

Neighborhood Manager

Hahn Picks Longtime Wachs Aide to Lead Neighborhood Empowerment Department

By MASON STOCKSTILL

City News Service

LOS ANGELES (CNS) - Mayor Jim Hahn today nominated Greg Nelson, a longtime City Council aide and neighborhood councils advocate, to run the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment.

Nelson served in Councilman Joel Wachs' office for 26 years, beginning as a junior administrative assistant and most recently as the councilman's chief deputy.

He drafted the original proposal to create neighborhood councils throughout the city, which later became part of the city's new charter, Hahn said.

"Greg Nelson brings to the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment a unique combination of experience, energy and creative approaches from his extensive work with community leaders," the mayor said.

Nelson will take over as the interim general manager, effective Tuesday. The mayor also nominated him for the permanent appointment, which requires City Council confirmation.

Nelson will fill the vacancy left by the July resignation of Rosalind Stewart.

"I am confident that he will work tirelessly to effectively lead this department, bring people in neighborhoods together and improve the quality of life for residents in every community," Hahn said.

As GM, Nelson will be charged with leading the department's efforts toward helping neighborhood councils get up and running.

Nelson has been a supporter of neighborhood councils since 1992, when Wachs made them a plank of his mayoral campaign, Nelson said.

Wachs finished third, but the neighborhood empowerment issue stayed alive.

"You know how there's this two-week break before the Super Bowl, when everyone has to wait for the game to happen?" Nelson said. "That's how I feel right now. I want to get into the game."

Nelson said his first priorities include streamlining the certification process for groups applying to become neighborhood councils, and reaching out to community groups as they begin to take on their official neighborhood council status.

He also considers it his role to serve as an advocate of neighborhood empowerment throughout the city.

"We're going to go neighborhood to neighborhood and show them how they can benefit by becoming a neighborhood council," he said.

Nelson said the department and the councils will help residents who feel their parts of the city have been marginalized by City Hall to participate in the process of governance.

Members of an effective, fully supported neighborhood council "can wield the same sort of influence as the most powerful lobbyists," he said.

"If this is done right, it could fundamentally change the way decisions are made at City Hall," Nelson said.

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