

Date: November 30, 2001

To: Neighborhood Leaders

From: Greg Nelson, General Manager, Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

WHO'S IN THE BALL GAME:

To date we've received 24 applications. Rather than repeat the entire list, here are the updates from the last newsletter:

17. Empowerment Congress, Central Area Neighborhood Development Council
18. Empowerment Congress, Southwest Area Neighborhood Development Council
19. Empowerment Congress, Southeast Area Neighborhood Development Council
20. Empowerment Congress, North Area Neighborhood Development Council
21. Empowerment Congress, West Area Neighborhood Development Council
22. West Wilshire Community Council
23. Woodland Hills-Warner Center Neighborhood Council
24. Harbor City Neighborhood Council

BOARD DECISION RE: BOUNDARY CONFLICTS

An ad hoc committee of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners was formed to address the problem of overlapping boundaries. Their first recommendation was adopted, with some amendments, at the Board's meeting of November 27, 2001.

Whenever the Board receives two or more applications that contain overlapping boundaries, they are allowed to force a 20-day "mediation time-out." The Board's new position is that if, during the 20 working day period following receipt of an application, the department receives a Letter of Intent from a group(s) that is forming and that sees an overlapping boundary problem, the department staff SHALL request the group that submitted the application to VOLUNTARILY participate in the 20-day "mediation time-out." If they refuse, that will be noted in the official file for the Board's consideration when the certification hearing is held.

In taking its action, the Board specified 6 pieces of information in order to show that there is a genuine and serious boundaries conflict. Those are:

- a) A detailed outline of the reason(s) for submitting the Letter of Intent.
- b) Details (including attendance information, date, time and location) to support that an organizing meeting has been held in the proposed new neighborhood council area.
- c) A photocopy of a dated sign in sheet which includes a list of signatures from participants in the organizing meeting indicating which groups were represented.
- d) Details indicating that organizing committees for the proposed neighborhood council have been formed including a designation of committee assignments and past or future committee meeting dates.
- e) A map indicating the boundaries in conflict.
- f) A list of outreach methods and samples of outreach materials.

The full text of the Board's position may be found at the end of this message.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS THAT COMMISSIONERS MAY ASK AT CERTIFICATION HEARINGS

Many of the developing neighborhood councils have asked if I have any idea which questions they might be asked during their certification hearing. The answer is no. Nobody can know that. But I can make some half-way intelligent guesses. What follows is an attempt to do that. I shared my thoughts with the Board of Commissioners and the public at last Tuesday's Board meeting, and didn't receive comments from anyone. I don't know what that means.

What I'm trying to avoid, to the best of my ability, is applicants being surprised by blockbuster questions. The process shouldn't be about surprises. Instead, it should be about the Board and the public being assured that the applicants are sincere about what they say they will do, and genuine in their desire to abide by the spirit of the City Charter and its implementing ordinances, especially as it applies to diversity and being inclusive.

Please feel free to call us or your Project Coordinator with questions. To reach DONE, or any city department toll-free use: 818.756.8121 from the Valley, 310.575.8321 from the Westside, or 310.548.7721 from the Harbor Area. Then press the 7-digit number you want. So to reach DONE you would press 485.1360.

The possible questions:

(To be asked of applicants whose election plan would allow a situation in which the diversity of the area might not be represented after their election.) "At the heart of the City Charter is the requirement that the Neighborhood Councils reflect the diversity of their area. One ordinance requires that Neighborhood Councils provide assurances that the members of the Neighborhood Council will reflect the diverse interests within their area. Another ordinance says that no single stakeholder group may comprise a majority of the Neighborhood Council's governing board, with exceptions permitted. And, of course, even if this wasn't the law, I'm sure you'll understand that your Neighborhood Council won't have as much influence as it would have if it truly represented the diversity of your area. So, if it turns out that your election doesn't meet these goals, what do you plan to do?"

"One of my concerns about each Neighborhood Council is that, once certified by us, the governing board will have little or no interest in spending their time or resources continuing to reach out and involve more people, especially among those people who have a history of low civic participation. Certainly this has been the experience in other cities. Can you tell us more about your plans for continuing outreach, and what you think should be done to help the City ensure that you abide by your plan? And if your plan requires assistance from the City that doesn't exist, feel free to tell us."

"After attending many community meetings with people who are organizing Neighborhood Councils, I've noticed that everyone seems to fit into one of two groups. One is people who are

strictly interested in what's best for their neighborhood, and abiding by the principles of the Neighborhood Council system to include as many people, and as many different people, as possible. These are people who would step aside if they felt that their presence was a detriment, and they aren't driven by a need for public recognition or titles. The other is people who seem to be more interested in empowering themselves so that they can be the spokespeople for their neighborhood. And letting other stakeholders assume a spokesperson position is something that makes them uneasy. So, don't take this personally, because I'm going to ask this of each applicant: how much time and energy do you guess you've spent discussing how to exclude people, compared to how much you've spent figuring out how to include people? For instance, 50-50?"

"What is your plan for inviting people to run for your governing board and vote in your elections? Again, if your ideal plan would require support from the City, feel free to tell us about it."

"If the City were able to pay for a mailing to all stakeholders announcing your first election, and inviting the greatest number of people to run for office, vote, and become involved in your Neighborhood Council, would that be something that you'd welcome? And, if yes, would you organize your elections around such a mailing?"

"Once you become certified, how will your official positions on issues and projects be determined? By the general assembly? By the governing body? By a committee of the governing body? By a single member of the governing body?" (The purpose of this question is to try and find out whether or not official positions will be decided by a diverse group, or if the president will be able to develop official positions 'on the spot', such as during a media interview, and use their title to give the impression that it is the official position of the Neighborhood Council.)

"Do you have any plans for how you will be developing new leaders, especially youth, for your Neighborhood Council? You won't be around forever you know."

"I'm especially concerned about plans you might have for involving the homebound in your elections and activities."

"The laws we're operating under require that all Neighborhood Councils communicate regularly with all their stakeholders, and we know what a huge task that is. Clearly, this will be difficult without help from the City. What are your plans, and what help do you need from the City?"

"What's your best guess about which major issues your Neighborhood Council and its governing board will end up spending its time on? For instance, 75% planning and land use, 20% traffic and streets; 20% other city services; 5% everything else."

"Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas has suggested that it would be beneficial for Neighborhood Council members to take the Fire Department's 17 ½ hour CERT, or Community Emergency Response Training course in order to better prepare them for self-sufficiency in the event of a

serious emergency. Do you think that, at least, your governing board members would volunteer to take the training, and urge others to do the same?"

"DONE is required to provide training for the Neighborhood Council leaders. What kind of training would like to be provided?"

LIST OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

As promised in the previous newsletter, here is a list of the City Council members and the Mayor. Feel free to use this to contact your elected city officials.

CITY COUNCIL

1st District: Ed Reyes (Room 410)

Phone: (213) 485-3451 Fax: (213) 485-8907

Email: ereyes@council.lacity.org

2nd District: Vacant (Room 480)

Phone: (213) 485-3391 Fax: (213) 680-7895

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3rd District: Dennis P. Zine (Room 405)

Phone: (213) 485-3486 Fax: (213) 485-8988

Email: zine@council.lacity.org

4th District: Tom LaBonge (Room 430)

Phone: (213) 485-3337 Fax: (213) 624-7810

Email: tlabonge@council.lacity.org

5th District: Jack Weiss (Room 440)

Phone: (213) 485-5013 Fax: (213) 687-7406

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6th District: Ruth Galanter (Room 475)

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7th District: Alex Padilla (Room 465)

Phone: (213) 847-7777 Fax: (213) 847-0707

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8th District: Mark Ridley-Thomas (Room 450)

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Email: mjones@council.lacity.org

9th District: Jan Perry (Room 420)

Phone: (213) 485-3351 Fax: (213) 473-5983
Email: jperry@council.lacity.org

10th District: Nate Holden (Room 455)
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11th District: Cindy Miscikowski (Room 415)
Phone: (213) 485-3811 Fax: (213) 473-6926
Email: miscikow@council.lacity.org

12th District: Hal Bernson (Room 460)
Phone: (213) 485-3343 Fax: (213) 473-6925
Email: bernson@council.lacity.org

13th District: Eric Garcetti (Room 470)
Phone: (213) 485-3353 Fax: (213) 613-0819
Email: garcetti@council.lacity.org

14th District: Nick Pacheco (Room 425)
Phone: (213) 485-3335 Fax: (213) 847-0680
Email: npacheco@council.lacity.org

15th District: Janice Hahn (Room 435)
Phone: (213) 473-7015 Fax: (213) 626-5431
Email: jhahn@council.lacity.org

MAYOR

James K. Hahn (Room 303)
Phone: (213) 978-0600 Fax: (213) 978-0656
Email: jhahn@mayor.lacity.org

You can send a letter to any of these at City Hall, 200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012. To call City Hall toll-free use: 818.756.8121 from the Valley, 310.575.8321 from the Westside, or 310.548.7721 from the Harbor Area. Then press the 7-digit number you want.

FULL TEXT: LETTER OF INTENT MOTION

The Board's Ad Hoc Committee on Overlapping Boundaries has begun considering solutions to some specific problems that are occurring, or that might occur, when the boundaries between two developing neighborhood councils conflict.

At its meeting of November 13, 2001, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners asked staff to draft a position statement for the Board's consideration that would allow staff to inform

developing neighborhood councils how the Board anticipates handling one particular type of boundary problem. Given the time urgency created by the applications that are being processed, the Board realizes that it would be time consuming to resolve this specific problem through an amendment to the Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils (“Plan”). However, this and other amendments to the Plan may be recommended by the Board at a later date.

I, THEREFORE MOVE that the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners ask the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) staff to inform developing neighborhood councils that:

Groups that are preparing certification applications may submit a Letter of Intent to the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) explaining that they are preparing an application that will likely include boundaries that will conflict with those of an application that has already been received by DONE;

The Letter of Intent must include the following information to confirm that there is a genuine and serious conflict of boundaries. The Project Coordinator(s) assigned to the disputed area must certify all attachments to the Letter of Intent.

- a) A detailed outline of the reason(s) for submitting the Letter of Intent.
- b) Details (including attendance information, date, time and location) to support that an organizing meeting has been held in the proposed new neighborhood council area.
- c) A photocopy of a dated sign in sheet which includes a list of signatures from participants in the organizing meeting indicating which groups were represented.
- d) Details indicating that organizing committees for the proposed neighborhood council have been formed including a designation of committee assignments and past or future committee meeting dates.
- e) A map indicating the boundaries in conflict.
- f) A list of outreach methods and samples of outreach materials.

3. Upon receiving a Letter of Intent, DONE shall ask the group that submitted the application to voluntarily enter into the 20-day mediation period that is provided for in Article IV, Section 2 (b) of the Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils for the purpose of producing a unified application; and

4. If the applicant does not agree to voluntarily enter into mediation, that action will be noted in the public record including the reason for rejecting the mediation period, for the Board’s information when the hearing on the application is held.

INTRODUCED BY: Commissioner Tony Lucente

SECONDED BY: Commissioner Pat Herrera Duran

Adopted on November 27, 2001

IMPORTANT MESSAGE:

1. Our records show that you expressed an interest in receiving information, such as newsletters like this, from the department. If you wish to discontinue receiving this information, simply type the word UNSUBSCRIBE in the Subject line, and e-mail it back to us. Your record will be removed from the mailing list as soon as possible.

2. The new City Charter requires the department to create a database of neighborhood organizations, and make it available to the public through various means that could include the Internet. This is so everyone can have an opportunity, perhaps for the first time, to communicate with each other on a grand scale, and build strength through unity. Telephone numbers will not be included on the public database, which will be different than the database that we use to keep you informed. If you would like to be removed just from the public database, please type the words NO PUBLIC in the Subject line, and e-mail it back to us.

Greg Nelson

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