

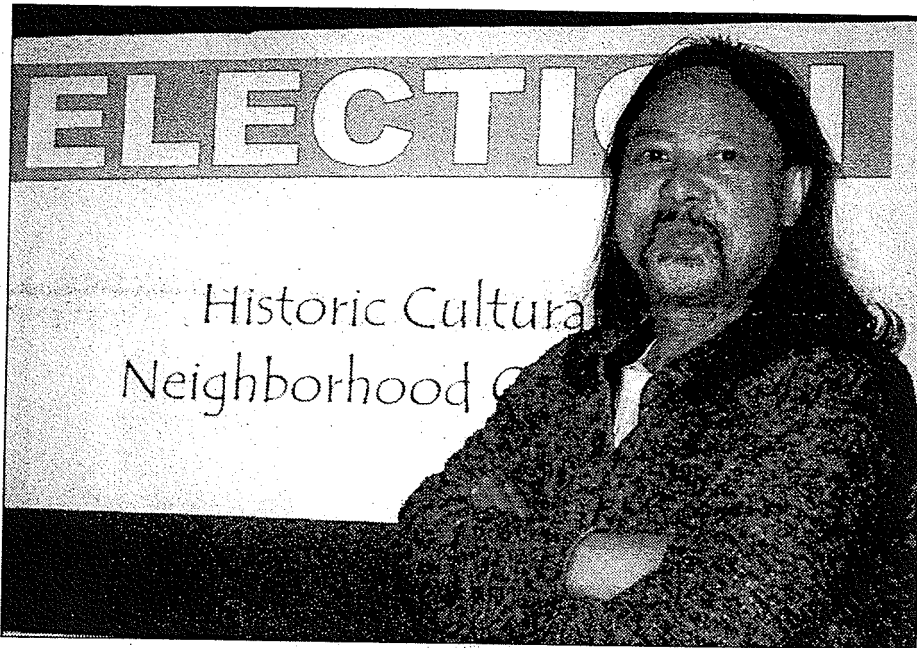
A New View of the City

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Not Necessarily a DONE Deal



Not Toy-ing Around: Don Toy said he is considering a court challenge to recent moves by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) to disqualify eight elected members of the Historic Cultural Neighborhood Council (HCNC) governing board.

By Eugene Yi
Reporter

Nearly a quarter of the winning candidates for the 33-member governing board of the Historic Cultural Neighborhood Council (HCNC) have been disqualified following a review of eligibility require-

ments and a new interpretation of election rules, according to the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE).

None of the changes were due to counterfeit ballots or other voting fraud, which some observers and participants suspected. (For DONE's revised list of winning

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candidates, see below)

But the changes have prompted a new round of complaints about the November 14th election in Chinatown, continuing a controversy that began almost as soon as the polling place opened and has continued for the past six weeks. The latest complaints are currently being processed by DONE, the city agency that oversees Neighborhood Councils.

Three of candidates were disqualified as a result of an investigation into eligibility requirements conducted by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), according to DONE. They were replaced by the next highest vote-getter in their respective categories. Among the candidates declared ineligible were:

- **Don Toy**, Chinatown Resident
- **Andy Gee**, Chinatown Business
- **Tracey Lovejoy**, Arts District Non-Profit

Also deposed were five candidates elected to represent non-profit organizations from the HCNC territory at large—which includes the Arts District, Chinatown, El Pueblo, Victor Heights/Forgotten Edge, Little Tokyo, Solano Canyon. Those five were taken down following a re-interpretation of the HCNC by-laws by DONE, which determined that the constituencies of those seats should be district-specific rather than at-large. DONE determined the new winners by recompiling the complete list of candidates, separating them by individual districts, and then declaring the highest vote getter in each district the new

winner. The deposed winners, all from Chinatown, were:

- George Poon**
- Catherine Vu**
- John W. Wong**
- Larry Wong**
- George Yu**

Both Don Toy and Tracey Lovejoy have filed complaints, according to **Michelle Cuevas**, a DONE staffer. Several more complaints were being translated from Chinese as of presstime, Cuevas added.

Additional informal complaints circulated through various HCNC neighborhoods, charging DONE with any number of shortcomings. Some observers claimed the agency overstepped its authority in a bid to reduce Chinatown's representation on the HCNC governing board. Others questioned DONE's preparation for the election, as well as the timing of its re-interpretation of the HCNC by-laws.

DONE requested the aid of the APALC in determining candidates' qualifications in the days after the election, a move intended to answer original charges that some candidates had supplied fake addresses for residences or businesses within specific HCNC districts. The APALC compared candidates' applications with public records, including voter registration records.

APALC representatives also contacted candidates directly in cases where public records were inconclusive, according to DONE. Those efforts haven't quelled the controversy, however.

Toy, for example, claims that his candi-

dacy fell because of a questionable and arguable perspective on paperwork. Toy had identified himself on his candidate application as a resident, employee, business owner and member of a non-profit organization—and he maintains that he qualifies in each category. However, the address he provided on the application was for the Teen Post, a non-profit youth center in Chinatown, where he serves as director. Toy said DONE disqualified him because the Teen Post address did not correspond to his residential address. But, he adds, the filing form left it unclear which address should be used for people with multiple involvements as a "stakeholder" in the community.

"It was ambiguous at best," said Toy, adding that he has already discussed the matter with private attorneys. "Problems could have been noted when I filed the [candidate] application in October—instead, the application was approved and my name was placed on the ballot."

Tracey Lovejoy also questioned the timing of the review of candidates' qualifications. Lovejoy serves as executive director of the Central City East Association (CCEA), which operates the Toy District and Downtown Industrial District business improvement districts. She ran for the Artist District Nonprofit seat, but DONE determined that she was ineligible because her organization's offices are not located within HCNC boundaries.

Lovejoy said she ran for the seat because—regardless of her organization's headquarters address—the group represents community members who own businesses located in the HCNC's territory. That proved sufficient prior to the election, but changed in DONE's review.

"The last I heard, it was not an issue," said Lovejoy. "We're not sure what happened between then and now."

Toy ran on a slate of more than a dozen other winning candidates—five of whom have been disqualified based on the re-interpretation of the election rules for non-profit seats. Toy said DONE's moves have made him suspicious of the agency's motives.

"It looks to me as though DONE has conspired with an elite and specific group," said Toy, "And that group is the interim board of the HCNC," an ad hoc body that played a major role in the formation of the HCNC and the planning for elections.

DONE staffer Cuevas, meanwhile, said the agency likely should have taken a better look at candidates' applications and made a closer study of the HCNC by-laws before the November 14th vote.

"In hindsight, that's what should have happened," Cuevas said.

Cuevas conceded that complaints about the redistribution of the non-profit seats are understandable.

There was "a sense that those seats were going to be distributed at large" during candidate workshops before the election, she said. Cuevas added that the nonprofit seats were not divided by district on the election ballot, which may have led to more confusion.

Still, Cuevas said that the decision on non-profit seats was made solely because DONE determined that the HCNC by-laws intended for those positions to be distributed among the various districts.

There was no date set for the first general meeting of the HCNC board of governors as of press time. But the group's by-laws call for that meeting to take place sometime in January. The HCNC board is expected to elect officers among themselves during the first meeting. The board is also expected to decide how to fill several board positions that remain vacant due to the redistribution of non-profit seats.

HCNC Board of Governors

Revised list provided by Los Angeles Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

ARTS DISTRICT

Residents

Jonathan Jerold
William Kramer

Business

Charles Woo
Non-Profit
Alan Kumamoto

Non-Profit

Leslie A. Ito Wong

SOLANO CANYON

Residents

Alicia V. Brown
Vacant

Non-Profits

Vacant

CHINATOWN

Residents

Mamie Hong
Maria Lam-Lee
Kam L. Lee
Ne Hay Tom

Nonprofits

Edmund Soo Hoo

Business

Nancy Yee

VICTOR HEIGHTS/FORGOTTEN EDGE

Residents

Stephen Guerrero
John S. Schutz
Albert Domasin
Philip Young

Business

Dominic Ehrler

Non-Profit

Vacant

EL PUEBLO

General

Al Soo Hoo

Business

Jose Luis Sedano

Non-Profits

Vacant

AT-LARGE SEATS

Commercial Property Owners

Kim Alan Benjamin

Employees

Joan Lee

General

Kelly Soo Hoo

Peter Woo

Senior Citizens

Chien Linda Wang

Youths

Daniel Gudino

LITTLE TOKYO

Residents

Mary Ahmanson
Howard Nishimura

Business

Brian Kito