

Date: February 9, 2006

To: Neighborhood Council Leaders
From: Greg Nelson, General Manager
Subject: FINAL DECISION MAKERS

FINAL DECISION MAKER VOLUNTEERS SOON TO BE SOUGHT

Good news! We're getting closer to beginning the process of accepting volunteers for the special training sessions that will be provided for those who wish to help Neighborhood Councils with their elections by serving on a small panel of Final Decision Makers (those who decide election challenges).

After a year's work, a working group comprised mainly of Neighborhood Council representatives from across the city teamed with staff from our department, offices of City Clerk and City Attorney, and the League of Women Voters to create a new set of rules for how Neighborhood Councils plan and conduct elections. The procedures were approved by the City Council a year ago, but they only recently went into effect. The City Council and the working group wanted to ensure that Neighborhood Councils had adequate time to know about and understand the new procedures. They have been on our website during that year.

The procedures were designed to balance the Charter-guarantee that each Neighborhood Council be able to determine its own methods of choosing its members with the Charter requirement that the business of a Neighborhood Council be conducted in an open and fair manner. Therefore, the procedures allow a Neighborhood Council the greatest array of election-design choices, while guaranteeing that the election be open and fair to all.

It was the desire of the working group, and the procedures reflect it, that the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment not be able to act as either the Independent Election Administrator or the Final Decision Maker. We are out of the "elections business" and that's the way it should be.

So very shortly, Neighborhood Council stakeholders will have the opportunity to resolve the election challenges of other Neighborhood Councils. Think of it as Neighborhood Councils helping Neighborhood Councils. Also think of it as another step toward the goal of allowing Neighborhood Councils to be as independent from City Hall as possible.

In accordance with the new procedures, our department will soon be creating a pool of those who wish to serve on the Final Decision Maker panels. The details will be forthcoming.

The procedures provide that each certified Neighborhood Council be invited to nominate persons who it feels would be good Final Decision Makers. Nominees do not need to be board members. Neighborhood Councils would do this through whichever method they decide upon to make such nominations. Names and contact information would be sent to

our department. The candidates will be required to take a training class that is being designed.

As each election nears, our department will randomly select at least three people from the pool, and ask each one if they are able to serve. A person with an interest in that election cannot serve.

Although the details of the nomination, training, and decision-making process are being developed, we wanted to provide each Neighborhood Council and stakeholders with as much advanced notice as possible.

Questions can be directed to the new e-mail address for those in the department who are the election specialists. That is done.election@lacity.org

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