

CityWatch

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Special Report

After 4 ½ Years and 88 Certifications, DONE GM, Greg Nelson, Calls it Quits

By Ken Draper

Northridge, CA—Saying that when he took the job four and a half years ago, he never intended it to be a lifetime job, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment General Manager, Greg Nelson, called it quits last night. His resignation will become effective some time before the end of April.

Nelson's explanation was simple. "I had planned from the beginning to get through the building process," Nelson told the Neighborhood Commissioners, "and we're there now."

Nelson was appointed to steer LA's Neighborhood Council system, by Mayor James Hahn, in September, 2001.

Nelson was a natural, many thought, to run the Department of Neighborhoods. He had provided former LA Councilman, Joel Wachs, with the NC idea ... first introduced by Wachs and then called Family of Neighborhoods ... in 1992, then helped shepherd the development of Councils through the Reform Commissions and into the Charter.

The Board, and the remaining audience members, was surprised by the announcement. Commissioner Bill Christopher, who worked closely with Nelson during the two year rush to get Neighborhood Councils certified, said that "Neighborhood Councils and community activists throughout the city owe (Nelson) a debt of gratitude."

Nelson responded: "This sounds like a eulogy."

"You've been thanked for many things," BONC's Tony Lucente told Nelson, "and you've been blamed for many things in the course of this venture. And, I would say in response to that: Guilty as charged."

"It was your leadership," Lucente added, "that moved this process forward after languishing for some time."

The evening provided a touch of irony. Nelson announced the end to his tour with the DONE and earlier in the evening, the Board voted to decertify one of LA's

oldest Neighborhood Councils, Old Northridge. Both, in a manner of speaking, had been around from the outset.

Nelson would not publicly commit to his plans for after his retirement in April.

(A complete report on this story including its effect on Neighborhood Councils, see the next CityWatch on March 27.)