

The New

City Watch



October 20, 2003

Vol.1 Issue 4

Welcome to the New City Watch. Our mission is to provide Neighborhood Councils and civic activists with timely information on the issues currently before the City.

City Watch is affiliated with the Alliance of Neighborhood Councils. For more information see allncs.org

Past issues can be found on laissuesaction.org

City Watch will be published electronically on Monday of every other week. Share it with your Neighborhood Council and other activists.

We welcome your comments.

New Grapevine
Page 2

Contact City Watch
(323) 937-0504
laissuesaction.org

An Insider Look At City Hall

City Watch is published by The Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils

TAX FOR POLICE: TRIAL BALLOON FLOATED

By Harris K. Telemacher

Council members Eric Garcetti and Alex Padilla introduced a motion that asks for the City Legislative analyst to come back with a study on the feasibility of placing a measure on the ballot next year to raise funds for more police.

The CLA will likely look at a range of revenue options, but the most likely choice would

be a parcel tax. Unlike the traditional property tax that is based on assessed value the parcel tax is based on the square footage of the property or parcel. The measure would seek \$80 million dollars.

The measure would require two-thirds voter approval to pass. In 1992 and 1993 similar measures were supported by the majority of voters, but failed

Continued on Page 3

Perspectives

Congress of NC's: Will It Find It's Voice

By Ken Draper

It's time for the Congress of Neighborhoods to find its voice. At least that's the view of some NC leaders, and even some of the Charter Commission members responsible for making the Congress a part of the Neighborhood Council process.

DONE has thrown some nice parties so far, but they have been mostly about education. More ed than said, says one NC leader. And, that's not the way many of the folks who voluntarily toil in the NC fields envisioned it. They expected these congresses to be opportunities to exchange ideas on regional and citywide issues, to form consensus and to provide a voice for the NC system as a whole.

Admittedly, the framers of the Charter's NC mandate were not very specific about what they intended the Congress to be. Some didn't want to micro-manage, some didn't want to delay the birth and some believed that NC's should be allowed to work the details out themselves. But, most will tell you that they imagined the Congress to be, at least in part, an issues platform.

Continued on Page 4

NC's Put to Test

Coalition Out to Clean up Newsrack Blight

By Harris K. Telemacher

Over the years there have been repeated attempts to thin out the number of sidewalk news racks in areas where as many as ten or twelve will accumulate. At one point, 1972, activists succeeded in passing an ordinance that limited the number to three newsracks within a certain number of feet, but the City's enforcement of the measure has been nonexistent.

A coalition has come together of homeowner associations, Business Improvement Districts and local chambers of Commerce to push for better enforcement and changes in the municipal code to close loopholes. They are also reaching out and involving the new kids in town, the neighborhood councils. The coalition calls itself CLEAN, (Coalition for LA's Enforcement Applied to Newsracks). It is made up of a wide range of Westside, Downtown, Valley and Hollywood activist groups who are attempting to put some teeth into the existing ordinance.

In a four page letter to the City, dated September 9, the Coalition recognized the first

Continued on Page 3

Tracking the Issues (I-Trac)

No to Beach Smoking, WTF By-right, Illegal Street Posters Highlight LA Issues Parade

Smoking Ban at LA Beaches- Taking a cue from San Diego County, City Councilman, Jack Weiss, has moved to ban smoking on LA beaches. Weiss equates smoking at restaurants with smoking at beaches: One doesn't smoke at a restaurant, he told the Times, one shouldn't smoke at the beach. One of the flaws in the motion, critics claim, may be the emphasis on cigarette butt litter vs. the health factor. As one NC President said, we already have litter laws. Just enforce them. (Motion File #: 03-2258).

Putting Teeth in the Illegal Sign Enforcement- The common practice of illegally posting commercial signs and posters on City light poles has become a hot-button issue, particularly in the Valley where NC's and homeowner associations are pressing their City Council reps for a solution. One of the enforcement hang-ups is the small fine for illegal posting. That and the City's lack of manpower. Currently, only four people are assigned to the task of dealing with some 50,000 new signs daily. Councilman Greig Smith is trying to do something about it. He has asked the City to provide a dollar figure on the exact cost of enforcing the already existing illegal signage ordinance. Legislative Deputy, Nicole Bernson, says Smith would then ask that the cost of fines be raised to cover the cost of removal and enforcement.

Controlling Wireless Antennae Growth-The Wireless Telecommunication Facilities (WTF) Ordinance, which contains by-right language for commercial properties, will be re-

viewed by the Planning Department on **October 29**. The Planning Department announcement asks for attendance by all "interested parties" and says they are looking for "views on the ordinance and ... any suggestions" for improvement. Biggest opposition comes from NC's and stakeholders upset about the by-right language giving, they claim, "every commercial building the right to put WTF on their roofs without allowing any opposition from residents. **Planning Department meeting will be held at City Hall (room 763M) on Wednesday, October 29 at 2 p.m. Call Patti LaLongo for more information: 213.978.1341.**

Other Issues in the Works (visit LACity.org and check the "Council File Index"):

Illegal Dumping/Seizure of Vehicles (File # 03-0249)

Enforcement of Traffic Behavior in Emergency Situations (File #03-1921)

Move In of Spouses & Domestic Partners on Tenant Leases (File #03-2216)

Public Notices on Land Use Matters (File # 03-1068)☐

Become a Player!

® **Get Heard ...**
On today's issues

® **Get More ...**
Details on IAN/City Watch

® **Get the Latest ...**
Alerts, advisories, motions

® **Get Help ...**
Taking issue actions

® **Check Out Our Websites...**

laissuesaction.org
and
allncs.org

City Hall Buzz THE GRAPEVINE

By Mr. Insider

Arnold Flexes His Muscle

The recent recall election crashed upon Sacramento like a tsunami and sent shock waves all across the political world, including here in Los Angeles. After all, both Gray Davis and Arnold Schwarzenegger live in the Southland, Davis in West Hollywood and Schwarzenegger in Brentwood.

Some City Hallers were heard comparing the fallen Davis to our own head politico, Mayor James K. Hahn. Both are rather bland figures with little charisma and an off-putting personal style. Each has shown a willingness to campaign dirty and bend to the interests of special interests.

One big difference between Hahn and Davis is that the soon to be ex-Governor is a self-made man who has risen to the top of the political heap without making any sort of political alliances, other than the recently disgraced Gary Condit. Hahn owes a great deal to his famous father, and has shown himself capable of forging political alliances.

A perfect example of Hahn's ability to enter into strategic alliances is his friendship with Schwarzenegger. Hahn appeared with the actor while running for Mayor. He also supported Arnold's after school initiative. This convenient friendship was motivated at least in part by the fact that Davis had endorsed Hahn's opponent in the 2001 Mayor's race, Antonio Villaraigosa.

Continued on Page 4

Police Tax Cont.

to obtain the two-thirds necessary for passage.

Four conditions must be right to obtain the two-thirds vote. First, voters have to perceive that there is a dire need for the service. With a force of 9,250 officers, LA lags behind virtually every major City in officers per capita. City leaders feel that the size of the force hinders our anti-crime efforts. The second condition is that voters must feel that there is no other source for the funds, other than taxing themselves. The perception that the City could just cut the fat and come up with the money, or Washington will bail us out, will defeat the measure.

The third condition is that voters must have confidence that the money will be spent on what it is being promised for. If the city needs the money to hire 500 officers, voters must feel assured that they will get 500 officers. Too often these measures become Christmas trees to fund other projects, which may not be expensive, but undermine voter confidence. One way to reassure voters is to establish a citizens oversight committee that will report back to the voters that the revenues are not being reprogrammed to other activities.

The last condition is that individual voters perceive a personal benefit from the tax. Many voters may ask themselves "Am I willing to pay higher taxes to feel safer?" If they feel that the additional police officers won't make a difference, why should they vote for it.

Recently the Federal Government offered LA a grant to hire additional police, but it requires the city to come up with matching funds. A glum City Council is facing the prospect of turning down the money for lack of a match. ☒

Save the Lap Dance for Me

Club owners are expressing confidence in the signature drive to refer the anti lap dancing ordinance to the ballot., Campaign consultant Steve Afriatsays that he expects to turn in nearly 90,000 signatures by October 26. Only 57,000 signatures are required.

If the referendum qualifies the ordinance would not take effect until approved by the voters, at the earliest March 2004.

The ban on lap dancing surprised civil libertarians as an attempt to legislate morality.

Newsracks cont.

amendment free speech issue, but emphasized that "the Supreme Court has recognized the rights of municipalities to exercise reasonably broad authority to regulate the aesthetic quality of the newsracks." And that is what they are after.

CLEAN outlined its eight guiding principals for reform. Included in the list is that the city achieve a uniform appearance of newsrack styles and colors; grouping of newsracks should not exceed three immediately adjacent to each other and no grandfathering of existing stands. CLEAN also recommended a permitting process for the newsracks that would include a license fee that will fund an enforcement effort by the City.

The significance of this effort is greater than its impact on newsracks. It is an occasion to assess the significance of neighborhood councils when working with business and resident's associations to influence city policy. Maybe they will hit a brick wall, or it could be a forerunner of new alliances that unite communities to get things done. ☒

City Watch Issues Calendar

October 21-

City Council (10 a)

*Allowing NC's to accept donations
Extending ban on rehab convictions*

Ed & Neighborhoods Com. (2p)

Office space for NC's

Budget Committee (3p)

*Financial report 2003-04
Budget reductions 2003-04
Hiring freeze policy*

October 22

City Council (10a)

Ballot measure to fund new police officers

Transportation Committee (2p)

Designating off-street parking locations

LAUSD Community Meeting (6p)

*Burroughs Middle School
600 S McCadden Pl.
Identifying new school projects*

PLUM Committee (2p)

*Housing, Economic Dev Com.
Combined meeting-Inclusionary Zoning*

October 29-

Planning Department (2p)

Input on WTF Ordinance

City Council –off site (6:30p)

*Glassell Park
Irving Middle School
3010 Estara Ave.*

November 1

Congress of Neighborhood Councils

LA Convention Center

Perspective Cont.

Jerry Gaines, who served on the appointed commission, saw it as both a “training platform and an issues platform.” From the elected commission, Rob Glushon doesn’t “recall any discussion about a Congress for training.”

“What was envisioned,” he says, “was NC reps dealing with issues and reaching a consensus or just talking to each other, dealing with policy issues, having a platform for voting on citywide issues.”

Gaines sees the Congress as an “advisory force for the 460 square miles of this diverse community, collectively making their voice heard.”

NC participants are hungry enough, for a citywide issues nexus that more than half a dozen of them have set up some form of issues network or committee.

So, why hasn’t the issues dimension found it’s way into the Congress of Neighborhoods? The next Congress occurs in two weeks (November 1) at LA’s Convention Center. And, as the DONE event cover says, “This Congress features the launching of the Empowerment Academy.” More education and training. Where’s the “platform for voting on citywide issues?”

Jerry Gaines says, “NC’s are probably not ready for the issues side yet.” Rob Glushon says, “The cynical among us see a conflict for DONE ... as a City Department ... lobbying for Neighborhood Councils and handling issues.” DONE General Manager, Greg Nelson, says the time isn’t right yet. He’s not opposed to

the Congress as an issues platform, when the NC’s are ready. How will he know when they are ready? “They will let me know.”

It is probably true that most Neighborhood Councils are, as Gaines says, learning how the system works. Which buttons to push.

“Those working with coalitions and collectively in their own neighborhoods are best prepared to make it happen citywide.”

But everyone is “learning the system”, including the City and DONE. As Greg Nelson is wont to remind us, this NC business is a new construct for city government. We’re all learning. All feeling our way. And, there is something a bit monarchical about big brother telling Councils that their Congress will live up to its promise when it deems the Councils to be “ready”.

A Congress as a citywide voice for Neighborhood Councils was a part of the Charter package we all imagined and bought into. So, let’s get on with it. It will be a messy organizational process. That’s the way democracy works. We’ll muddle through it the same way we have to date with DONE’s and the City Attorney’s fluid policy and procedural revelations as they try to figure out NC process. It’s time for DONE to set the budgetary perimeters and turn the issues platform planning over to NC leaders. It’s time for the Congress to find it’s voice.

As Rob Glushon noted, “If you really believe in empowerment, you have to allow Neighborhood Councils to control their own Congress.”

☐

**Reader’s Comments
Welcomed**

**Email City Watch at:
sirken323@aol.com**

Grapevine Cont.

Speaking of the Council member of the 14th District, while Hahn never forgave Davis for endorsing his opponent, he seems to have no trouble making up with Villaraigosa. Word has it the two former adversaries have forged a strong working relationship. This serves both men well given the politics of the Council, particularly as it affects the Latino block.

Hahn broke from his long-time ally Alex Padilla, an early marriage of convenience that had outlived its shelf life, over the recently passed budget. Needing a strong Latino ally of the Council Hahn reached out to Villaraigosa. Since all the other Latinos on the Council (Reyes, Cardenas and Garcetti) are firmly allied to Padilla, this partnership made a great deal of sense to Villaraigosa as well.

Hahn’s recent appointment of Villaraigosa and his protégée Martin Ludlow to the MTA Board was a reflection of the blossoming new alliance between the two figures. This type of ability to connect with members based on mutual benefit does not generate the strongest or most long-lasting loyalties, but should prevent Hahn from having to ever worry about facing the fate of Gray Davis, who remains a unique figure in California politics, one who will serve as a bogeyman for every young politician for many years to come. ☐