

January 31, 2003

Controversy Racks Historic Neighborhood Council

Still mired in controversy over the results of its first election, the Historic Cultural Neighborhood Council (HCNC) held its first meeting last Wednesday night at the Maryknoll Japanese Catholic Center in the Arts District. In addition to the 30 new board members, candidates who had been disqualified from the election due to a discrepancy over wording in the HCNC bylaws, as well as their supporters, gathered in the small auditorium. Hostility was anticipated, as evidenced by the presence of two senior lead officers from LAPD Central Division. While the proceedings were peaceful, several audience members criticized the allegedly unfair election process. Tracey Lovejoy, director of the Central City East Association, and a candidate for one of six non-profit seats on the board, said she was disqualified without merit. Lovejoy explained that she was ruled out since her office's address does not fall within the boundaries of the HCNC, which represents Chinatown, Solano Canyon, Victor Heights, El Pueblo, Little Tokyo and the Arts District. Lovejoy said she has over 200 constituents who live or work within the boundaries, and should thus qualify as a candidate. She complained that she should have been informed earlier on that her business address ruled her out. Lovejoy asked that the bylaws be clarified and that her application be reviewed.

Several speakers also noted that of the six top vote-getters for the six at-large, non-profit seats, only one ended up on the board. Although many candidates thought the seats would be filled by the six leading candidates overall, Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) officials insisted that the bylaws called for the leading candidate in each of the six districts to be elected to

the board. Michele Cuevas, senior project coordinator at DONE, later said that the misunderstandings were not the department's fault and that the election results are final. "We feel we've conducted a fair review," said Cuevas. "In no way did the department rewrite or change the rules after the fact." After much debate, the new board voted 18-9 (three were absent) to adopt the bylaws and establish a volunteer committee to amend them.