



# Approved General Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 13, 2009, 7:00pm

Hamilton Senior High School Cafeteria

2955 S. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90034

**Doug Fitzsimmons**  
President

**Jon Liberman**  
Vice-President

**Ann Hammond**  
Secretary

**Terrence Gomes**  
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## I. Call to Order & Roll Call

SORO NC President Doug Fitzsimmons called the meeting to order at 7:12 p.m.

**Board Members Present:** Christine Aghassi, Brian Bergman, Harold Bock, Robyn Braun, Bette Billet, Susan Burden, Daniel Fink, Doug Fitzsimmons, Gary Garcia, Terrence Gomes, Anne Gross, Nahed Guirguis, Ann Hammond, Barry Levine, Jon Liberman, Roy Nwaiser, Marj Safinia, Paula Waxman, Sanda Willard

**Board Members Absent:** Paul Del Piero, Jake Hakimi, Gina LeBeaud, Adam Wheeler

**Guests Present:** Jennifer Badger, Elizabeth Carlin, Mark Davis, Rose Ibanez, Stephanie Marquez, Brooke Powers, Kelly Reynolds, Kenneth Siers, Christel Wilson, Raymond Yu, Elise (illegible)

## II. General Public Comment

Raymond Yu announced several upcoming events, including the Los Angeles Neighborhood Housing Foreclosure Prevention Fairs (see [www.lanhs.org](http://www.lanhs.org)) and the Los Angeles Marathon (May 29<sup>th</sup>). Elise announced the Reynier Village Association is updating its mailing list and has started a blog for water conservation. Ken Siers, County of Los Angeles, Department of Mental Health, announced services are available and brought brochures.

Christel Wilson, Chair of the SoRo Festival Planning Committee, announced the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual SoRo Festival is being held on June 7<sup>th</sup>; the purpose is to have members of the community come together and have a good time, build unity and spirit, talk about things, and show support for the whole area together. She said the Festival is a great tool for NC outreach and provides many avenues for communication. She showed teeshirts from past Festivals. She said that any money raised by the Festival, which is operated on a non-profit basis, goes back into the community. The Festival has a Fun Zone for children, and features the LA Police Department and Fire Department. Christel invited all SORO NC members to wear a teeshirt; it shows pride in the community and participation in Festival. Christine asked the SoRo Festival Committee to send a message to elected representatives about the NC budget situation. Harold said the Festival is the most important community event for the NC, adding it is critical to sign up as a volunteer for the day of the Festival, and he passed out the sign-up sheet. Harold also asked each Board member to start putting up signs for the Festival: five signs each. Doug said that SoRo, Inc. has taken on the burden of organizing



the Festival; however, it is not something that some other organization does, but something that SORO NC does, and it gets a lot of attention for SORO NC. Stephanie said she needs enthusiastic adult volunteers; it is a great time and a great way of giving. There are lots of games. Volunteer help is needed for food booths, taking tickets. And if you are walking the Festival, please make sure nothing bad is going on; security. Jon said Christel and Stephanie are very giving of their time; everyone present applauded.

**Robertson Public Library.** Carol Duan, Library Branch Manager, gave her quarterly update. She said she participated in the SoRo Festival last year and had the opportunity to meet many people and hold a book sale; it was important. As for the current situation with the library, Carol reported the branch is fully staffed except for one position, and they hope they won't lose that position. With the budget crisis, library hours will continue, but the book budget and staff salaries are reduced. Thus they cannot provide everything they want to the community, including fiction; Carol passed out a list of books they could not afford to buy. They offer a job hunting guide on the library website; it lists more than 200 employment-related websites and resources and is designed for first-time job seekers and the unemployed. Databases include a health and wellness resource center. Carol has a handout about all of this. She emphasized that the Library has excellent staff to serve all members of the community. She added that the Friends of the Library hold a book sale about every two months that helps raise money.

Terrence said Gina was accepted to MIT with full scholarship. All present applauded.

Paula reported on the Green Team. She said they had their first meeting, and they will have a booth at the SoRo festival. Vons has contributed tote bags, Million Trees LA has committed to provide free trees, Helios House has contributed book totes, and Alcon Lighting will give coupons for compact fluorescent light bulbs. The next Green Team meeting is next Thursday in Hamilton Cafeteria (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of month). Objectives include planting a garden at Robertson Recreation Center, a vegetable garden for children. The Green Team has also agreed to partner with the Mayor's Day of Service on June 27<sup>th</sup>; the SORO area will host a job fair. Carol added that Robertson Branch Library is a battery-recycling site.

Gary said the Hamilton High parking lot is being redone with bond money approved some time ago. Gary added that many things need to be repaired at the school, including bleachers. He reported that recent Friday-afternoon police activity at the school was due to a threat written on a bathroom wall; while the threat turned out not to be credible, Gary said he very much appreciated that Jon called to find out if he needed anything. Gary passed out to everyone a copy of the letter he wrote after this incident, and he said he posts everything on [www.hamiltonhighschool.net](http://www.hamiltonhighschool.net), including that letter.



Christine talked about the budget meeting. Jon, Terry and Christine attended. She said the turnout of NC representatives was impressive; some 120 NC Board members in the middle of a workday. All NCs spoke very positively. It was noted that NC budgets have not increased since the NC system started, although the city budget has grown by 30% during the same period. NCs are first responders for many community issues. She said it is important to remember the outcome of this showing by NC representatives: it is proof that the NC system works, that NCs can vocalize, mobilize, and have impact. Christine said that, in her view, City Council members were taken aback by the strength of support.

### III. Old Business

**Draft General Board Meeting Minutes of April 15, 2008 (Hammond / GB051309-1)** Marj moved to approve the draft minutes; Jon seconded. **Vote: 10-Y, 0-N, 6-A. Minutes approved.**

### IV. Community Reports

a. **Office of Councilmember Wesson.** The report was deferred, as a representative was not present.

b. **Office of Councilmember Weiss.** Mark Davis reported that fines for billboards will be increased from \$12,000 to \$28,000 daily. He said this is a lot stricter and has teeth behind it. Mark said funds for street resurfacing were cut last year, and they are now down to 120 miles, deciding what streets most need to be resurfaced. He said that, just to maintain streets, the city needs to resurface 300 miles per year. Therefore, it appears there is a need to fight harder for streets. Adding speed humps is on hold for now; if a street already has humps and is resurfaced, it will get them again. Marj said PLUM (Planning and Land Use Management Committee) is sitting on hardship exemptions for medical marijuana dispensaries; she suggested respectfully that, as Councilmember Weiss is on PLUM, Mark could ask him to do something about it. Mark said 40 new medical marijuana dispensaries are now in Fairfax. Doug said the issue is that hardships are not being dealt with, and the City has absolute authority to do so. Mark also reported LAPD vice busted the massage parlor on Robertson.

c. **Office of the Mayor.** Jennifer Badger reported on the Mayor's Day of Service. She has been working with the California Employment Development Department; maybe there will be a youth job training program, perhaps including a certification process, taking young people interested in getting a city job for the summer and helping them with their resumes, the interview process, etc. To do this, they would need community members to help. Paula said there is a sign-up sheet. Jennifer said the Mayor declared a budget emergency, and that opens the door for staff furloughs. Jon asked what if the budget is not approved on May 19<sup>th</sup>; Jennifer said she does not think it would be a problem. Terry said Karen Bass is having an event on Saturday.

d. **LAPD Report.** No report was made, as no representative was present.



e. **Robertson Recreation Center.** Brooke Powers reported the Child Care Center will be open this summer, and the summer RAL program will operate three days a week. She said there is a new component to the RAL summer program this year, i.e. participants will have to earn community service points to go on a field trip. Brooke will work with the Green Team to develop the garden and other things. There will be a piano recital in June. Carol asked if Brooke could arrange field trips to the library.

f. **DONE Report.** Rose said the Council needs eight members to support the budget proposal. She also reported the Council will consider a proposal to postpone the NC election to July 2010; the city clerk may oppose this. Meetings are being held to try to cut the cost of elections. Rose needs an updated SORO NC roster; Ann will send it to her. Rose also reminded the NC that the bylaws amendment is due. June 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for the NC to submit its choice among election options. Dates for NC elections will be by lottery. Marj asked if the DONE website can be updated.

## V. Committee Reports

### a. Executive (Fitzsimmons).

i. **NC funding.** Doug said it is very important for our voices to be heard by Council people, so we can continue to do the work we do. The money the City gives to NCs is relatively small, given the size of the city budget, but the payoff is big because it is all volunteer work. The next budget meeting is May 15<sup>th</sup>; the decision will be made on May 18<sup>th</sup>. Doug asked NC Board members to attend one or both meetings. He said there will be a 9:00am press conference on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

ii. **Volunteers:** Doug said volunteers are needed for both the SORO Festival and the Mayor's Job Fair. He said there are so many young people within SORO, and we need to help find jobs for them.

iii. **Pico/Olympic representative.** Doug reported that Jon has volunteered to be the SORO NC representative on the Pico/Olympic discussions. Doug invited anyone else who is interested to get involved. Jennifer said the next meeting has not yet been scheduled; discussions are ongoing.

### b. Budget Committee & Treasurer Report (Gomes / GB051309-2).

Terry reported the Budget Committee met, and he referred everyone to the Treasurer's Report. The total available for FY08-09 was \$113,272.75. Year-to-date disbursements total \$47,510.03, and \$24,335.88 more has been allocated.

c. **Bylaws (Nwaiser).** Doug reported that the proposal regarding the election is included in tonight's motions. He said the NC is also in the final stages of getting the recent rounds of bylaws changes done so they are official.

### d. Land Use & Economic Development (Bergman & Swanson)

Brian said there are two motions for tonight's meeting. He also said there will be a public hearing on June 4<sup>th</sup> regarding proposals for structures on Venice. One is for a 7-foot wall; the other is for a cell



tower on Venice. Questions or concerns about either may be referred to Brian. Marj said discussions are underway for a great business revitalization effort on South Robertson from Cattaraugus to Cadillac. The Mayor's office and other community luminaries are involved.

e. **Education (Levine & Braun).** Barry said it is fine if LA Best is moved to a line item on the budget. Rose said that the SORO NC needs to submit the audit report before DONE can do anything; Terry said he would ensure that was done. Barry said he is still waiting for word from LAUSD on food for the SCATCH program.

f. **Public Safety (Bock).** Harold said the issues covered at this month's meeting are contained in the three motions this evening.

g. **Outreach (Safinia & Aghassi).** Marj reported there was no meeting this month, but there will be another meeting before the Festival. Jon asked about the possibility of a survey. Marj said the lease for banners has been renewed, so they will continue to be posted for free through June 2010. Marj asked again that all committee chairs send a brief paragraph saying what their committees do. SORO Walks at 7 is ongoing.

## VI. New Business

a. **Motion to approve 2009-2010 budget (Gomes/GB051309-3).** Terry invited public comment; there was none. Roy asked about the allocation for the website and progress on it. Christine moved to approve the budget as proposed; Jon seconded. **Vote: 18-Y, 0-N, 1-A. Motion approved.**

b. **Motion to oppose the proposed radical reduction of NC funding (Fitzsimmons/GB051309-4).** Doug said that he would write the proposed letter to the Mayor, City Attorney and all 15 Councilmembers. Ann moved to approve the motion; Bette seconded. Christine proposed amending the motion to "...support the mayor's budget proposal cutting NC budgets by no more than 10% , for an annual allocation of \$45,000 per NC for the coming fiscal year and to allow NCs to retain all rollover funds. " Terry seconded the proposed amendment. **Amendment approved unanimously.** Terry moved to approve the amended motion; Jon seconded. **Amended motion approved unanimously.**

c. **Motion to approve Paula Waxman as official DWP delegate (Fitzsimmons/ GB051309-5).** Doug introduced the motion. Terry moved to approve it; Ann seconded. Paula recused herself. **Vote: 18-Y, 0-N, 0-A, 1-R. Motion approved.**

d. **Motion to approve Ann Hammond as Public Safety co-chair (Public Safety/ GB051309-6).** Harold introduced the motion. Christine moved to approve it; Jon seconded. Ann recused herself. **Vote: 18-Y, 0-N, 0-A, 1-R. Motion approved.**

e. **Motion to provide up to \$500 for the La Cienega Heights June 2009 public safety march (Bock/GB051309-7).** Harold introduced the motion. Christine asked for details about anticipated expenses; Harold





said flyers and related materials. Ann asked what was the impact of last year's event. Sandra said there was some backlash; Terry and Robyn said tagging. Sandra asked if LAPD is going to support the event. Terry said he was concerned about more demonstrations of rebellion. Robyn said she thinks the event is a very positive undertaking; things have gotten much better in the community during the past four years, but there are still some gang members and friction. Christine asked for the name of the umbrella sponsoring group and if Terry and Robyn planned to participate; Terry and Robyn noted one organizer is from CPAB and said they both planned to participate. They added that at least some of LAPD participation is in terms of traffic management. Terry said people in that community still thank the NC for everything it has done, as well as Councilmember Wesson's change of all the streetlights. Many city services have improved, and the City Attorney's Office has gone in to try to get rid of gangs. Bette said she understood CPAB had asked SORO NC to cosponsor the event. Jon moved to approve the motion; Terry seconded. **Motion approved unanimously.**

**f. Motion to oppose an ordinance change that would allow overnight parking for commercial vehicles on residential streets (Bock/GB051309-8).** Harold introduced the motion. Daniel said other NCs are concerned about allowing commercial vehicles to be parked on residential streets; it may start with taxicabs, but it could be extended to other types of commercial vehicles. Robyn said it was also a concern in her neighborhood. Mark said this proposed change has been postponed for a while so that details could be worked out; he said some construction workers only have one truck and, under the current ordinance, cannot park in front of their own houses. Sandra asked if the ordinance could not be based on residency rather than type of vehicle; Mark said parking enforcement could not tell if the owner of the vehicle lives there. Doug shared an email he had received with public comment on this issue; this resident on Roxbury is very opposed to any commercial vehicle, as she already has to deal with commercial vehicles related to the Museum of Tolerance and the fitness center. Roy said we should also take into account people who have only one vehicle; there should be some solution to have permits for those who live there. Roy moved to table the motion; Susan seconded. **Vote: 6-Y, 13-N, 0-A. Motion to table not approved.** Marj moved to amend the motion to say "We support a provision permitting sole proprietors a means for parking one commercial vehicle near their residence." Gary seconded. **Vote: 3-Y, 16-N, 0-A. Proposed amended not approved.** Harold moved to approve the motion; Jon seconded. **Vote: 14-Y, 4-N, 1-A. Motion approved.**

**g. Motion to support the Weiss billboard ordinance (Bergman/GB051309-9).** Brian introduced the motion, and Daniel elaborated on various points of views. Brian asked Mark how the SORO NC could be helpful to Councilmember Weiss in his efforts to deal with billboards. Mark said a letter of support would be helpful. Sandra asked if Dennis Hathaway agrees with the thrust of the proposal; Brian said yes. Terry asked what "express support" means. Brian said he would write a letter. Brian asked Liz Carlin the view of Councilmember Wesson on the proposal; Liz said that, in general, the Councilmember supports stricter



billboard regulation. “write a letter and prepare a community impact statement to the City Council stating that SORO NC supports the Weiss sign ordinance amendment.” Anne said she likes billboards. Gary said that he does, too; the real problem is blank sides of building. Rose suggested that, in future, SORO NC could do Community Impact Statements. Christine moved to approve the motion; Nahed seconded. **Vote: 16-Y, 1-N, 2-A. Motion approved.**

(Daniel left.)

Doug invited Liz Carlin to report on Councilmember Wesson’s office. She said: (a) she brought applications for Mayor’s Day; (b) there will be a meeting next Thursday at Culver City about Expo; (c) there will be Movies in the Park again this summer and the plan is to include Reynier Park as one venue, but dates are not set. Liz added that the Councilmember would not be coming to the NC to ask for money to support the Movies program, but will be asking for volunteers.

**h. Motion to support the enforcement of the marijuana dispensary interim ordinance and immediate processing of hardship applications (Public Safety & Land Use / GB051309-10)** Brian introduced the motion. He said that there are more than 300 hardship applications pending. While the ordinance says you are not allowed to operate while the hardship application is pending, the facilities are operating. Roy asked what is a hardship application; Brian said he was not sure. Ann moved to amend Part I of the motion, to read: “That a letter be written...while applications for hardship are pending.” and to delete the penultimate paragraph on the draft letter to reflect that change. Jon seconded the proposed amendment. **Amendment approved unanimously.** Ann moved to approve the motion, as amended; Bette seconded. **Amended motion approved unanimously.**

**i. Motion to purchase 30 tee-shirts bearing the new SORO NC logo at a cost not exceeding \$420.00 (Waxman/GB051309-11)** Paula asked that the motion be tabled because tee shirts are not needed for the Festival and because of the unknown budget situation. Terry asked that, when re-introduced, the motion include specifics about the proposed design. **Motion tabled.**

**j. Motion to allocate \$540 for snacks for the SCATCH program (Levine/ GB051309-12).** Barry asked that the motion be tabled as there is not yet clarity from LAUSD about handling the food. **Motion tabled.**

**k. Motion to grant \$3500 for the Castle Heights Elementary School Computer Training Program (Gomes/GB051309-13).** Terry introduced the motion and a guest from Castle Heights. The guest explained that Castle Heights has received some Title II stimulus money that can only be spent on teachers. The request before the SORO NC would be for technology. This year, Castle Heights was able to buy a computer for every classroom. LAUSD has implemented a new math program, but it requires laptop computers and projectors. The instructional carts proposed for purchase under this motion include laptops and projectors; Terry said \$3500 will pay for about five carts.



Jon said he would like to see this motion go to the Education Committee so they can review it and advise. Christine said she has a friend who has paid for technology to teach this type of math – it cannot be done without the technology. Sandra said we have funded many things for Shenandoah but never asked about how we can support Castle Heights; Marj agreed. Barry asked which budget the proposed funds would come from; Terry said from unallocated funds. Barry said many schools have unused technology and there has been push to upgrade technology. Brian asked the guest if this is the number one priority for Castle Heights; he said yes. Robyn asked if this is pilot program; he said computer resources have been in the school for some time; they already have some carts. The proposed carts are for 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades: one for every two classrooms. Ann asked for clarification on the expenditure category. It was explained that each cart costs \$2,000, so the total expense is \$10,000 for the five carts; the proposed SORO NC funding of \$3,500 would cover the shortfall of funding from other sources so that all five carts needed could be purchased. Doug moved the motion be amended to stipulate funds would come from unallocated funds for the 2008-09 fiscal year; Ann seconded. **Proposed amendment approved unanimously.** Christine moved to approve the motion, as amended; Terry seconded. **Vote: 17-Y, 1-N, 0-A. Amended motion approved.**

(Nahed, Gary and Anne left.)

**I. Motion to approve the proposed 2010 election procedures (Fitzsimmons/ GB051309-14).** Doug introduced the motion and walked through the stipulation worksheet. He noted that the proposed response would supersede voting provisions in SORO NC bylaws. Jon asked DONE if it was okay to have one NC member appointed; Rose said yes. Doug noted that current SORO NC bylaws say anyone age 15 or older is a stakeholder and can vote. Christine moved to approve the motion, Robyn seconded. **Vote: Unanimously approved.**

## **VII. Adjournment**

Ann moved the meeting be adjourned, Robyn seconded. **Agreed unanimously.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.