

Date: March 7, 2004

To: Neighborhood Council Leaders

From: Greg Nelson, General Manager, Dept. of Neighborhood Empowerment

Subject: NW SAN PEDRO NC RFQ. PLANNING DIRECTOR APPLICATION DEADLINE EXTENDED. FAQ SECTION TO BE IMPROVED.

NW SAN PEDRO NC RFQ

The Northwest San Pedro Neighborhood Council has released a Request for Qualifications to find a consultant(s) to develop a community-driven conceptual land use and traffic plan for properties bordering on a one-mile stretch of North Gaffey Street.

The four-page RFQ will be available on our home page later today. If you know of anyone who might be interested, the deadline to submit a response is March 21. There is more information on their website at www.nwsanpedro.org.

PLANNING DIRECTOR APPLICATION DEADLINE EXTENDED

The deadline for submitting an application to be the new City Planning Director was extended to March 18. To see more [click here](#) and be taken to the Personnel Department's home page, Executive Job Opportunities section.

FAQ SECTION TO BE IMPROVED

Right now, the FAQ section of our website contains legal questions. There is a separate FAQ in the Funding section. But we're working on expanding the FAQ to include non-legal questions. We've got tons of them, but the one that keeps coming up most frequently involves whether or not Neighborhood Councils can have formal votes on City matters, such as on planning and land use matters.

The answer is no ... at least not without changing the City Charter and complying with the federal Voting Rights Act. And doing so would end the current concept of Neighborhood Councils. This was discussed thoroughly during the Charter reform commission hearings, and many of those reports are on our website.

The two most important parts of the Charter are the ones that say that Neighborhood Councils shall be advisory, and not have any formal decision-making power, and that Neighborhood Councils may determine their own boundaries and their own method of selecting their leaders.

If Neighborhood Councils were given, say the first vote on land use matters, the federal Voting Rights Act would eliminate all the methods through which Neighborhood Councils current select or elect their board members, and

boundaries would likely have to be changed to ensure compliance with federal law regarding equal population and the effect of boundaries on minority voting power.

What was talked about during the Charter reform process was the possibility of creating a change through which locally-elected people would be able to vote on certain matters from inside the system, but that the Neighborhood Councils would exist as “public lobbyists” to hold accountable all of the full-time and part-time politicians.

And another issue that came up at the time, was that in planning and land use matters, state law requires that for the most part, a city planning commission or a City Council must have the final say, so those local front-end votes could be vetoed.

In short, Neighborhood Councils could not have a formal vote inside the system as long as they continue to elect themselves as they are doing now. All of the protections of the Voting Rights Act would apply.

Feel free to send in your other questions, and we’ll begin loading up the FAQ.

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