

CITY WATCH

An Insider Look At City Hall

November 30, 2004 Volume 2 Issue 21

CITY WATCH

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Say What?

"In Greek, the word "politic" translates to citizen." A citizen is one who is responsible to the life and governing of the city. We are all citizens."

**-Alfre Woodward
Actress**



Special Report

City Watch Combines with Alliance, CBS for Televised Mayoral Debates Neighborhood Councils will Provide, Ask Questions By Ken Draper

In what could be a landmark set of events, City Watch will combine with the Citywide Alliance and KCBS/KCAL TV to present two mayoral debates featuring LA's Neighborhood Councils. Both debates will be televised live and Neighborhood Councils will provide and ask the questions of the participating mayoral candidates.

KCBS is channel 2 and KCAL is channel 9. Managing Editor, Paul Skolnick, estimates their potential area-wide viewers at 35-million.

As one leading NC activist put it, "The Neighborhood Councils participation in these debates will have significant and incalculable impact on the credibility and awareness of the NC system."

The debates will come at a crucial time in the mayoral campaign. They are scheduled for February 7 (8 – 9:30 p.m.) and February 28 (6:30 – 8 p.m.). With the 2005 City election set for March, these two timely and critical encounters could play a major role in the outcome.

Continued on Page 5. See "Debates"

CITY WATCH

The Experiment is Over: NCs are Here to Stay

By Ken Draper

Tell Dennis Zine, the experiment is over. Janice Hahn was right! Neighborhood empowerment has taken. Tell the naysayers to find another cause for their negative rants and their doom-shrouded forecasts. Neighborhood Councils are here to stay. The revolution has passed the point of not return.

Next month will mark three years since LA's first NC was certified. There are now 83. This February, City Watch and the Citywide Alliance and KCBS ... and Neighborhood Councils from all across Los Angeles ... will host the campaign's two most important mayoral debates.

Even as we confront the turkey and dressing leftovers, 40-plus Councils are sitting with the City's largest agency, the LA Department of Water and Power, crafting an agreement that will ensure that the promises of the City Charter are kept. This year, Neighborhood Council opposition put the brakes on an 18% water rate increase, slowed the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance and helped pass a Newsrack Ordinance that limits their number and controls their appearance. The neighborhoods have found their voice. This genie will not go back in the bottle.

Continued on Page 6. See "Experiment"

PERSPECTIVES

City Watch Follow Up

On-Location Filming: A Positive Report from One Community

By Albert Lord

*(The November 2 City Watch reported that some neighborhood organizations are demanding heavy fees from on-location filmmakers in return for not disrupting the shoot. In one case, as much as \$5,000 per day. An industry attorney called it illegal and outright extortion. This report from **Albert Lord (United Neighborhoods Neighborhood Council)** details a different kind of relationship with the filmmakers in West Adams Avenues community.)*

Two years ago the community of West Adams Avenues sought to rename the Second Avenue Park because of gang and gun violence.

LA City Recreation and Parks agreed to change the park name to Benny H. Potter West Adams Memorial Park.

In March, two years ago, a large and successful community celebration was held ... and, **paid for by donations collected over the year from production companies filming in the neighborhood.**

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Cont on Page 5. See "Filming"

Street Talk

Can LA's NCs Deliver the Voters? Better Yet: Should They?

In an editorial headed "Calling all Neighborhoods," the Los Angeles Daily News recently challenged Neighborhood Councils to turn out the vote for the March, 2005 City election. The newspaper suggested that Neighborhood Councils launch massive voter registration drives and energize City residents, else special interests might prevail in this election. City Watch went to the neighborhoods and asked a cross-section of NC leaders what they thought about the Daily News call to action. 1) Should NCs make an effort to show their influence by turning out a bigger than normal vote? 2) Do NCs have that responsibility? Is it realistic to think that NCs can make a difference? Here are portions of the Daily News editorial and the responses by some NC leaders.

The Daily News wrote, in part:

"The city's neighborhoods are quickly running out of time to make their presence known in this election. And should they fail to play an active role, no matter which candidate collects the most votes, the winner will end up being L.A.'s most entrenched special interests—once again.

In the next few months, neighborhood councils and other community groups must take the lead in energizing the city's residents. They must launch massive drives to register new voters, and educational efforts to inform and inspire old ones."

Jacque Lamishaw, Winnetka NC President:

Although I do not think it is the responsibility of the NCs to help get out the vote, I think that many want to do so. I am just afraid that trying to promote to the NCs to make calls and otherwise urge people to vote might very well become more candidate oriented that it should be. With proper cautioning, it's O.K. I do think that NC participation could make a difference in voter turnout.

Rusty Millar, Silver Lake NC Board:

Do we have any responsibility to get voters out? Well, we try and most NCs have had trouble with outreach and getting people to vote in their board

Continued on Page 7. See "Deliver the Voters"

CITY WATCH

The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

November 30, 2004
Volume 2 Issue 21

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CITY WATCH is published to promote grassroots civic engagement through information and ideas.

CITY WATCH is published electronically on Tuesday of every other week. Share it with your Neighborhood Council and other activists.

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Election 2005

Handicapping the Mayor's Race

By Mark Siegel

Now that we know who the President is going to be, local political junkies are turning their attention to the Los Angeles Mayor's race this spring. While filing for the office is open to the first of the year, the major candidates have already declared, primarily to allow them to raise the cash needed to run.

James Hahn

Mayor Jim Hahn will be running on his record for reelection. His accomplishments include defeating the secession efforts in the San Fernando Valley and Hollywood, reducing crime and bringing Police Chief Bratton to town. He has been a strong supporter of Neighborhood Councils, integrating them into the budget planning process. He has been dogged by the inappropriate and perhaps in some cases criminal, behavior of some of his commissioners. Mayor-appointed commissioners have been accused of using their position to extract campaign contributions. There is no evidence that the Mayor was involved, but it is a stain on his administration.

Attempting to take advantage are four challengers, Richard Alarcon, Robert Hertzberg, Antonio Villaraigosa and Bernard Parks.

Antonio Villaraigosa

Given his near victory four years ago, Villaraigosa is considered the most formidable candidate, However, he comes to the campaign with no new assets. Organized labor, which was the backbone of his campaign last time, will probably go with Hahn. In addition there is talk of recall in his district by some activists who claim that Villaraigosa promised to serve his full term as the First District City Councilman. Don't count him out. His charismatic personality can charm the voters.

Continued on Page 7. See "Mayor's Race"

The Great Mayoral Debates

Featuring LA's Neighborhood Councils

CITY WATCH, the Citywide Alliance, KCBS/KCAL ...and, NC's across the City, will present the most timely and important mayoral debates of the 2005 City Election.

• February 7 at 8 pm

• February 28 at 6:30 pm

Televised LIVE from CBS Television City

- All questions provided by Neighborhood Councils
- All questions asked by Neighborhood Councils
- All attendees from Neighborhood Councils

Make sure your Neighborhood Council is included. Get more details on the debates in the next City Watch, watch for special alerts on the City Watch Network, visit www.LANCIssues.org or forward your e-address to Debate at LACityWatch@aol.com.

MAYOR Candidate Profiles

Richard Alarcon

California Senator

Alarcon is 50 years old and was born in the San Fernando Valley.

How he got here: Once a teacher, Alarcon worked for former Mayor Tom Bradley, beginning in 1981. Was first Latino elected to City Council in 1993. Entered the state Senate in 1998.

James Hahn

Current Mayor

Hahn is 54 and from Los Angeles.

How he got here: Hahn was city controller for one term, City Attorney for four. Was elected Mayor in 2001.

Bob Hertzberg

Former state Assembly Speaker

Hertzberg is 49 years old and from Los Angeles.

How he got here: Hertzberg served in the state Assembly from 1996 to 2002. Was Assembly Speaker from 2000 to 2002. He is currently an attorney with a Los Angeles law firm.

Walter Moore

Attorney

Moore is 45 years old and grew up in Florida.

How he got here: Moore graduated from Princeton and Georgetown Law Center. He has been a business trial lawyer for 20 years and is currently on leave from a Los Angeles law firm.

Bernard Parks

LA City Councilman

Parks is 60 years old, was born in Texas and raised in Los Angeles.

How he got here: Parks served in the LAPD for 38 years. Became Chief in 1997. Was elected to City Council (8th Dist) two years ago.

Antonio Villaraigosa

LA City Councilman

Villaraigosa is 51 years old and was raised on LA's eastside.

How he got here: Villaraigosa was elected to the state Assembly in 1994 and was Assembly Speaker from 1998 to 2000.

We've Got Mail

Want Fees? Why Stop With Filming

Re: The extortion of filmmakers (*Neighborhoods Putting Big \$\$ Squeeze on LA Filmmakers-City Watch Nov 2, 2004*).

What's next? Threatening to slash the UPS driver's tires ... if he doesn't give us money ... because he's blocking traffic while delivering packages.

Keith Bright, Stakeholder
West Los Angeles

More Reasons for NC Voter Drop Off

Another reason for second election drop off among Neighborhood Councils (*NC 2nd Election Voter Drop-off-City Watch November 2, 2004*) is *board member complacency. Just like all politicians, once elected, NC boards stop reaching out to the people who elected them. In this case, the stakeholders they were certified to serve.*

When these people are organizing for certification, everybody is welcome and gets to talk and participate. As soon as the election is over, the stakeholder/voter gets his two minutes to speak and that all of the participation that's permitted. People become disillusioned and drop out.

Jean Torres
San Pedro

Grand Avenue Planning Workshop: Help Create LA's Heart!

The Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council invites all the NC's and all the stakeholders of the City of Los Angeles to tell the developers of Bunker Hill's Grand Avenue what they would like to see built in the heart of our city's cultural center.

If Grand Avenue is going to become the true urban living room for all Angelinos, we need to have detailed input from everyone as to what they want to see developed in the center of their city. A major civic park is being planned along with housing, retail and additional cultural facilities. But besides giving input on this project, this is also your chance to help develop a template for all future mixed-use developments in this city, including in your own neighborhoods.

This real hands-on event will be held Saturday December 4th from 10 AM to 2:00 PM in Rooms 402 A & B at the Los Angeles Convention Center next to Staples Center by Figueroa and Pico. For parking information and directions and to make reservations – which are only required if you wish to have a free lunch – e-mail Brady Westwater at WWMalibu@aol.com or call 213-804-8396. ■

City Watch Briefly

Low Cost Cable Fees

The Information Technology Committee passed a motion to establish a low cost basic cable tier with Adelphia. As it stands, Adelphia is planning to roll out a low -cost basic service tier, offering 38 channels for approximately \$12. This new agreement would bring all cable companies in LA to a low \$12 range.

This outcome is not only groundbreaking for Los Angeles, it might also mark the first instance of an NC creating a motion that became policy for the City. It goes before City Council next week.

Neighborhood Protection

LA Councilman Jack Weiss unveiled his "Neighborhood Protection Package," designed to help residents protect their quality of life by strengthening City laws and enforcement ability and by educating developers on preventing the disruption of neighborhoods.

LA's Get Out of Jail Free Card

The LA Sheriff's Department announced that more than 119,000 convicted offenders had been let out of jail before serving their full sentences over the past two and a half years. ■

Warning

The fines for false burglar alarms have been increased and are now in effect.

Fines are now: \$115 for the first, \$165 for the second and \$215 for the third. That's with a permit.

With out a permit, they are: \$215 first, \$315 second and \$415 third.

Coming In City Watch

- **The Many Sides to the Grass Roots Venice Election Mess: In their own words**

- **The Real Deal on the Affordable Housing Issue: A Former Insider**

- **Why NCs May Never Have Voting Rights ... and my not want them**

- **City Watch Year-ender: On the City ... and, your Neighborhood Council**

- **The Growing Backlash Against Homeowner Groups: Should NCs be concerned?**

Debates-Continued from Page 1

Even though NC's are prohibited from endorsing candidates, most leaders agree, they are intimately in touch with both the pulse of the City's neighborhoods and the citywide issues that concern the neighborhoods. "Who better," asks Council board member Keith Bright, "to press these guys for their solutions to LA's problems than Neighborhood Councils?"

Neighborhood Councils have figured prominently in citywide issues this year, putting the brakes on the proposed 18% water rate increase, slowing the Inclusionary Zoning ordinance and supporting the just passed newsrack bill.

Debates at TV City

The debates will be held at CBS Television City located in the mid-city Fairfax area. Neighborhood Council representatives will make up the live audience and will ask the questions of the candidates. All 83 certified councils will be eligible to participate and to send representatives. Each Council will be allowed eight representatives.

Neighborhood Councils will need to register their official representatives in the debate reserved-attendance database by January 15. Questions will be provided by NCs and will also be due by the 15th.

NCs to a New Level

Neighborhood councils have risen to a new level of civic engagement. The question now is: can the candidates do the same?

Neighborhood Councils can register their official Mayoral Debates representatives by contacting their Citywide Alliance Regional Representative or by emailing the names to: Debates Registration at lacitywatch@aol.com. Councils can forward their proposed questions .. along with council name and contact number to: Debate Question-(Confidential) to NoahM@allncs.org. ▣



Filming-Continued from Page 2

Over three hundred people joined the LAPD, LAFD, Councilman Nate Holden, the LAPD Swat Team, and other city agencies, for the happy event.

The first anniversary of the now safe and renamed park was held and the production of the television program **Six Feet Under was recognized for its effort in hiring local production assistants and empowering an under utilized labor pool.** More than 500 people came by to help celebrate.

USC Studies Project

Two studies have now been made, by the USC School of Engineering and Design, for rehabilitating the park's grounds, playground structure, bathrooms, picnic area and basketball court.

The Benny H. Potter West Adams Avenues Memorial Park story would seem to be a model for how filmmakers and neighborhood can work together to generate positive attitudes and positive results.

(Albert Lord is a film professional, works for Councilman Ludlow's office and is a member of the board of the United Neighborhood Council.) ▣

Don't Be Left Out of ..

The Year that Was!

City Watch will publish a special yearend review issue

A look back at the high & lowlights of 2004

The City of Los Angeles ...

and, LA's Neighborhood Councils

Send us your stories: Yearend at LACityWatch@aol.com

Issues Watch

(Citywide Top Ten)

November 30, 2004

Current/Previous

1/2 Tax for Cops

2/1 Inclusionary Zoning

3/6 Business Tax Reform

4/5 2005-2006 City Budget

5/3 Transparent DWP

Funds Transfer

6/7 Mayoral Election

7/9 King/Drew Closure

8/-- Extortion of

Filmmakers by

Neighborhood Assns

9/10 Urban Landfills

BFI/Sunshine Canyon

10/4 LAX Expansion



Issues Watch

(NC Top Ten)

November 30, 2004

Current/Previous

1/1 NC Election

Procedures

2/2 NC Funding Delays

3/3 Lobbyists ID for NC's

4/5 NC/DWP Partnership

Negotiations

5/4 NC Appointments to

Commissions

6/9 Cable TV Access

7/-- Conflict of Interest

8/-- NC Grievance

Procedures

9/10 Decision-Making

Powers(Public

Works/Land

Use/Budget)

10/7 Reasonable Time for

NC's at City Meetings



Experiment-continued from Page 1

The real proof, however, is in the Councils themselves. The 35 to 40 established NC's, now rooted in their communities, tending to community business and providing a neighborhood voice at City Hall. The numbers may actually be higher. The roots and establishment may still be shallow, but NC's are a presence and they are here to stay. If the City withdrew it's funding, if DONE were to disappear tomorrow, there is today a solid core of Neighborhood Councils that would survive and continue to provide the voice that is reshaping the way the city government does business. Neighborhood Councils are, and will remain, a part of the City's political landscape.

There is not now, and there will never be, a citywide system with every Council running on all cylinders. This is grassroots democracy. Don't confuse organizational perfection with effectiveness or accomplishment. On that score, democracy ain't perfect. And, oft-times, it ain't pretty. If you don't believe that, I suggest you review the history of our own City Hall.

Most often, the misperception of how well Neighborhood Councils are doing is the result of expectations and comparisons that are not only unrealistic, but downright wrong.

Elections

We keep hearing about NC's that encounter election problems. Hello! Does the name Florida ring a bell? San Diego still has not finalized its November 2 mayor's election. At least three parties have filed challenges ... threatened to sue ... as they try to sort it out. A man on an Orange County ballot never campaigned and couldn't be found after he won. Why are we expecting perfection from Neighborhood Councils?

Bylaws

Some NC's have had bylaws issues. Governments, at all levels, are regularly sued by attorneys and reproached by courts for violating their constitutions. Congress has tried to enact laws that were ruled unconstitutional. Why are NC's held to a higher standard?

Brown Act

Neighborhood Councils spend an inordinate amount of time trying to negotiate the Brown Act maze. Some have most certainly violated the Brown Act. But then again, so have the city of Beverly Hills and the County's Board of Supervisors. Why expect more of NC's?

Quorums

Yes, we know, some NC's have had trouble with quorums. But, so do the City's committees and commissions. Last December, the City Council turned the lights out early because it couldn't locate a quorum. Why single out NC's?

Funding Decisions

One of the critics' favorite gripes is the choices NC's make for spending the tax-payer's money (i.e. the \$50,000 City funding for certified Councils). First of all, Neighborhood Councils are the tax-payers. Second, as Laura Chick's audits and Wendy Greuel's Efficiency Committee keep demonstrating, the City is hardly a model for how to handle the tax-payer's money. Remember too, the city of San Diego has been on the edge of bankruptcy for some time now. How could NC's do any worse?

The Charter mandate was not about perfection or Neighborhood Councils without problems. It was about regular people having a voice in their own government. About changing the way the City does business. About transparency and the right to be informed in a timely fashion. About monitoring the delivery of city services. About grassroots empowerment and civic engagement.

Genie is Out of the Bottle

The empowerment genie is out of the bottle. An impressive number of Neighborhood Councils have figured out how to give a voice to their communities, even if they haven't gotten comfortable yet with the Brown Act or

Continued Next Column

DayPlanner

City Council

Recess: Nov 30-Dec 3

BONC

December 7 (6:30p)

*Daniel Webster Middle School
11330 W Graham Place
(Election Procedures)*

BONC

December 14 (6:30p)

(tent)

*IMAN Cultural Center
3376 Motor Ave*

Greater Echo Park Elysian Planning Land Use

December 6 (7p)

*Logan St Elementary School
1711 Montana St
(Single issue: 52-unit affordable
housing development)*

Grievance Procedures

Working Group

December 8, 15 (6:30-8:30p)

305 East First Street

Historical Highland Park NC General Meeting

December 16 (6:30-9p)

Agenda:

info@historicalhighlandpark.org

North Hills West NC

Board Meeting

December 15 (7p)

16111 Plummer St

Details: www.northhillswest.org

Arts, Parks, Health Com

December 7 (8:30a)

City Hall

*(Persons spending night at
branch libraries.)*

Cont from previous column

don't manage a quorum at every committee meeting. They have learned how to make a difference. Even if somewhat fluid, that core of empowered Neighborhood Councils is not going away. The genie cannot be massaged or intimidated back into the bottle. The experiment is over. ■

Mayor's Race-Continued from Page 3**Bob Hertzberg**

Former Assemblyman Bob Hertzberg is the other big personality candidate. Known for his crushing bear hugs, Hertzberg will try to develop his base in the San Fernando Valley. As Speaker of the Assembly he steered legislation through to clarify the secession process and has many allies from that campaign. He may also appeal to moderates. He has been an aggressive fundraiser and should be one of the strong contenders who could unseat Hahn.

Bernard Parks

Former Police Chief Bernard Parks will pull votes from Hahn in the African American community, but unlikely to make much headway in other parts of the City. He has distinguished himself as chair of the council's budget committee, but the competition only needs to point to the sad shape the Police Department when he was Chief.

Richard Alarcon

State Senator, Richard Alarcon is a tenacious campaigner but may be the odd man out. Hertzberg cuts into Alarcon's valley base and Villaraigosa splits the Hispanic vote. Alarcon also lags in fundraising.

Each challenger has a base that could cut into Hahn's support. If the election were held today, Hahn could beat any of the challengers in a head to head election. He does need to make sure that Hertzberg and Villaraigosa don't catch fire and put him in third place in the general election.

(With this report, City Watch begins its coverage of the LA Mayor's race, 2005. Insider coverage. NC point of view, from now until the outcome is settled.) ■

Deliver the Voters-Cont from Page 3

elections. I wonder if, in general, the public has time for another level of government. Unless there is a specific issue, most people don't get involved.

Michael Cohen, Reseda NC Council Liaison:

Great idea, but what metrics would you use to determine our effectiveness? I feel the number one priority for NCs is stakeholder outreach. This includes encouraging stakeholder participation in all city affairs, the election cycle, as well as local NC involvement.

Brady Westwater, Downtown LA NC President:

The very existence of Neighborhood Councils will guarantee a larger turnout. With all of the candidates having a specific geographic and ethnic base it will help the turnout. More important, with all the issues that NCs have brought to the table, the candidates will increasingly have to respond to highly specific questions on everything from DWP rate increases to Inclusionary zoning to police on the streets. Never before have so many voters been so well informed on so many issues in this city. That will create even more interest in the mayoral race. It is more important to me to help voters learn more about the issues and the candidates. I would rather have fewer but better informed voters than more totally uninformed voters.

Joe Vitti, Granada Hills North Board:

I believe NCs should make an effort to turn out a greater vote in March. One way might be a "commercial" during the February mayoral debates with a plea from NC representatives to the public to vote. I believe all organizations throughout the city have a responsibility to help get the vote out. NCs should do as much outreach as possible to make their stakeholders aware of the importance of voting in March. I do not believe that the recent election "burn out" will have any significant impact in March. It may actually cause many new voters to participate. ■

**City
Hall:
We've
Gotcha
Covered !!**

**Make
Sure
You're
on
the
City
Watch
Network**

***Send your name and
e-address to:***

lacitywatch@aol.com