the Neighborhood Council Subdivision, another potential solution is to move one the filled Project Assistant positions there to decrease the new monies required.
- Exemption from 5% Salary Savings: Because the Department is small and has a large workload, whenever there is a position vacancy, the Department must immediately hire As-Needed workers to maintain Neighborhood Council support. Therefore, it is difficult to meet the salary savings requirement. In fact, the Department was not able to meet the salary savings for the current fiscal year for this

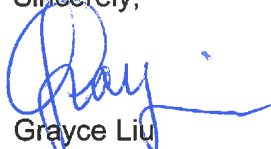
reason. While \$82,000 may not seem like a great amount, for a small department, this is a huge difference in maintaining staffing for the year.

- **Provide 9 months of Salary for New Positions:** The Department is tasked via an upcoming City ordinance with implementing the Neighborhood Council Subdivision beginning in October 2017. With only 6 months of salary funding for the new positions to implement this program, we will not be able to do so in time. This delay will not only affected the Neighborhood Council stakeholders, but also the elections timeline to prepare for the 2018 elections as any potentially new Neighborhood Councils will fall into the upcoming election cycle.

Potential Funding Sources: If the Department is exempt from the 5% salary savings, the \$82,000 can be applied to the \$123,383 in requested new funding. Combined with a total anticipated Department savings this fiscal year of \$45,000, there would be \$127,000 to cover this request.

Thank you for your consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have any other questions via email at Grayce.Liu@lacity.org or by calling (213) 978-1551.

Sincerely,



Grayce Liu
General Manager
Department of Neighborhood Empowerment