

Neighborhood Commission

Mayor Announces Nominees for New Neighborhood Empowerment Commission

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City News Service

LOS ANGELES (CNS) - A nun, a lawyer and a high school social studies teacher are among the seven nominees announced today by Mayor Richard Riordan for the city's new Board of Neighborhood Empowerment Commission.

Riordan said he hopes the commission, charged with overseeing a system of neighborhood councils as required by the new city charter, will become a ``national community model."

``Today we mark the beginning of a new era at City Hall and throughout Los Angeles," the mayor said.

``After searching throughout our city I have found seven amazing Angelenos with outstanding records of community service. They live in various parts of Los Angeles yet they share one common thread: a love of our city."

The nominees must now be approved by the City Council.

The search for a general manager of the department is under way, and Riordan said he expects to name a candidate by the end of September.

Nominee Sister Jennie Lechtenberg, a resident of East Los Angeles and executive director of the PUENTE Learning Center of Boyle Heights, said the board will first have to figure out how neighborhoods and the city will exchange information.

``It's all a learning process for all of us," Lechtenberg said, ``but I really do enjoy doing something that doesn't have a lot of fences or laws or regulations, so that we can be creative and use the potential of the people of our community."

The neighborhood councils themselves should be up and running in about 18 months, City Council members have said.

Lee Kanon Alpert is a nominee from Northridge who now serves as president of the city's Board of Building and Safety Commission.

He said the newly created board will look at models of neighborhood councils in other communities such as Seattle, San Antonio and Minneapolis to determine

how they should be set up in Los Angeles.

Councilman Alex Padilla said he expects the commission to be ``an ally to making the city more responsive and more accountable to the residents."

The five other nominees, who will serve terms ranging from one to four years if approved, are:

- Carrie Castro Armour, a resident of San Fernando and a high school social studies teacher at Sepulveda Middle School in North Hills;
- Pat Herrera Duran, a San Pedro resident and executive director of Joint Efforts Inc., a nonprofit organization that provides a family counseling and an AIDS outreach program;
- Christopher Pak, a resident of Playa del Rey and the founder of Archeon International Group, an architectural, planning and interiors firm;
- Keith Weaver, a Sherman Oaks resident who is a community and government affairs liaison for Kaiser Permanente; and
- William Weinberger, a resident of mid-city Los Angeles and a partner in the law firm Selvin & Weiner & Weinberger. He also served as commissioner for the Elected Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission.

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