



an insider look at city hall

CITYWATCH

citywide edition

December 1, 2005
Volume 3 Issue 19

CityWatch Today—Neighborhood Councils have long pondered the impact of the City Council President on their effort to carry out the Charter's mandate. Eric Garcetti is set to replace Alex Padilla on January 1. What will that meant to NCs? We set the story up here on the cover page and then offer multiple perspectives on the answer to that question on Page 3.

There's something for everyone in today's CityWatch news and views soup. Another Westwater opinion, this time on the death of the LAX Master Plan; Wayne Williams responds to Westwater's view on "Clean Money" campaign finance reform, says it's not a fantasy; the \$100,000 NC Street Repair program is costing the city \$35,000 per participating NC. What's wrong with that picture?

All of those issues plus DayPlanner, By the Numbers, News that Was ... and more in today's CityWatch. We hope you find it useful. Thanks for stopping by.

-Editor

Say What?

"The only people who don't like Clean Money are those who want to abuse the political system to gain power."

--Wayne Williams, Author
Clean Money Proposal
for Los Angeles



City Council President

Alex Steps Down; Eric Steps Up But is that Good for LA's NCs?

By David Lowell

As CityWatch reported some weeks ago, Alex Padilla stepped down as City Council President this week to pursue his campaign for State Senator. In a quiet and uncontested vote, Eric Garcetti became his replacement. The Mayor called the transition "classy."

Garcetti said he was "deeply honored" and promised that the "people of Los Angeles are going to see real solutions." Councilmember Wendy Greuel called Garcetti "a savvy consensus-builder" and Councilmember Jan Perry called him "a great city leader."

The question now for grassroots LA: Is this change good for Neighborhood Councils? There are some dissenters, but in the main, the consensus is positive. "I think Eric has exhibited a real commitment for neighborhood empowerment" and "I've always found him approachable," were some of the early responses.

The Council President is the parliamentary chair of the council. He is responsible for setting the agenda, chairing council meetings and assigning members to committees, none of which should be underestimated in their ability to move an agenda. Garcetti officially takes over on January 1. ■

Opinion

**Views on a Garcetti Council
and what it means to
Neighborhood Councils:
CityWatch Pg 3.**

Perspective

Neighborhood Council Street Repair Advice Costing City \$700,000

By Ken Draper

Sometimes what looks like a diamond in the gift box, turns out to be a zircon under the magnifying glass. As it turns out, that appears to be the case with the \$100,000 Street Repair gift offered up to Neighborhood Councils by former Mayor James Hahn in the heat of the mayoral campaign earlier this year. The good news is it also appears that NCs weren't fooled.

As you will recall, back when Hahn was scrambling for constituencies in the mayor's race, Neighborhood Councils were the recipient of a number of real and promised goodies. Among them, Hahn's decision the let NCs share in unexpected surplus gas funds, earmarked for street repair. Both the former mayor, and some councils, could be heard claiming the NCs would get \$150,000 this year, implying that the street repair money would somehow show up in Neighborhood Council bank accounts. Some councils believed that they would also have options, like diverting the money to sidewalks or tree trimming.

See Page 8. "Perspective"

CITYWATCHVIEWS

Neighbors Breath Collective Sigh: LAX Plan Grounded

By Sara Epstein

The City of Los Angeles and the five plaintiffs who were suing the LAX Master Plan have made a deal, and the neighborhood seems to be breathing a collective sigh of relief.

See
Opinion
Piece
Below.

For all of the money it cost to prepare and all of the time it spent in turbulent gestation, no one was really happy with former Mayor Hahn's \$11-billion Los Angeles Airport's Master Plan. Most of all, not the airport's neighbors. And, even if you did like it, the now eliminated lawsuits would have tied up the plan's implementation for years. Mayor Villaraigosa said he is "elated" and Councilman Bill Rosendahl called it "a great day for LAX, for airport neighbors and for regional aviation." The last part a key to the new vision: regional aviation. Expansion of LA's air traffic, in other words, to area air ports.

The newly achieved consensus, for which the Mayor is receiving major credit, puts most of the Hahn plan on the shelf. However, it does allow construction to continue on southern runway, the Tom Bradley terminal and the airport baggage system.

The so-called Hahn plan took 11 years and \$150-million to forge. There are a number of Angelinos hoping that the new regional vision can take form faster and cheaper ... and with the voices of airport neighbors and Neighborhood Councils added to the input mix, before the lawsuits are filed. ■

Opinion

LAX Boondoggle is Dead but Serious Questions Still Have to be Answered

By Brady Westwater

The \$11 billion boondoggle to rebuild LAX breathed its last breath last week. Mayor Villaraigosa and all the neighboring jurisdictions finally – albeit unofficially - pulled the plug. Both the mayor and airport chief, Lydia Kennard, won wide praise for accomplishing this. But since formally rejecting the existing plan could require a new EIR and since that would prevent needed safety and environmental upgrades, the original plan remains (largely) legally intact; instead, everyone just agreed to agree that most of the project is DOA.

And, clearly, all the controversial projects such as the multi-billion dollar remote passenger center – AKA the terrorist's dream – are dead. The flip side is that the question of how to balance growing air travel with growing traffic congestion, remains unresolved. Plus stop gap measures such as reducing the number of gates at LAX when the number of passenger rises, quite obviously – solve nothing.

At least now, though, the essential safety improvements can go forward while issues such as which regional airports should be expanded, how to create mass transit to airports, and how to deal with traffic congestion can be examined. And the NC's can expect to be right in the middle of all these debates. *(Brady Westwater is a political writer and contributor to CityWatch. He is the President of the Downtown LA Neighborhood Council.)* ■

We've Got Mail

Shop Cart Plan Tags Wrong Culprit

(Re: CityWatch story "Smith Tries to Control Shopping Cart Plague"---November 17, 2005) Let's see. A customer shops, then steals the shopping cart ... then abandons it somewhere in the neighborhood and the store is responsible. Hmmm. Does not make any sense to me. Maybe the stores should eliminate carts and we can shop carrying all of our items in our arms. Makes sense.

--Helen Davis
Chatsworth

CITYWATCH

The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

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2-CITYWATCHVIEWS-On Garcetti selection to head City Council

Insight

Viva El Presidente

By Mark Siegel

Congratulations are in order for Eric Garcetti who is ascending to the Presidency of the Los Angeles City Council. He will serve until July 2007 when he will be termed-out of the City Council. Congratulations too, to Councilman Alex Padilla for overseeing the transition to a new city charter, the creation of neighborhood councils and passing six city budgets with the minimum rancor. This change in position is a result of term limits and Padilla's planned campaign for State Senate.

Garcetti is an intelligent and creative individual; While he supported Hahn for Mayor he has mended fences with Mayor Villaraigosa. They both share a passion for increasing the supply of affordable housing.

Crisis Coming

Garcetti will face an immediate crisis with the Engineers and Architect's Union. As President, he serves on the Executive Employee Relations Committee (EERC), which instructs city negotiators on what to bargain for. While the Mayor is in the spotlight in labor negotiations, the President of the Council must deliver the votes to pass the contract.

President Appoints Committees

The President also appoints council members to their committees. Traditionally committees change in July of the odd years, when Council member are sworn in and chose their leadership, but nothing prevents him from handing out new assignments now.

Garcetti will have a brief window to propel issues he would like to pursue or he can sit back and enjoy the ceremonial aspects to the job. We will see soon which he chooses. ■

Garcetti Has Exhibited Commitment

I think Eric Garcetti has exhibited a real commitment to neighborhood empowerment — introducing motions on our behalf in lieu of our ability to create council files, and giving credit to NCs when the idea was theirs.

He has also added his own version of the Council File Number proposal to his new goals for neighborhood empowerment. I think we are lucky to have him as the new president. It can only result in greater inclusion of NCs in the City Council process.

--Jason Lyon (Silver Lake NC)

Yes on Garcetti

I know he will make a wonderful City Council President and am looking forward to his tenure. I've always found him approachable, inclusive and interested in service, and I know he will want to make sure the neighborhood councils improve their ability to participate. Your commitment to public safety and the quality of life in Los Angeles and your reputation for fairness ... and integrity ... precede you.

-Bill Murray
(LA Community Policing/Arroyo Seco NC)

Opinion

Garcetti Replaces Padilla: Is That Good For the NC's?

By Brady Westwater

Short answer, yes. Alex Padilla was one of the first to support Neighborhood Councils in opposition to the DWP rate hike and he has long been supportive of the entire MOU process. Eric Garcetti has also been supportive of NCs on these issues and has additionally taken the lead on the considerably more controversial Council File Number proposal that would allow motions written by NC's to be considered by City Council committee chairs.

Pragmatic & Innovative

He has also worked closely with his own district's NC's and he has been equally available to NCs outside of his district who have needed his assistance. Garcetti has also demonstrated a pragmatic side by working to find innovative ways of keeping film and TV jobs in Los Angeles and by collaborating closely with Councilmember Wendy Gruel to draft the first part of the long delayed, but finally passed, business tax reform package.

With Eric Garcetti as successor to Alex Padilla, the partnership between the City Council and Neighborhood Councils can only become stronger. *(Brady Westwater is a political writer and contributor to CityWatch. He is the President of the Downtown LA Neighborhood Council.)* ■

NO ON GARCETTI *(Letter to CityWatch)*

I'd like to suggest the Council take a position opposing Garcetti being appointed as Pres of the City Council. Will he run the Council like he runs his district? His district is one of the dirtiest in the City, as evidenced by my frequent public transportation travel in his district, to the Braille/ City College area and Hollywood, and apparently it's not an issue of concern with him. The Red Line at SM and Vermont is usually a garbage dump. Santa Monica Blvd from Highland to Vermont is usually a pig sty, with garbage and such lining the curbs, likewise the area around City College along Vermont and the Braille including Vermont and Melrose Westbound. The streets look like garbage dumps, people sleeping in doorways etc., it's truly 3rd world.

Hollywood Blvd, in spite of all the hype about improvement, is another area that should be an embarrassment to him and the City since it's such a tourist destination. I work out at Ballys Hollywood and see the garbage every day. Who in their right mind would buy a condo at Hollywood and Vine with those street conditions around them? He hasn't shown real leadership in cleaning up these messes in his district and the evidence is there to see.

See Page 7. "No on Garcetti"

GuestWords

Adv

In Support of Campaign Finance Reform: "Clean Money" No Fantasy

By Wayne Williams

(A response to the published opinion of Brady Westwater on the Garcetti/Rosendahl/Greuel proposal for Campaign Finance Reform, so called "Clean Money" reform, in the November 17 Edition (Page 2) of CityWatch.)

Brady Westwater raises issues that must be dealt with in a viable Clean Money system, but to assume that the process of Clean Money will inevitably turn dirty falls in the same vain as assuming everything one does will be flawed, no matter what. With that logic, no one would ever do anything constructive for fear of failure.



First off, Clean Money is no longer a fantasy, it is a successful process of having publicly funded elections in Vermont, Arizona, and now Connecticut with many more States and Cities looking to establish or having already established it in their communities. Why? Because it works, for both Democrats, Republicans, Independents and the public as a whole. It brings integrity and honesty back to the political and governmental system, something that Mr. Westwater neglects to mention is pervasive under the current system of pay to play politics.

The only people who don't like Clean Money are those who want to abuse the political system to gain power, or who already have such power and don't want to lose it. There are many ways to make it difficult for these people to continue to do just what they are doing now, buying politicians. The best way is Publicly Funded Elections.

See Page 9. "Clean Money No Fantasy"

GuestWords

Clean \$\$ Reform will Restore Integrity

By Wendy Greuel

Full-public financing, also known as "clean money," has been credited with dramatically improving the level of civic discourse and decision-making, and leveling the political playing field in jurisdictions that have adopted the system.

Background

As CityWatch reported on November 17, the City Council has approved a study on the feasibility and cost of full-public financing for political campaigns. The reform was proposed by Councilmembers Greuel, Garcetti and Rosendahl. The Chief Legislative Analyst has 90 days to provide the report.

We need campaign finance reform to restore integrity and honesty into our election process and governance system. Our city deserves a government that is open, ethical and truly independent from the influence of special interests. By taking money out of elections, candidates will be forced to go directly to the people. That is how democracy is supposed to work.

Full-public financing of campaigns would provide a set amount of public funds to qualified candidates to run for office. Candidates who opt in to the system and

qualify, would agree to limit their spending and reject contributions from private sources. They would receive a public grant for both the primary and general elections if they successfully raise a required number of five-dollar contributions and signatures of support from residents within the district they hope to represent. Candidates remain free to reject public funds, and may run as "non-participating" candidates who commit to the more traditional approach of raising only private sources of funds to run for office.

See next column



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From previous column

This is a voluntary system of public finance, providing not an overhaul - but an alternative - to the more traditional system of campaigns funded by wealthy individuals and large private interests. *(Wendy Greuel is the City Councilmember for the 2nd Council District. Greuel was one of a trio of city council members who proposed the public-financing reform.)* ■

**CITYWATCH:
KNOW MORE**

CITYWATCH DayPlanner

City Council

Dec 6, 7 9-In Recess

Education & Neighborhood

December 14 (2 p.m.)

City Hall (Council Chamber)

Possible agenda items: NC Council File Numbers,
Webcasting of NC meetings.

Meeting will be televised.

BONC

December 6 (6:30 p.m.)

City Hall (Rm 1060)

Creating a conflict panel; NC Donations Ordinance
(Info: www.lacityneighborhoods.com)

Griffith Park Master Plan-Wkng Grp

December 5

Animal Services Citizens Oversight

December 7 (7:30 p.m.)

221 N Figueroa St (Rm 1640)

DONE Academy Training

December 7 (6:30 p.m.)

305 E First St

City Government 101—Learn about: City history,
leaders, departments, bureaus and how to advocate
(More info: www.lacityneighborhoods.com)

Valley Alliance

December 8 (6:30 p.m.)

Sherman Oaks Hospital

4929 Van Nuys Blvd (Doctors Conf Rm)

Speaker: Dr. Gail Schaper-Gordon

Sub: "Can't We All Just Get Along?"

Street Closing for Filming

December 4 (4 p.m. to 6 a.m.)

2nd St from Figueroa to Hill; Hope St from Gen Thaddeus
Kosciuzko Way to Hope Place

December 4 (4 a.m. – 8 p.m.)

Wilshire from Flower to Grand; Hope from 6th to 7th St



Adv

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CITYWATCH**The News That Was ...****Chick Offers to Audit LAUSD:
“I’m Accountable to the People”**

LA Controller, Laura Chick, has sent off a letter to the LAUSD Superintendent, LAUSD Board President and the UTLA President offering to oversee an audit of the School District’s management. Her office is right for the job, Chick says, because she is “The independently elected Controller for the City of Los Angeles (and) I’m accountable directly to the people.”

In the recent agreement between the LAUSD and the United Teachers of LA, the School District was directed to hire an independent consulting firm to audit the Districts administrative operations.

LAX Rehab: Old Plan Grounded

After more than a decade and millions of dollars in design costs, the City has decided to ground its controversial rehab plan for Los Angeles International Airport. The only part of the old plan kept in place, is the rebuilding of the southern runway, a \$300-million project.

According to the LA Times, the city consented to review the \$11-billion modernization program in exchange for a promise from airport-area communities to drop federal and state lawsuits that challenged the plan.

The Mayor, who never supported much of the now-dead rehab proposal, must start over now on a new concept that attempts to spread air traffic around to the area’s regional airports.

LA Transpo on the Move

The City Council has agreed to ante up \$40-million, over five years, to help get construction on the Exposition Line up and running. The first phase of the project would run from downtown to Culver City.

In the meantime, the court-appointed mediator has approved an MTA plan to double the number of Metro-Rapid routes, from the present 14 to 29, over the next three years.

And, Councilmember Tom LaBonge is looking to expand parking by 800 spaces at the Red Line station in NoHo on a parcel of land that was used as a construction staging area while the Orange Line busway was built. His proposal, which won favor at the Transportation Committee this week, must get the support of the MTA, which owns the 1.8-acre site, and funding to pay for the facility, estimated at \$1 million.

Finally, California Representative, Henry Waxman, has agreed to reconsider his long-time

See next column

**CityWatch
Future Assignments**

◆ **Is This the Best LA City Council Ever?**
Our panel and our readers have opinions

◆ **A Look at the New BONC**
The reformers, the conformers, the undecided

◆ **LA’s 90,000 Homeless**
Does anyone, other than Jan Perry, care?

◆ **Warm & Fuzzy Holiday CityWatch**
*Checking our list twice—a must read
December 21*

◆ **The City Through a 2006 Prism**
*Comprehensive CityWatch Year-ahead issue
December 28*

**Next CityWatch: December 8 ...
...ON A COMPUTER NEAR YOU!****From previous column**

opposition to tunneling under the Wilshire corridor for subway expansion.

Short Takes ...

Bucks for a Clean Ballona—LA’s Board of Public Works has awarded \$1.5-million to a project designed to reduce trash and debris from entering Ballona Creek and Santa Monica Bay. The award was announced by Cynthia Ruiz, Public Works Board President.

NC Congress Growth Continues—Valley Village Neighborhood Council has become the 17th to ratify the Proposed Charter for an NC Congress. (For complete list: www.LANCCongress.org).

Time Warner to Own LA’s Cable Companies—The LA City Council has agreed to allow Time Warner to eventually become the cable provider for 98% of LA. If the FCC approves, it will come in steps. First TW and Comcast will buy the troubled Adelphia cable, then TW will absorb Comcast’s customers.

Shot Over the City’s Bow—The Engineers and Architects took its first shot in salary negotiations with the City by appearing at a City Council meeting and warning of possible disruptions and a strike if their increases were not comparable to those recently received by Department of Water and Power’s IBEW workers.

Life is About Choices—City Councilman Ed Reyes fired his Office Manager, Ruby de Vera, a few days after she came in third in the 14th District Council election. ■

7-9-1-3-10-8-2-4-6-5-

CityWatch ...

... by the Numbers

(A statistical status report on some of the ongoing citywide Neighborhood Council activities at deadline.)

LA Neighborhood Council Congress

(Councils that have ratified Proposed NC Congress Charter)

This Wk-17

Last Wk-15

Planning MOU

(RSVPs to first citywide Presidents/Land Use chairs meeting on December 3)

This Wk-42

Last Wk-21

NC/DWP MOU

(Councils that have signed onto the NC/DWP MOU)

This Wk-46

Last Wk-45

NC File Number Proposal

(Have forwarded Community Impact Statements of support)

This Wk-39

Last Wk-37



No on Garcetti—from Page 3.

Someone that unconcerned about quality of life conditions within his council district, irrespective of the facts, it's now heavily immigrant communities, should not be holding the position of President of the Council. What kind of a message does that send? Immigrant communities in particular need the quality of life bar set high and examples set by clean streets, graffiti free walls and better police presence, and deserve better.

I don't understand why the NCs, when they met at City College, continue to close their eyes to the streetscape conditions in that area. That area is just as much a part of LA as the West side and the Valley. How do you expect these immigrants to have "hope" when conditions around them seem "hopeless" as reflected by the streetscape? Before he goes to the throne, he needs to clean up his act in his council district.

--Tom Paterson
Valley Village

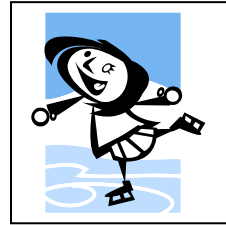
(Letters to CityWatch may be edited for clarity and/or brevity.) ■

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Perspective: From Page 1

However, in the light of day, what NCs discovered was: 1) the money is limited to street repair only; 2) the folks at the Bureau of Streets can overrule their decisions; 3) the money only buys minimal resurface work on somewhere between three to six blocks, max; 4) many of the streets that councils would

**NC
Decisions
Due
Dec 30**

have selected were already on the Public Works schedule; 5) Hahn's "gift" was worth a lot more as a campaign ploy than it was either as community enhancer or builder of Neighborhood Council advisory authority.

As a result, Street Services Director Bill Robertson tells us, only 20 Councils have responded and, of those, only three or four have suggested streets different than those already on the Bureau's schedule.

Alarming

Even more alarming, it will have cost Public Works more than \$700,000 to prepare the street condition assessments and conduct the outreach needed to inform and involve NCs in this questionable project. That's about \$35,000 per participating Neighborhood Council so far. That number likely does not include the cost of sending Robertson, a Board Commissioner and DPW staff out to neighborhoods across the city in a last-minute effort to get NCs to participate. NC street resurface decisions are due by the end of this month.

There are lessons to be learned from this. First, even if you think you are doing NCs a favor, it is worth asking for their input before moving forward. Their priorities, interests and needs may not attach the same importance to your offer. The odds are, if Councils had known in February, what they know now, they would have rejected Hahn's proposal up front. Also, if the idea requires a bunch of smoke and mirrors, you will get a sense early on that they've seen through your shell game.

NCs have Matured

Second lesson: Neighborhood Councils have matured enough now that they no longer welcome any handout. They are secure enough and wise enough now to want these perceived NC benefits to have substance.

There are those who will argue that this program gives neighborhoods a voice in the process ... albeit not much more than a whisper ... where they've not been heard before. But, here's a bulletin: NCs are no longer that needy. They've established a voice in their government and it grows louder with each MOU, each taskforce, each coalition and each new revelation that they have indeed found empowerment and no longer need their hand held while crossing LA's pock marked, out-of-repair streets. ■

Courtside

-Brown Act & Public Comment Time-

Neither the Ralph M. Brown Act nor the San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance requires a local agency to provide a public comment period of three minutes per speaker per agenda item; both laws permit agencies to adopt reasonable restrictions on public comment. The city commission did not abuse its discretion in limiting public comment to two minutes per speaker where the agenda included several items for which unusually long discussion was anticipated. So ruled a California Appellate Court recently.

Note: The court did not discuss whether it is reasonable to limit public comment to less than two minutes.

**Chafee v. San Francisco Library
Commission
First District, Division Four
Published November 21, 2005**

Report courtesy:
Roberta Avrutin Law Offices

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*No matter how you
celebrate the season
see the
CITYWATCH
Holiday Issue
Dec 21!*

Clean Money No Fantasy-From Page 3

Because of Buckley vs. Vallejo, the Supreme Court wrongly ruled that money is free speech. However, in subsequent rulings, the court allowed government to limit how much can be spent on campaigns, thus putting campaign contributions into the sites of legitimate legal restrictions that Clean Money systems can control.

As an example, a Clean Money system can demand that anyone putting up Special Interest expenditures for or against any candidate would need to state well in advance how much and in what fashion their money's will be used, giving the Publicly Funded candidate the ability to receive like kind funding well in advance to deal with the 'attacks.' With such a means in place, the 'Special Interests' would have second thoughts on wasting their funds.

As for raising contributions, a well designed Clean Money System would also make it illegal for individuals to pay others to collect their initial five dollar contributions and signatures to qualify as a candidate, and establish viable thresholds for reaching qualification.

Most importantly, a Public Money Clean Election System should make it clear, as incentive for all candidates to run as publicly funded, by stating clearly on the Sample and Final Ballot, whether a candidate is "Publicly Funded" or "Privately Funded." Who do you think is the most likely candidate to get your vote?

Finally, a publicly funded election system is only as good as the public that supports it. An educated public will hear issues from the Publicly Funded candidates that many privately funded candidates will not feel comfortable discussing because of their constant need to raise more funding for their election and thus must watch what they say for fear of losing contributors.

Independent special interest groups, lobbyists and those seeking governmental contracts could also be restricted from funding elections on any side. This was put into the Clean Elections law recently established in Connecticut, severely restricting additional dirty money into elections.

It's time that Mr. Westwater, and others who fear Clean Elections, to work to make sure they are successful, and stop complaining about fantasies of what can't be done. We are American's after all, we can and must accomplish great things, and making our government work better for all the people must be our number one priority.

(Wayne Williams is the author, along with Attorney John Isen, of a Clean Money Proposal for Los Angeles, based on the California Clean Money Campaign and Center for Governmental Studies initial proposal for Clean Elections in California.) ■

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