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Neighborhood panel vote partially voided

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VAN NUYS -- Resolving the long-contested election of the Van Nuys Neighborhood Council, the Los Angeles City Clerk's Office voided the election of two neighborhood council board members but let stand the election of 11 others.

The City Clerk's Office concluded that neighborhood council board members Hilda Garcia and Robert Duran had improperly accompanied voters to the polling place in the Feb. 8 election for the advisory panel.

However, the clerk's office, in a detailed report that the neighborhood council requested, said other flaws in the election process were too minor to overturn the entire election. The clerk's office did not support the contention of several losing candidates and their supporters that the winners illegally campaigned within 100 feet of the polling place, improperly solicited people off the street to vote for a slate of candidates, or that the slate itself was hidden from other candidates.

Garcia and Duran will be replaced by the second-place finishers in their races for the neighborhood council.

Garcia did not speak after she was asked to step down from the neighborhood council, but Duran said he respected the office's decision.

"I was 100 percent for them trying to resolve this issue," he said. "They did a very, very hard job very diligently."

Some activists who were critical of the election also said they were pleased that a nearly 6-month-old dispute appears to be over.

"Reconciliation is probably a ways off," said Launa Prince. "I hope we can at least show respect."

The City Clerk's Office report was intended to bring closure to nearly six months of sometimes-heated controversy over the Feb. 8 election to the advisory panel.