

CITYWATCH

An Insider Look At City Hall

January 18, 2005 Volume 3 Issue 1S

Mayoral Debates for NCs

Open Letter

To: Neighborhood Councils

The upcoming CityWatch/Alliance sponsored debates are important to Neighborhood Councils. Your participation is one more signal of the coming of age of neighborhood empowerment.

The opportunity for exposure to thousands of stakeholders, as yet unaware of Neighborhood Councils, adds real and valuable significance to your support of these debate events.

Thank you for your enthusiastic response to our invitation to participate. LA's NCs are creating yet another model for civic engagement and for changing the way the city does business.

--Ken Draper, Editor



Say What?

"Let's let the

Neighborhood Councils

take the wheel on this."

--Tom LaBonge
Councilmember
4th District

*(To City Council on putting the
½ Cent Safety Sales Tax on the
City ballot.)*



NC Mayoral Debates May Prove Most Critical of 2005 Campaign

By David Lowell

The upcoming mayoral debates, sponsored by CityWatch and the Citywide Alliance and telecast live on Channels 2 and 9, will likely be the most important and critical of the 2005 campaign. For starters, this will be the only opportunity for all of the leading candidates to come face to face with more than 1,200 inquiring neighborhood representatives before a TV audience estimated in the millions.

The February 7 primetime debate, to be aired on KCAL9 at 8p.m., will kickoff the final, intense weeks of the primary campaign. It will mark a serious effort by candidates to get LA's voters to focus on the issues and the election. The February 28 debate, to air on KCBS2 at 6:30 p.m., will provide candidates with their last opportunity to lock up votes before the March election.

CityWatch Focus Groups

CityWatch has announced plans to provide post-debate focus groups for each debate. They will be managed and facilitated by professional analysts. According to CityWatch Executive Editor, Ken Draper, "This will allow us to track the effectiveness of the candidate's message. We'll be able to see if the debates changed any of the sample group's minds, or simply confirmed what they believed going in."

The focus groups will contain a cross section of likely voters with different geographical and political perspectives. They will view the debates and then provide comments in a facilitated environment.

City Channel 36 to Air and Stream Debates on Delay

City Channel 36 (LA36) will also air the CityWatch/Alliance mayoral debates on a delay basis. (Visit www.LA36.org for the schedule.) They will also stream the debates on the LA36 website for those who would like to watch at their convenience.

The Mayoral Debates—2005 are sponsored by CityWatch, in association with the Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils and television channels KCBS2 and KCAL9. The debates will be telecast live on February 7 and 28. The live audience will consist of representatives from Los Angeles' Neighborhood Councils. All questions to the candidates will be provided by Neighborhood Councils. ■

Next Issue

**What Ever Happened to that Inclusionary Zoning Bill?
Inside the Safety Sales Tax Campaign: What Were they Thinking?**

Grass Roots in Venice: Yesterday and Today

Koreatown Voters Throw Out the Baby & the Bathwater

Van Nuys NC: On the Brink of a Comeback?



Perspective**The Mayoral Debates a Yawn?
You're Missing the NC Point**

By Ken Draper

Neighborhood Councils have been remarkably responsive to the invitation to participate in the CityWatch/Alliance sponsored mayoral debates. Nearly every certified and forming council will have representatives at the debates. Conversely, there have been a couple of NCs whose fire has been a bit more difficult to light.

There are still a small number of councils that believe citywide issues are not their charge. And, a few that apparently can't get excited enough about the next leader of the country's second largest city to get involved. One NC board member told me recently that when participation in the debates was brought up, it was met with a huge yawn. That kind of limited vision misses the NC point.

Not About Charisma

Neighborhood Council participation in these televised debates is not about how charismatic the candidates are or, how apathetic many of LA's stakeholders can be about things political. CityWatch helped organize, and invested in, these debates for three reasons.

1) We believed that bringing the voices of LA's neighborhoods to those who would lead us was what Neighborhood Councils were mandated to do. That's what the NC fight is all about. Making City Hall accountable.

2) Credibility. This has been the year of the Neighborhood Council, what with the DWP rate increase roll back, the NC participation in the Inclusionary Zoning and ½ Cent Safety Sales Tax issues, NC partnership negotiations with the DWP, memoranda of understanding with NCs and the Departments of Public Works and Cultural Affairs ... to recite just a partial list. Now comes the increased NC credibility that will result from bringing these mayoral candidates face to face with LA's NCs before more than a million television viewers.

Picture This

3) Finally, outreach. At the top of the Neighborhood Council complaint list is the charge that they do not get enough outreach support. Picture this: One NC representative after the other, on camera, identifying themselves and their council, standing before a 650 member live audience and millions of viewers, putting the tough questions to the mayoral candidate panel. Generating new awareness and interest in the Neighborhood Council system and, your own council. If that vision prompts a yawn at your board table, it may be time to step back and review why the reasons you joined up.

The good news seems to be that the great majority of LA's Neighborhood Councils get it. The flip side of that coin suggests that a few of the City's NCs still haven't mastered the concept that as the citywide neighborhood empowerment program goes ... so go our individual franchises. Keeping the citywide system healthy helps protect our own neighborhood interests. ■

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Criteria For Participation Mayoral Debates—2005

There have been questions and some confusion over the criteria used for allowing participation in the CityWatch/Alliance sponsored Mayoral Debates-2005. The following may provide some clarity.

When CityWatch began organizing mayoral debates for Neighborhood Councils, the plan was to invite all active candidates. When the opportunity presented itself to collaborate with the Citywide Alliance and CBS, and to televise the debates live to hundreds of thousands of viewers, CityWatch opted to accept the limitations of television programming in return for the exposure and outreach benefits to LA's Neighborhood Councils.

Not an Option

With 11 candidates participating in a 90 minute televised debate, logic would indicate that once the time required for the program open and close, and the candidates opening and closing statements, were deducted, the time remaining would allow for maybe two questions to be asked of the participants. That was not an acceptable option.

Criteria

The criteria for candidate participation was agreed upon at the very first meeting of the debate's sponsors: Any candidate for mayor, reaching the matching funds threshold, as defined by the City Ethics Commission, would be invited to participate, regardless of party affiliation, gender, personality, philosophy ... or, any other category or characterization.

And finally, CityWatch and the Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils are independent, nonprofit organizations. Neither is an agency of the City or affiliated with the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, or any other City department or agency. Both are dedicated to the promotion of civic engagement and the support of neighborhood empowerment. The sponsorship of these debates is yet another effort toward achieving those goals.

--Editor

The Mayoral Debates – 2005 FACTS

Dates/Times-	February 7 (8 p.m.) February 28 (6:30 p.m.)
TV-	KCAL9 (2/7) KCBS2 (2/28) LA36 (delayed)
Location-	2/7-TV City 2/28-TBD
Moderators-	Pat Harvey-KCAL9 David Jackson-KCAL9 Paul Magers-KCBS Laura Diaz-KCBS
Candidates-	James Hahn, Antonio Villaraigosa, Bob Hertzberg, Richard Alarcon, Bernard Parks
Participants-	LA's Neighborhood Councils
Questions-	LA's Neighborhood Councils
Sponsors-	CityWatch/Citywide Alliance of NC's



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