



an insider look at city hall

CITYWATCH

citywide edition

November 3, 2005
Volume 3 Issue 16

CityWatch Today—When it comes to full plates, LA's NCs are not slouches. They are currently engaged in a daunting list of citywide issues and causes. From new MOUs with City departments to attempting to fashion the nature and duties of the Charter-mandated NC Review Commission. CityWatch takes a look beginning on Page 2.

Speaking of citywide issues, the affordable housing issue is moving back to the front burner. Either in the form of a modified Inclusionary Zoning ordinance or as a billion dollar ballot measure, offered up by the Mayor. CityWatch takes you through it here on the cover page.

How does LAPD determine a false alarm? Which LA NC is being sued? The plan to get control of the shopping cart plague. All in today's CityWatch.

Thanks for stopping by. --Editor

Say What?

"I just generally favor more rules. It all seems too far out there for me, in terms of the Neighborhood Councils.

It's almost inconceivable to me that there are 80 Neighborhood Councils and they all do whatever they want, whenever they want."

--Diane Middleton
New BONC Commissioner



Mayor's Plan Raises Hope; Questions **Billion Dollar Housing Bond Issue; Showtime for Neighborh'd Councils**

By Brady Westwater

Eighty percent of Los Angeles can not buy a home. Rents are high. Traffic is horrible.

Background

Los Angeles needs affordable housing. A year ago, Councilmembers Reyes and Garcetti rolled out an Inclusionary Zoning plan that was stopped in its tracks by business and Neighborhood Council opposition.

Mayor Villaraigosa has proposed taking a billion dollar bond measure to the voters to aid the affordable housing and the homeless crisis. Placed on a ballot, the measure would require two-thirds of the votes to prevail.

No date was mentioned for placing the proposal on a ballot.

Last week, Mayor Villaraigosa added \$50-million to the affordable housing trust fund. He then proposed a billion dollar bond issue for new affordable housing to subsidize buyers and renters of existing housing.

Ideas for publicly funded housing in LA, however, have often had mixed results. Wisely, the Mayor wants to study options first.

Plus, besides all the direct housing impacts, there are other issues. Traffic, parks, schools, public safety, trash disposal, to name a few. And, there are questions. Here's where Neighborhood Councils can get involved.

To start, where should growth go? Each NC needs to address where they can accommodate growth, and where growth is not appropriate.

See Page 5. "Billion Dollar Bond"

Perspective

An Indulgent Pique at City Hall

By Ken Draper

Almost from the outset, Neighborhood Councils have been held to a higher standard than other government agencies. City Hall eyebrows have been raised because some NCs have struggled with elections, making quorum, understanding land use issues, figuring out the maze that is city bureaucracy.

The City's traffic cameras ... those candid cameras designed to record red-light violations ... were shut down in June because the City couldn't make up its mind on which operator to give the contract to. It's likely they won't be snapping close-ups again any time soon.

Contracts like these don't expire overnight. The City knows well in advance when it's time to review its options and make a decision. So, somebody ... or, some bodys ... screwed up. Dennis Zine blamed it on the bureaucracy. Fellow council members blamed Zine ... for letting the cat out of the bag. The City Council, of which Zine is a member, is the bureaucracy. **See Page 8. "Pique"**

Neighborhood Council Report

NCs Engaged in Daunting List of Citywide Issues, Activities, MOU's

By Ken Draper

The BONC certified LA's 87th Neighborhood Council this week. The NC landscape will look considerably different to the newly anointed **Hollywood Studio District NC** than it did to the **Wilmington Neighborhood Council** almost four years ago. Wilmington was LA's first certified council back in December of 2001.

NC Working Groups

A partial list of Neighborhood Council taskforce groups, organizations and alliances currently active in Los Angeles

- Citywide Alliance of NCs
- Valley Alliance of NCs
- No. East Coalition
- Gay & Lesbian Caucus
- LANC Congress Taskforce
- NC Leadership Coalition
- NC EP Network
- NC/Planning MOU Taskforce
- NC/DWP Oversight Comm
- Citywide Issues Group

There are a number of other regional NC coalitions and some looser NC groups that meet under the auspices of their City Council Member.

Few things have happened ... or likely will happen ... with the potential to affect the NC process as much as the work this group. And, as the process goes, so goes your Neighborhood Council.

See Page 6. "Citywide Issues"

GuestWords

The Valley Finds Its Voice

By Greig Smith

Video conferencing for the Valley has now become a reality! Tuesday, November 22, will mark the beginning of an exciting new period at City Hall with the commencement of my 'Los Angeles City Council Video Connection Pilot Project'. This pilot project will take place from the new Valley Municipal Building in Van Nuys located at 14410 Sylvan Street, Room 208.



The Valley has had an increasingly difficult time participating regularly in our City Council meetings due to distance and heavy traffic. This reality has made it challenging for Valley residents to voice their opinions and concerns on matters that intimately and substantially impact their lives. Now, however, with the approval of this six month pilot project, we have a tremendous opportunity to not only increase participation but also make City government as open and accessible as possible.

See Page 5. "Valley Voice"

The NC view for Wilmington back then was nothing but frontier prairie. Today, HSDNC walks on to an engaged playing field. In addition to tending to neighborhood business, Councils are involved in so many citywide issues and activities today, one needs a scorecard to keep track. **Here's a partial list.**

NC Review Commission—The City Charter requires the Mayor and City Council to select a special commission to review the Neighborhood Council system and advise on what they find or think ought to be changed. The plan for how this commission should be selected, who should serve on it and what's expected of them is being formulated as you read this. The Mayor said that the makeup and guidelines should be organic, meaning NCs should be involved.

CITYWATCH

The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

November 3, 2005
Volume 3 Issue 16

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CITYWATCH is published to encourage grassroots civic engagement through information, ideas and perspective.

CITYWATCH the E-Newsletter is published weekly on Tuesdays. Share it with your Neighborhood Council and other activists.

CITYWATCH is published by CityWatch Media Group.

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We appreciate the recent plug and link. Brought instant response.

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CityWatch-Briefly

A First: NC Sued by Board Member

File this one in the it-had-to-happen-sometime folder. The Sylmar Neighborhood Council becomes the first LA Council to be sued. In this case, by one of its board members.

Maggie Campbell filed the suit, saying in court papers that she had been blacklisted by the Council's officers because she is black and a Christian. The Daily News says that she was upset "in particular because council members refused to use her title "Evangelist Maggie Campbell."

The City Attorney will defend the NC.

...

Keeping Score? BONC Certifies #87

After considerable deliberation and advice on the smallest of issues, the mostly new Board of Neighborhood Commissioners finally certified the City's 87th Neighborhood Council: Hollywood Studio District NC.

After two years of preparation, in a tough community to organize, and a certification presentation that by most accounts more than covered the certification requirements, the extended grilling and pontifical advice seemed to surprise many. After the certification, one reporter said, the NC was in something less than a celebratory mood.

...

When is a Restaurant Not a Restaurant?

Councilmember Tom LaBonge has asked the Planning and Building and Safety Departments to clarify the difference between restaurants and night clubs. At least as far as the Zoning Code goes.

A number of establishments with restaurant beverage licenses are operating as night clubs. Among the reasons: many night clubs target young crowds. The night club alcohol license restricts sales to age 21 and over. LaBonge wants a crack down.

...

Zine Tries to Control Shopping Cart Plague

Most folks in most neighborhoods recoil at the thought of abandoned shopping carts strewn about the community. Councilman Dennis Zine is attempting to do something about it. He's championing a pilot program in his own 12th District that puts the responsibility for controlling this cart blight on the businesses to whom the carts belong. Under the plan offered by the Bureau of Streets, the City would monitor the neighborhood for carts left abandoned on the public right-of-way. Responsible businesses would have 24 hours to retrieve their cart before it is impounded. Both the Reseda and the Winnetka NCs have provided Impact Statements of support. ■

CityWatch Future Assignments

- ◆ What Does the Mayor Expect of NCs?
An exclusive sit down with CityWatch
- ◆ NCs on Turkey Day: A Perspective
So, what's not to be thankful for?
- ◆ A Look at the New BONC
The reformers, the conformers, the undecided
- ◆ NCs Closer to Own Congress
A status report: Next CityWatch Extra

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City Council
November 8, 9, 11 (10 a.m.)

BONC
Not sheduled yet

Education & Neighborhoods
Wednesday, November 9 (2 p.m.)
City Hall (Room 1060)
*Motion to allow NCs to buy equipment and
Webcast meetings; Continued discussion of
NC Review Commission*

NC/DWP MOU Oversight Committee
November 5 (9 a.m.)
DWP (Portland Room)
Hope & 1st Streets
Election of officers/Approve SOP
Info: www.mouoversight.org

LADWP Commissioners
November 8 (8:30 a.m.)
Discussion on renewable technologies

Arts, Parks, Health & Aging
November 8 (8:30 a.m.)
City Hall (Room 1060)
Motion for 37 regional Park Rangers

Planning & Land Use
November 8
CANCELED

Dept of Public Works
November 9 (7 p.m.)
Rancho Park/Palms Library
2920 Overland Ave
Prop O input: Call for Projects
Info: www.LAStormwater.org

Planning Commission
November 10 (8:30 a.m.)
City Hall (Room 1010)
Oak Tree Ordinance on agenda

Valley Alliance of NCs
November 10 (5:30-9 p.m.)
Info: jbarad@adelphia.net

Citywide Alliance of NC
November 19 (9:30 a.m.)
Info: www.allncs.org



**2006-2007
Budget Workshop
for
Neighborhood Councils**

On Saturday, November 19, 2005, beginning at 1:00 p.m., LADWP management will be holding its Fall Budget Workshop for the Neighborhood Councils. It will be held at the John Ferraro Building located at 111 N. Hope Street, Downtown Los Angeles. The meeting will be in the LADWP Auditorium located on A-level. Free parking will be provided.

At this Fall Budget Workshop, LADWP will present information about its future multi-year financial plans / budgets and its adopted budget for the current fiscal year. LADWP's current 2005-06 fiscal year began on July 1, 2005 and will end on June 30, 2006.

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Billion \$\$ Bond Issue: NC Showtime*Continued from Page 1*

How can growth improve mass transit?

How can tenants buy their rental units at a discount – and still protect the rent control rights of the other tenants?

How can labor unions, churches and non-profits build below market rate units for their members? How can companies develop units for their employees? What kind of housing component should be in the LA River project?

Should complexes of for-sale units be developed for first time buyers? Families with children? Artists? Seniors? The handicapped?

Developing Parks

How can we develop new parks with new housing? How can housing have less impact on trash disposal? Use less energy?

How can we build affordable housing projects with enough retail, office space and market rate condos so that after the project is finished – enough capital is returned to build a second project without further subsidy? And then a third and a fourth project.

How can we create unlimited amounts of subsidized housing from the same pot of money while also increasing the number of market rate units, thus moderating prices for everyone – and not just the lucky few who get subsidized housing?

How to Address

Lastly – how do we address these issues citywide as well as on a neighborhood basis?

The Mayor's idea has positive initial reaction. No one questions the need. Not the poor. Not the teachers, police and civil servants who work for the City but can't afford to live in it.

Postscript questions: Can the Mayor's idea be sold? And, will Neighborhood Councils project their considerable potential influence into the process? (*Brady Westwater is a writer and contributor to CityWatch. He is the President of the Downtown LA Neighborhood Council.*) ■

Valley Voice. Can Now Participate in City Council*Continued from Page 3*

I encourage all community members to utilize the new and exciting technological medium to communicate your views and opinions on matters before City Council. It is especially important to have as many residents, businesses, and organizations as possible take advantage of this technology during the six month pilot program period in order to demonstrate the need to have it available on a permanent basis.

Public Can Testify

Members of the public will be able to testify every Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday at 10am on particular Council agenda items via a video and audio feed without the challenges associated with driving downtown.

The time for the Valley to have its voice heard during Council meetings has arrived. Make certain your collective voice reverberates throughout City Hall and the entire City of Los Angeles.

(*Greig Smith is City Councilman for the 12th District. He can be reached at: Councilmember.Smith@lacity.org.)* ■

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City Issues. NCs have full plate

Continued from Page 2

The Education and Neighborhoods Committee has openly asked for the input of NCs. At least one ad hoc group, with the support of E&N, is drafting content for the ordinance that will be needed to establish the commission along with a list of suggestions on commission directions and goals. An invitation to NCs will be out shortly to attend an early December meeting to review their work, discuss the commission and provide ideas and advice.

NC Emergency Preparedness Network—This project is headed by former BONC Commissioner, Pat Herrera Duran ... in cooperation with DONE ... and looks to form a network of "certified", trained and organized NCs that will be connected to each other and the LA EP centers. NCs would be expected to organize their neighborhoods ... down to the block ... and to provide disaster response for their communities. Early planning calls for participating Councils to receive funding from federal and local governments and businesses.

Councilwoman, Janice Hahn, said, shortly after 9/11, that had the Twin Towers been a Los Angeles tragedy, she could envision Neighborhood Councils being the go-to leaders in their areas. The NCEP Network is in the early formation stage. It could be a major NC project for 2006.

Neighborhood Council Congress—The Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Congress (LANCC) is the outgrowth of two workshops, conducted by the USC Neighborhood Participation Project, on the idea of NCs running their own congress. In particular, a deliberative issues and networking congress.

At the moment, the LANCC is the Taskforce charged with crafting a charter, or guidelines, for how an issues congress, run by Neighborhood Councils, would work. More than 60 different people, representing more than 40 different NCs, have been involved in the Taskforce meetings since it was formed in January of this year.

The Charter Proposal has been completed and has been distributed to Councils. Thus far, 11 Neighborhood Councils have ratified it. Another dozen have it agendized. A second wave of NC outreach is currently underway. *Status reports and information, including the proposed Charter, are available at www.lancccongress.org.*

NC/Planning Department MOU—A formation committee is creating a working draft MOU, modeled after the NC/DWP MOU, and has scheduled a meeting with NC representatives for December 3. NC Presidents and Land Use Chairs have been asked to attend this inaugural session. The MOU will be developed collaboratively with the Planning Department. In addition to NC activists, two former City Planners, a Building and Safety inspector and BONC Commissioner, Bill Christopher, are serving on the formation panel. *For more information: jamishaw@socal.rr.com.*

NC/B & S MOU—A representative of the Building and Safety Department has agreed to exploratory discussions in January on an MOU between Neighborhood Councils and his department.

Council File Numbers—As of this date, 37 Neighborhood Councils have forwarded Impact Statements of support for an NC proposal allow Neighborhood Councils to request City Council File Numbers from the City Clerk. *(For background, click on Archives and review CityWatch Vol 3, Issue 4 at www.citywatchla.com.)*

See Page 8. "Citywide Issues"



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Citywide Issues. Councils are busy

Continued from Page 6

The proposal continues to gain the support of City Council members. The Mayor told a Citywide Alliance meeting recently that he agreed with the idea. The proposal could get out of E & N and come before the City Council early next year. Councilman Dennis Zine has said that he supports the concept and would, for one, be willing to introduce it to the City Council.

NC/DWP MOU Oversight Committee—The DWP MOU Oversight Committee is a requirement of the agreement between the LADWP and LA's participating NCs. Its purpose is to monitor adherence, by both parties, to the conditions of the MOU. This Saturday, November 5, NC representatives will consider a working SOP for the committee and will elect its first set of administrators. This will officially end the work of the original MOU Taskforce and the transitional Executive Committee. The Oversight Committee is currently tracking the Independent Financial Review ... just begun ... and the DWP water rate increase proposal that should follow. *(Check for info and status reports at www.mouoversight.org.)*

And More—There are other potential citywide issues in the offing. The return of the Inclusionary Zoning issue ... perhaps in the form of the Billion Dollar Housing Bond that the Mayor just proposed (see CityWatch page 1), cable contract negotiations, the Joint Commission on LAUSD Governance, holding the DOT accountable for LA's traffic mess, tunneling under the Wilshire Corridor for another metro line and more.

•••

The change in the Neighborhood Council landscape fascinates. The relative calm of the Wilmington certification dawn, four years ago, looks more like the 101 and 405 freeway intersection at five in the afternoon.

Watching LA's NCs push the empowerment envelope is exciting and satisfying. It also produces the inevitable question: Can LA's NCs keep juggling all of these issues plates, at the top of their volunteer poles, without collapsing under the weight of the dedication and determination it takes to persist and prevail? ■

Pique. Words for City Hall

Continued from Page 1

The City Council is prepping to address the so-called Lap Dancing issue yet again. The reason it's back on the table? Because a year or so ago, the City Council mishandled a proposed ordinance.

Last August, the City Council had to turn its own lights out because it couldn't make quorum. One of its members took off on a last minute trip to Las Vegas.

The City Council routinely starts meetings a half hour to forty minutes late.

See next column

News You Can Use

How LAPD Determines When Burglar Alarm is a False Alarm

When dispatched to an alarm location, a Los Angeles Police Department patrol unit inspects the premises for evidence of a burglar such as an open door, broken window or other activity consistent with that of a burglar. If an open door, broken window or other activity consistent with a burglar is detected, the primary patrol unit requests a secondary police unit to assist in entering the premises and securing the location. In certain instances, an air unit is also summoned to provide additional assistance.

If the location appears to be secure, officers ascertain via LAPD's Communications Division, whether the alarm company is monitoring any activity within the location. If no evidence of any criminal activity such as burglar, vandalism, or robbery are found, the police unit determines that a false alarm occurred.

When the alarm call is determined to be a false alarm, or the police unit's investigation has determined that the alarm was erroneously reported, the police unit records that information on his/her Daily Field Activities Report (DFAR), Mobile Digital Terminal (MDT) and Alarm Notification Card and informs Communications Division of their findings.

When the location does not have a valid Board of Police Commissioners (BOPC) alarm permit, the police officer places a check in the box on the reverse side of the Alarm Notification Card. The completed Alarm Notification Card is issued to the subscriber, owner, or other responsible person at the location. *(This explanation was provided by the Police Commission to the Budget and Finance Committee on October 11.)* ■

From previous column

Constituents complain consistently that their Councilperson has been unresponsive and for not paying attention at Council meetings.

The numbers keep climbing on Los Angeles elected officials fined by the City's Ethics Commission for campaign violations.

The point of all of this is simple: If the City Council wants to continue to criticize Neighborhood Councils for mismanaged meetings, ethics conflicts, stakeholder grievances, the way they spend taxpayer dollars, election goofs or missed quorums, they should start by setting an example. ■