



an insider look at city hall

CITYWATCH

citywide edition

August 9, 2005
Volume 3 Issue 7

CityWatch Today—Were the stakeholders served by the decisions of the Human Relations Commission on the Greater Wilshire NC election results?

Will the stakeholders be served by the appointment of Bill Rosendahl to chair the E&N Committee? Rosendahl is an advocate for redefining what a stakeholders?

Can the anti-landfill stakeholders in the Northwest Valley prevail for one more vote on the Sunshine Canyon extension?

Questions we will attempt to address in today's CityWatch. Because, in the end, Neighborhood Councils are not about boards or BONC or the HRC. They're about **stakeholders**.

Thank you for stopping by.
--Editor

Say What?

“Show us that you really mean what you say: That we are not second-class citizens out there.”

--Wade Hunter, Pres North Valley Coalition
(To City Council on Friday, day of the 1st vote on the Sunshine Canyon contract extension.)



Greater Wilshire Election

NC Election Challengers are 0 for 9; HRC Says GWNC Vote will Stand

By David Lowell

Rejecting nine separate challenges, the LA Human Relations Commission upheld the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council's June 16 election. Despite claims of fraud, intimidation, hour and a half waits, voter identification being distributed in the waiting lines and electioneering within 100 feet of the polls, HRC ruled that no bylaws or DONE approval had been violated.

Chief among the challenge complaints were the inadequacy of the polling place and candidate slates and voter identification cards being handed out to persons standing in line waiting to vote. GWNC's Election Procedures contain the no-electioneering-within-100 feet-of-the-polls clause.

More than 2,000 voters cast more than 29,000 ballots at a single polling location, creating a considerable parking problem and long lines of voters, in some cases, waiting more than an hour and a half. To which HRC responded. "Having to wait an hour and a half to vote, while not illegal, is somewhat of a hindrance, this is an unfortunate part of the democratic process."

Continued on Page 5. See: "Election Challengers"

Perspective

Is Alex Sending a Message to NCs?

By Ken Draper

Los Angeles' Neighborhood Councils took a couple of hits last month. At least that's the perception from here in the cheap seats.

Take the City Council President's demotion of Janice Hahn on the Education and Neighborhoods Committee, and the selection of newcomer Bill Rosendahl to chair it. After Rosendahl's pointed comments on NCs, at the July Citywide Alliance Forum, it is hard to conclude anything else.

Rosendahl told the gathering that Neighborhood Councils were no different to him than any other organization. He said he wouldn't recognize NCs "until they changed the definition of what a stakeholder is." The Councilman sighted the problems a council in his district had with marginal stakeholders being bused in to vote in one of their elections. Rosendahl is pushing to have only registered voters qualify as stakeholders. He did not explain how, in the meantime, he plans to fulfill his sworn obligation to uphold the City's Charter, which offers a considerably different definition of a stakeholder and obligates city officials to recognize Neighborhood Councils.

Continued on Page 5. See: "Perspective"

CityWatch Op & Ed

My Take on This

Some NC Members Blame DONE, BONC for Greater Wilshire Election Problems

By Pat Herrera Duran

(As CityWatch reported earlier, the Greater Wilshire Neighborhood Council held its first election on June 16. More than 2,000 voters cast more than 29,000 ballots. As we also reported, the election was contentious. "Before the first ballot box was opened ... there were accusations of fraud, intimidation and name calling." There were those who blamed the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners for the GWNC election woes. This is a response to those charges. It is not a response to any of the formal charges filed with the Human Relations Commission.)

When are folks ever going to take responsibility for their own actions? Did BONC or DONE hand out phony ballots or do any of the things that the stakeholders were accused of doing while they were at the polls? Since when are the Commissioners or the Staff supposed to baby sit each and every move, word, and action of adults who would have a fit if we were to accuse them of acting like irresponsible, dishonest, immature, self serving people?

So what if the process isn't perfect. Whose and what process is perfect? Would a perfect process make them perfect people? I don't think so. So where do they get the idea that an imperfect process is a valid reason to make matters worse by their imperfect behavior? Would it ever occur to them to overcome the imperfections and get on with an honest election the same way that many other elections have been held with imperfect processes throughout the City and the State and the Country?

Clean house and get rid of all of us. But if all you do is bring in other people, BONC and DONE will still function imperfectly. Sorry, that's the luck of the draw with humans.

Continued on Page 4. See "My Take on This"

Guest Commentary

Why Sidewalk Repair at Point of Sale is Not the Answer.

By Brian Paul

A guest commentary by SEIU347's Julie Butcher proposed a plan for fixing LA's sidewalks (See CityWatch, June 21). The main thrust of her proposal: property owners can have their sidewalks repaired now and pay for it at the property is sold. Mr. Paul takes issue with Ms. Butcher's proposal.

Historically, I am told by a very good source, the federal government provided money for sidewalk repair and so the city of Los Angeles repaired sidewalks, which were the responsibility of the owner. Presently, the money has dried up and the city is looking for ways to get the homeowners to take on the responsibility once more. Hon. Wendy Greuel, the pot hole queen, came up with her 50/50 idea which would help to bring funds into the city coffers for the repair, and would allow homeowners that could afford it to opt to repair their sidewalk immediately and pay half the cost. Good idea, and its popular.

So, Julie Butcher, (we call her Dr. Union Membership Drive) in an attempt to provide more work for our city's union workers, and add 2,600 to their ranks, has suggested a bad idea which will not be popular at all.

Continued on Page 6. See "Sidewalk Repair"

CITYWATCH
The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

Citywide Edition

August 9, 2005

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CITYWATCH
Briefly Noted

Sunset at Sunshine Canyon?

Like flypaper stuck to its fingers, the contract extension for Sunshine Canyon just won't go away for LA's City Council.

The five-year extension failed on Friday for lack of votes (7 ayes/8 needed). The Council will vote on the agreement the required second time, again on Tuesday, August 9.

That vote is also likely to be close. Councilman Garcetti could be the swing vote this time. ♦♦

Burbank Blvd ... Finally

The LA portion of Burbank Blvd will be resurfaced for the first time in 50 years. The project was originally scheduled for 1989, but was held up by construction projects. ♦♦

In Case You Missed It

The Mayor has appointed Rev. Lewis Logan to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners. He comes to LA by way of Baltimore and Washington DC and is the Pastor of the Bethel AME Church. ♦♦

Neighborhood Prosecutor Closes Bar

The Southwest Division Neighborhood Prosecutor has closed down the Mr. X-Bar in South LA. The City Attorney's office says the bar was one of the most crime ridden bars in the Division and was an ongoing source of gang activity and operated without permits.

(To find out how to contact your Neighborhood Prosecutor, check the City Attorney website and click on Neighborhood Resources. To learn more about whether the Neighborhood Prosecutor program has been effective, read the story in an upcoming CityWatch.) ♦♦

Walking the Walk

Councilwoman Jan Perry's motion to widen the sidewalks on downtown's Grand Avenue (between Washington and Martin Luther King Blvds) from 22 feet to 32 feet, goes before the PLUM Committee this Wednesday (2 pm at City Hall). The expansion requires a change in the Southeast LA Community Plan. ♦♦

County Has Its Own Service Line

LA has its all-purpose 3-1-1 number, now Los Angeles County has announced a new social services access number 2-1-1. Like 9-1-1 for emergency calls, 2-1-1 can connect people to emergency food and shelter, support services for seniors and the disabled, childcare, employment assistance, child and adult protective services and legal assistance. ♦♦

CityWatch Ticker

Council File # Issue

(Here is the latest count on NCs that have provided Community Impact Statements in support of the Council File issue)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Silver Lake | 16. Winnetka |
| 2. Glassel Park | 17. North Hills West |
| 3. Greater Griffith Park | 18. Harbor Gateway No |
| 4. Mar Vista | 19. Arroyo Seco |
| 5. Historic Highland Park | 20. Tarzana |
| 6. Granada Hills North | 21. Boyle Heights |
| 7. Greater Echo Park Elysian | 22. Central San Pedro |
| 8. Pico Union | 23. Sherman Oaks |
| 9. Sunland Tujunga | 24. Van Nuys |
| 10. Chatsworth | 25. Westside |
| 11. Greater Valley Glen | 26. Hollywood United |
| 12. Northridge West | 27. Studio City |
| 13. Atwater Village | 28. Valley Village |
| 14. Mid City WEST | 29. Bel Air Bev Crest |
| 15. Westchester Playa del Rey | |
| ** Valley Alliance of NCs | |

If you need more background or information on the Council File # Proposal:

1. Email: Jason@jasonlyon.com
2. Call: 323.661SNLC
3. Check the June 21 back issue of CityWatch at: www.LANCIssues.org

If you need instructions on sending a Community Impact Statement: www.lacityneighborhoods.com



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CityWatch examines both perspectives ... and more ... in its Special Labor Day LA edition due at your computer doorstep on:

August 31st

CITYWATCH: KNOW MORE

My Take On This-Continued from Page 2

Instead, considering all the work that BONC and DONE have done, imperfect as it is, what if instead we got rid of all the stakeholders whose every move at an election has to be inspected, monitored, scrutinized, questioned to keep the election honest. What if BONC and DONE were able to accomplish everything with only perfect stakeholders who left their self interests at home and for a change took responsibility for making their own part of the election perfect. Now, wouldn't that be something worth experiencing?

I wonder, could it ever happen?

(Pat Herrera Duran is a longtime Commissioner on the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners.) ■

CityWatch DayPlanner

(Of interest to NCs)

City Council

Tuesday, August 9, 2005 (10 a.m.)

Second vote on renewing City contract with Browning-Ferris (BFI-Sunshine Canyon Refill) for another five years. The renewal failed in Council on Friday, August 5 by a 7-4 vote. Eight votes are needed for passage.

Education & Neighborhoods Committee

No meetings planned for August

BONC

August 16 (tentative)

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Election Challenges-Cont from Page 1

n the more serious charge of handing out candidate slates and instant identification carts ... electioneering within 100 feet of the polls ...the HRC said, "Electioneering within 100 feet of the polling place is indeed prohibited by the GWNC election procedures. (However), Mr. Jerry Kvasnicka, the IEA ... spoke to anyone found to be too close to the polling place, and asked them to back and remain beyond 100 feet."

Even though a number of witnesses and more than one challenge that offered observed details of electioneering, the HRC ruled, "No violations of this procedure could be shown or proven to have affected the election outcome."

Activist Speaks Out

As one neighborhood activist, Keith Bright, noted, "That would be like letting me run through red lights without giving me a ticket because I didn't interfere with the cross traffic and caused no noticeable harm."

In any case, the election will stand because determinations made by the "Final Decision-Maker" cannot be appealed. The independent overseer of the election was the League of Women Voters.

Rocky Journey

Most would agree that the journey to certification and elected board, for this council, has been rocky at best. The questions now are: Can the new board set the acrimony aside and become productive? And, will the parties involved ... GWNC, BONC, DONE and HRC ... be willing to share the blame for their part in the discord, the convoluted election scheme that took 20,000 ballots to elect a board and allowed participants to produce stakeholder id's and pass out candidate slates while waiting in line to vote? ■

Perspective-Continued from Page 1

Mr. Rosendahl's reasoning got a bit fuzzy when he went on to say that some of the Neighborhood Councils in his district were instrumental in getting him elected. And fuzzier still when he said that his only obligation was to the 29,000 voters who checked his name off on the ballot. Which left one wondering who was obligated to represent the other 220,000 people in his district. Or, the thousands of voters who overwhelmingly approved the new City Charter, in 1999, with the current stakeholder definition in it.

But, back to Council President Alex Padilla's message to NCs. He also removed NC supporter, Dennis Zine, from Education and Neighborhoods. Zine said he didn't ask to be "traded."

Could Swing the Balance

Padilla assigned the third seat on E&N to the winner of the 14th District council race. That could swing the pro NC pendulum to the other side of the spectrum.

A message to Neighborhood Councils? Revenge on NC supporters? Maybe. Maybe not. But Padilla is also the Councilman who told an NC President once, when the subject of the Mayor's Budget Process came up, that the budget wasn't NC business. "That's what we were elected to do." And, the same Alex Padilla who, in his Rules Committee, has been sitting on improvements to the ENS system, approved by the Education and Neighborhoods Committee, for a year and a half.

One NC leader called it "an attack on Neighborhood Councils." True or not, there are a number of folks who would agree, that is the perception it clearly leaves. ■

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NC/DWP MOU Oversight Committee Meeting

Saturday, August 13, 2005 (9 a.m.)

Details: Pat Herrera Duran 310.831.5202

Sidewalk Repair-continued from Page 2**Why this is so wrong.**

We need to get out of the business of forcing people to do things at point of sale. It pays no regard whatsoever to the persons ability to pay. Not everyone, after paying the fees and commission to sell their home have money left over, and you still have to buy a new home. **Many seniors** rely on the money from the sale of their property for retirement. It does not mean that the sidewalks will get repaired where it is needed most. In fact, the rate of repair would be piece meal and slow. In an up market it decreases affordability, already at record lows, as owners pass on the expense. In a down market it leaves sellers worse off.

Why City workers shouldn't be doing this. Julie Butcher quote "Did you know that if you call in the request for sidewalk repair today that the bureau of street services will be out to fix your sidewalk in 83 years"

The city would have to repair the pavement in the escrow period, which could range from 7 to 45 plus days. There is already a waiting list for the 50/50 program! If it takes the city and their workers 83 years to get to your sidewalk for repair do you really want them in charge of this? Surely, if this is your sidewalk then you should be able to choose who repairs it, especially if you are forced to make the repair at point of sale. At \$8 a square foot, the city workers are too expensive for most of the homeowners.

Costs too much to sell in LA already.

We are already a burdensome high tax city when compared to our neighbors. A Seller in the city of Los Angeles has to pay for Gas Valves etc, and a city Transfer Tax to sell their home that a seller in Santa Clarita doesn't.

Julie Butcher - fuzzy math.

Your figures are wrong. It's a fallacy that because half of all properties are sold in a decade, that this would constitute a repair of sidewalks. Of the homes that sell, the resale period is 5 years, therefore a large proportion are resales and new homes. Many are duplexes and condos.

Will not reduce city lawsuits.

City, trip and fall, lawsuits would not be reduced. If the sidewalk is the responsibility of the owner it is the owner that would be sued not the city. The city will only be sued in cases where the city is held responsible for the maintenance of sidewalks. Surely, these sidewalks are not the responsibility of a seller and so the seller should not be burdened with paying for it.

On the other hand, cities are the party responsible for notifying the owner when a sidewalk needs repair. (See California Streets and Highways Code, Sec. 5610-5618.) Are they doing this?

Why can't big cities make their repairs?

Yes we have a lot of sidewalks but we have a lot of businesses and residences and therefore a lot of revenue to the City of Los Angeles. Property TAX revenues have increased greatly over recent years. What is going wrong with our spending?

When is a sidewalk in need of repair?

What constitutes a sidewalk that needs repair, a crack? Or would this be an assessment by the city workers who will repair them. This could become a cash cow for the city, which is obviously the idea behind it. Sidewalks may be repaired well before their life span was up.

Who gets to pay?

What if I live in a condo or a duplex and I sell first? Do I pay for the whole sidewalk or a proportion? The plan raises more questions than it answers.

The answer.

The city needs to take care of its responsibility and so do the owners. Why not simply assess where owner(s) need to make repairs to their sidewalks and request they take care of the same on the 50/50 program, or use their own contractor. The sidewalks that are the owner's responsibility get repaired as required in a timely manner, and we don't have to wait 30 years for the person to sell or 83 years for the city.

(Brian Paul is on the Development and Planning Committee of the West Los Angeles Neighborhood Council.) ■

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