

Date: February 21, 2006

To: Neighborhood Council Leaders
From: Greg Nelson, General Manager
Subject: COMPLAINT PROCESS

COMPLAINT PROCESS

On December 14, 2005, we sent a newsletter that asked for input on the process that the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment will use to handle formal complaints against Neighborhood Councils. We have received one response from one individual, and none from any Neighborhood Council. Last chance!

The process through which formal complaints against a Neighborhood Council are handled is spelled out a bit in the Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils. The Plan says that if our department makes "exhaustive efforts" to get the Neighborhood Council to resolve the complaint, and those efforts fail, and the complaint involves a violation of the Plan, we must ask the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners to decertify the Neighborhood Council.

The middle ground, the exhaustive efforts, are not defined. Therefore, I am again presenting to you for your comments a process through which formal complaints will be handled. Its goal is to describe a system through which frivolous complaints can be dealt with quickly by a Neighborhood Council, and one through which stakeholders can be assured that their Neighborhood Council is following city rules and its own bylaws.

The Plan states that the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the rules are followed is with our department.

Part of this grand Neighborhood Council experiment is to see if it is possible for people with the broadest range of diversity to work together in a productive way to increase public participation in government and in their neighborhood. The goal is not to see if government can do all of this for them and increase its size to be able to handle the workload. That's the old way.

Therefore, the proposed written process remains the same as the process that we have been using in that all complaints will first be sent to the Neighborhood Council so that it can have a first attempt at dealing with its own problems, and that we have an exhaustive supply of exhaustive efforts that we can use.

The draft process can be found on our home page, or by clicking [here](#). Beneath it is list of community and City resources that are available to assist Neighborhood Councils in resolving disputes, complaints, and grievances, or you can click [here](#).

At the risk of confusing the whole issue, there is a difference between grievances and complaints. Grievances are submitted by a stakeholder to the Neighborhood Council.

Complaints are filed with the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, and in accordance with the Plan, are sent to the Neighborhood Council. Unresolved violations could lead to a decertification hearing at the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners.

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