

DONE Responds

A July 28 letter from a member of the West Hills Neighborhood Council complained that they were not allowed to use public funds to buy savings bonds they wanted to give to some local students. That is correct.

In our mandatory training for neighborhood council treasurers, it is explained that state law prohibits "gifts of public funds" by neighborhood councils just as it prohibits city council members from giving gifts. They can't use public money for flowers, gift certificates, cash gifts and the like.

Neighborhood councils have been given \$50,000 a year in city funds for their operating expenses and neighborhood improvement projects. We repeatedly urge neighborhood council members to check with us before money is spent for something questionable, and before promises are made. As one neighborhood council officer pointed out at a recent meeting, this is not the neighborhood councils' money to spend whichever they want. It's the taxpayers' money. We need to use it responsibly.

Greg Nelson

General manager

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment