

CITYWATCH

An Insider Look At City Hall

May 21, 2005 Volume 3 Issue 3

Editor's Notes

This Alliance Forum is dealing with a couple of prominent and important Neighborhood Council issues: Possible revision of the Brown Act; a change in the format, structure and direction of the Congress of Neighborhoods and the relationship between NCs and City departments.

Brown Act

On this page, we offer you some background on AB 1314, Assemblyman Mark Ridley Thomas' attempt to provide some relief for Neighborhood Councils.

A Congress Of and By NCs

More and more, there's a new thread running the NC movement: Independence. Citywide Neighborhood Council efforts to independently take on issues, organize and negotiate Memoranda of Understanding. Now comes an attempt by NCs to independently create their own structure and format, and manage the content of the Congress of Neighborhoods. More than 45 different NC representatives are already participating at some level in the Neighborhood Council Congress working group.

Partnerships

And finally, in the wake of the signing of the NC/DWP MOU, Councilwoman Wend Greuel talks about relationships between NCs and the City.

Postscript

LA's most innovative City channel, LA36, is partnering with CityWatch and the Alliance to bring these bi-monthly forums to TV. Today's forum will be taped and replayed on LA36 and streamed on their website. If all goes well, these Alliance Forums will be televised on LA36, in partnership with CityWatch, on a regular basis.

--Editor

Brown Out?

Bill Would Exempt NCs from Brown: Views Mixed

By Dan Pasley

A new California State Assembly bill, AB 1314, that could have considerable impact on NC's, is being sponsored by Assembly Member Mark Ridley-Thomas.

Anyone who has been involved in the NC movement for any length of time knows about the Ralph M. Brown Act. On one hand it provides legitimacy for the Neighborhood Councils by treating them as if they were "real" government. On the other hand it requires that volunteers with no staff and precious little money for items like postage and printing must treat a simple sub-committee meeting as if it were a major appropriations measure on the floor of the State Assembly.

Brown Act Mandates Posting

The Ralph M. Brown Act mandates that ALL legislative agendas must be posted in a timely manner prior to the meeting, and that no item may be considered unless it is on the agenda, and that there be ample opportunity for public comment and questions. Its original intent was quite clearly to add transparency to official deliberative processes and to insure that the public have an opportunity to register their input. A lot of energy and training through DONE has been invested into the Brown Act, stressing the critical importance of compliance. **The Ridley-Thomas bill attempts to help break the posting log jam for NC committees and to custom transparency to Neighborhood Council needs.**

Unfortunately there is still some ambiguity in the way AB1314 is currently written. As recently as April 29, Pam Haynes, Ridley Thomas' Legislative Director, reassured us that the "INTENT" of the bill is to exempt ONLY NC Subcommittees from Brown Act posting requirements. Jason Lyon, Co-chair of the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council, says, "As I read the motion, it will eliminate any requirement for public notice at all". Whereas, Dennis Hathaway claims "the bill explicitly states that neighborhood councils will still be subject to the requirement to post advance notice of public meetings, have a published agenda, and allow public input at such meetings."

Continued on Page 2. See "Brown Out"

Say What?

"In past CityWatch newsletters, it has been suggested that it's time for Neighborhood Councils to get serious about making recommendations to the mayor about folks they would like to see on city commissions.

Clearly, the arrival of a new mayor presents a monumental opportunity for Neighborhood Councils to try and impact this important aspect of city government."

--Greg Nelson, General manager, D.O.N.E.

Brown Out-Continued from Page 1**Bill Has Problems?**

According to Jim Alger, Neighborhood Council Liaison for Senator Richard Alarcon, "the bill as written has some problems. Mark Ridley-Thomas should be applauded for taking the initiative, but it is unfortunate that the NC's have started forming opinions before the final language is set."

Elizabeth McClellan, Empowerment Congress Southeast, thinks it will all be worked out eventually and says "we're looking a gift horse in the mouth". Whatever the outcome it could be a very important development in the way NCs operate and are perceived.

For more info: 1) Full text of the bill can be found on the General Assembly web site. <http://www.assembly.ca.gov>; 2) Visit the DONE website at: www.lacityneighborhoods.com; 3) Or contact Pam Haynes, Legislative Director, (916) 319-2048. ■

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CITYWATCH ASSIGNMENT DESK

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■ **The BONC—In Need of Vision and Courage**

■ **35 Years Ago The Venice Town Council
May Have Been LA's First NC**

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■ **Election Fallout Could Dramatically
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■ **The 2005-2006 City Budget:
What's In? Out? What Does It Mean to NCs?**

■ **Can NCs Take Charge of the Congress?
41 Neighborhood Councils Say Yes.**

■ **Plus: *Mr. Insider returns!***

THE NEXT CITYWATCH:

COMING TUESDAY

TO A COMPUTER NEAR YOU!

CITYWATCH

The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

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We've Got Mail

Into the New Century with Antonio

(In response to CityWatch story on whether the Mayor matters to Neighborhood Councils-May 18)

I am a member of the Silver Lake Neighborhood Council Governing Board and am voting for Antonio because he will help bring Los Angeles into the new century. I am disgusted with Hahn's carefully disguised racist attacks on his opponent. I don't believe that there is a place for such activity in the politics that I support. Hahn should be able to run on his record as mayor - clearly he must not have one given his campaign.

--Marty Hitt

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CityWatch Out of Balance

(In response to CityWatch story on whether the Mayor matters to Neighborhood Councils-May 18)

Thanks for the "helpful information" in advance of tomorrow's election. Unfortunately, you left out a few items:

The mayor's fundraisers and appointees have been dismantling our community's specific plan parcel by parcel so they can squeeze in a few more houses and make more money without any improvement to the underlying infrastructure.

The mayor was the only major name on the primary ballot who did not accept the invitation to come and speak to our neighborhood council. In fact, he never even gave us the courtesy of a reply.

The mayor's use of our tax money to fight a misleading campaign against Valley secession deprived us of the real self-rule supported by a majority of Valley voters at the polls.

Next time you undertake to provide helpful pre-election information, please try to be a little more balanced.

--Marty Woll

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Neighborhood Council

MOU

Notification

DWP Budget Review: Slated Monday, May 23

The LADWP Board of Water and Power Commissioners will conduct a special meeting on May 23 at 10:30 a.m. at 111 N. Hope Street, Room 1555-H, to review the proposed 2005-06 budget. This budget presentation is an opportunity for Neighborhood Councils and the public at large to provide input.

The 2005-06 draft budget presentation is available for review at the newly created LADWP website page for neighborhood councils at www.ladwp.com/nc.

Greuel Wants Our Money Back; Asks State to Restore Transpo \$

Recognizing that very few problems affect our quality of life more than traffic congestion, Councilmember Wendy Greuel called on state leaders to restore funding of the voter-approved Proposition 42 at \$1.3 billion to help create a transportation system that gets Los Angeles moving again.

"Restoring voter-approved transportation funding will help Los Angeles create a transportation system to get the city moving again," Greuel said, "Los Angeles deserves to have their transportation tax dollars spent in Los Angeles."

Proposition 42, passed by the voters on March 5, 2002 by 69% of the voters, amended the California Constitution to require the sales tax on gasoline to be used annually for state and local transportation purposes. These funds were designated specifically to improve road safety, fund mass transit and reduce traffic congestion.

Recent State budgets have included transfers and loans from transportation funds to the state's General Fund, resulting in a loss of much-needed transportation spending.

Los Angeles is expected to receive approximately \$16.6 million in additional transportation revenues if full funding of Proposition 42 is restored and adopted in the 2006 State Budget. ■

(This story was provided by Councilmember Greuel's office and edited by CW for brevity only.)