



Approved General Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, August 12, 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

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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: Robyn Braun, Bette Billet, Paul Del Piero, Paula Waxman, Brian Bergman, Christine Aghassi, Terrence Gomes, Anne Gross, Marj Safinia, Roy Nwaiser, Doug Fitzsimmons, Ann Hammond, Nahed Guirguis, Gary Garcia

Board Members Absent: Harold Bock, Jon Liberman, Sandra Willard, Barry Levine, Adam Wheeler, Susan Burden

Guests: Mark Davis, Liz Carlin, Brooke Powers, Mary Earl, Susan Strick, Gita O'Neill, Torri Hill, Oliver Summens, Yami Bolanos, Eddie Navarrette, Susan Gans, Herb Wesson, Paul Koretz, Susan Bursk, Joseph Gianloa

II. General Public Comment

Raymond Yu announced a Town Hall meeting on August 13th for the current City Attorney, 6pm-9pm, and a parade on Sunday August 16, 1-9pm, in Little Tokyo. Joseph Gianloa introduced himself, saying that he rents his home on Gibson and would like to be a candidate for a SORO NC Board at-large position; issues of particular concern to him are graffiti and the state of businesses in our area. Susan Strick announced that the new City Attorney will have a meet-and-greet function for Neighborhood Councils.

III. Recognition of 2009 Susan Bursk Award Nominees

Doug said this was a special evening for SORO as we would be honoring this year's nominees for and winner of the Susan Bursk award. He introduced the special guests: Councilmembers Herb Wesson and Paul Koretz, representatives of the City Attorney's office, and Mary Earl, President of SoRo, Inc.

Bette Billet introduced Susan Bursk explaining that, 12 years ago, Susan was key in helping to organize the neighborhood and the first South Robertson neighborhood Festival. At the 10th Annual SoRo Festival, two years ago, the Susan Bursk award was initiated. Susan said the neighborhood was initially divided into two Council Districts. Community members initiated the Festival to celebrate the "Sense of SoRo." Now the SoRo neighborhood no longer sees itself as divided by, but rather as including, two districts. The Susan Bursk award recognizes those with a passion and commitment to serve this community. She thanked all in



attendance and all those nominated because of they demonstrate that passion and commitment. She said there were so many extraordinary honorees this year that everyone wanted to honor all of them.

Councilmember Herb Wesson said how much he enjoyed working with SORO NC, and praised the NC for being so supportive of the community with both financial and hands-on help. He thanked the NC particularly for its collaboration with his office on Movies in the Park and the medical marijuana dispensary situation. He said the community is very lucky to have the leadership of this year's Susan Bursk award winner, Susan Strick, at the City Attorney's office. Councilmember Paul Koretz thanked everyone for all they do and said he looked forward to working together in future. He said he had worked with many on the Gentleman's Club issue and is working now on medical marijuana facilities; he invited people to contact him with any issues of interest or concern.

The Councilmembers then gave awards to the honorees present or represented: Penny Mehra, Executive Director of Alcott Center; Gary Garcia, Principal of Hamilton High School; Daniel Romm for Baila Room, Community Police Advisory Board; Marj Safinia, SORO NC Board member; Doug Fitzsimmons, SORO NC Board member; Susan Gans, Beverlywood neighborhood member. Other nominees not present, whose awards will be delivered to them, were: Carmen Dominguez, Yosef Kanofsky, Jane Rogers, and Daniel Rojo.

The recipient of the Susan Bursk award for 2009 was Susan Strick. Susan Bursk said she has gone above and beyond her job for the community. Susan Strick said she has her award at the office; it is a constant reminder of what the community brings to her, and she considers it is a partnership. She thanked the community for the acknowledgment. She stressed that many wonderful city employees work daily with community members; sometimes they get tired, but there is always another day.

Councilmember Wesson then awarded two additional certificates. The first was to Christine Aghassi, on this occasion of her last meeting as a SORONC Board member, as she has resigned. He said that she has done so much for the community and takes so little credit; he said she just does things because they need to be done. The second was to Terrence Gomes, for volunteering with at-risk kids for their camping trip and for attending and helping with all Movies in the Park events.

There was a short break in the meeting for refreshments.

The meeting resumed at 8:05 p.m. and moved directly to the motions to accommodate schedules of community members present.

VII. New Business

a. Motion to recommend that SORO, Inc. contribute \$1000 for Hamilton High Jazz Choir travel (Garcia/GB081209-3), Gary introduced the motion and three representatives of the Hamilton Jazz Choir. The representatives explained that the Choir had just won the Reno Jazz Festival, and students had worked hard to make this happen, both in terms of performance and raising money to help pay travel costs.



The representatives emphasized that the Jazz Choir is excellent and represents the community; as one of only three high schools to appear in Oklahoma, they were the only urban group and the only one with mixed ethnicity. Parents pay \$1000 per year for their children to be in these ensembles. Additional funds are needed for travel and hotel to enable the Jazz Choir to accept the invitation to perform at the Monterey Jazz Festival on September 20th. Travel would be September 19th - 21st. The total budget is \$6,000 for 16 vocalists, 3 instrumentalists, and 13 others who are new this year and will be able to apply what they learn in this year's Choir. Those 13 have been selected on the basis of their musical ability, ear, quality of voice, attitude, and teamwork; all students have to be academically qualified. No funds are coming from the Hamilton High as there are no funds available for student trips. The representatives described the many year-round fundraising activities for the Choir, including auctions, private dinner parties, and a table at SORO Festival. This Choir is one of the top three in the country. The Choir sings jazz, swing, and other types of music. Christina said trips like this used to be paid for out of property taxes; we should fund it, it is purposeful, and it is a good use of SORONC money. Marj added that a stamp of self-confidence that can be gained from an experience such as this can shape a life; it is similar to the approval SORONC has given to the art program and the Recreation Center. Paul congratulated the Choir; he said he grew up in Monterey and this Festival is extremely prestigious. It was clarified that the funds would specifically support five children whose parents cannot pay. Robyn added that Choir members are chosen, not just from the Music Academy, but from the student body as a whole. Roy moved to approve the motion and Paul seconded. Gary recused himself. **Vote: 13-Y, 0-N, 0-A. Motion approved.**

b. Motion to support requested zoning variances for Eilat Bakery (Bergman /GB081209-4). Brian introduced the motion and Eddie Namaretz, who spoke to the details. The first request is that the site be allowed to open at 6:00 a.m. Susan Strick asked if the property backed up to residences, noting that the concern about opening time is generally based on added noise and traffic. The owner said the 6:00 a.m. opening time is requested for cooking, not deliveries; baking is done at Fairfax, then deliveries are between 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Most customers need to buy baked goods before they go to Temple, so need to arrive early. The door in front of the business will be open; not the door in back. Christine asked if they have talked to neighbors, both residents and businesses. Regarding parking, the owner explained that they have a business at 9233 Pico; they have three onsite parking places and three offsite. Roy asked if employees can be required to park offsite, not to use any of the onsite places. Christine said she objected to telling employees where they can park. Terry asked how long is the bakery's lease; they said three years, and Terry asked what happens if it stops after three years. Community member Larry DeMers spoke; he said that, as a manager of commercial property, it is his perspective that the question is: what would the change in property use bring to the community? He said parking is a city-wide problem; there would be no change in the parking situation. He said there would be no undue burden on the community by this usage; it is better than having the property sit empty. A Rabbi in attendance said this bakery would be an asset to the community. A proposal that the letter should stipulate the two parking



spaces farthest away from the business be used for employee parking was defeated by a vote of 8 to 5. Brian moved to approve the motion, Robyn seconded. **Vote: 11-Y, 0-N, 2-A. Motion approved.** (Roy was absent during the votes.)

c. Election of two Board representatives to the Community Budget Day. Terry said that the City wants two budget representatives from each NC to the October 10th Community Budget Day, which is also Congress Day. He added that, this year, the Mayor wants people to have more input than just the “survey monkey” on the internet. Christine said she participated in Community Budget Day two years ago; she said it is a long morning, but you learn a lot and meet a lot of people. Terry volunteered to attend again this year; Marj said Jon would probably also like to do it. Christine volunteered to be alternate. Bette moved to elect Terrence Gomes and Jon Liberman as the two SORONC representatives to Community Budget Day, with Christine Aghassi as alternate; Ann seconded. **Motion approved unanimously.** Jon, contacted by phone during the meeting, subsequently agreed to be the second representative.

IV. Old Business

a. Draft General Board Meeting Minutes of July 8, 2008 (Hammond/GB081209-1). Marj moved to approve the draft minutes and Bette seconded. **Vote: 11-Y, 0-N, 3-A. Minutes approved.**

V. Community Reports

a. Office of Councilmember Wesson (Carlin). No report was made as no representative was still present.

b. Office of Councilmember Koretz. No report was made as no representative was still present.

c. Office of the Mayor (Badger). No report was made as no representative was present.

d. Office of Senator Price (Bernal). No report was made as no representative was present.

e. LAPD Report (Gray & Gonzalez). No report was made as no representative was present.

f. Robertson Recreation Center Report (Powers). Brooke said the Recreation Center is awesome. The Robertson Activities League (RAL) is in week 8; students go back to school in three weeks. The garden is going extremely well, with humongous zucchinis. RAL participants picked up trash at Reynier and volunteered at Movies in the Park; she added they would volunteer with Heal the Bay the next day.

g. DONE Report (Ibanez). No report was made as no representative was present.



VI. Committee Reports

a. Executive (Fitzsimmons). Doug reported that the Executive Committee met on August 4th. There have been a number of changes to the website, and he referred everyone to his email for details. Changes include the addition of the newly-approved bylaws and standing rules, as well as a financial section so reports can be archived. Doug said that the NC has heard back from Congressman Waxman and the US Postmaster General saying they are sorry, but there is nothing they can do about the mailboxes that have been removed from street corners. He said he has not had a chance to duplicate the sexual harassment training video; Ann offered to view it and let everybody know if it is short enough to view in the context of a Board meeting. Doug said NC elections are coming up and it is important we prepare for them. He said it is critical that we reactivate the Board Development Committee: we need to go out and recruit new people, get people to fill current vacancies and be candidates for the future. He said he sent an email reminding election centers about the upcoming election: Robertson Rec Center, Museum of Tolerance, and Bet Shiva Community Center. He noted that schools are not available on Sunday. He said Gina has resigned from the Board and has left for university. Robyn and Paula have identified potential candidates. Ann will re-send the Board application, and Doug will send a letter to the Community. Ann volunteered to revive the Board Development Committee; no other Board members volunteered. Bette asked Nahed if SORO NC can have a table at the Peace Picnic to talk about Board openings; Marj said they will. Marj also said Doug's letter should specify the term would be for 10 months.

b. Treasurer Report (Gomes/GB081209-2). Terry reported that the City Controller has not yet released money for the NCs. He added that he is still missing back-ups for some items. He said he has turned in the audit report with the inventory. He said \$91,000 is available in budget; funds have been budgeted to committees but not allocated. Nahed will follow up on the Peace Picnic. The grant for artists at Shenandoah has been approved but he does not know where it stands. Bette asked how much money is available to allocate; Terry said "like \$15,000" which is reserve and does not fall under any categories. Doug asked if anything can be done to expedite the process because our funds will be cut off if not.

c. Bylaws (Nwaiser). Roy said the Committee did not meet this month.

d. Land Use & Economic Development (Bergman). Brian reported the Committee had discussed the requested zoning variances for Eilat Bakery and the EXPO line. Paul asked the EXPO representative present, Torri Hill, if construction is on track. She said yes, according to the Recovery schedule: the official opening date was supposed to be summer 2010, but that has not been extended by about 18 months.

e. Education (Levine & Braun). Robyn said there was nothing to report.

f. Green Team (Waxman & Hess). Paula said the Green Team has been very busy. There is an active group of leaders; each has taken his or her area of interest and run with it. A Castle Heights teacher is very interested in "greening" the next SORO Festival. Phyllis Rothman is very interested in Zero Waste. Another is interested in Watershed issues and



has gone to meetings about it. Brooke has taken over Park issues and has had her RAL students clean up trash in Reynier Park. CALTRANS will clean up the overpass area. The Green Team at Hamilton has planned how to involve students in cleaning up Reynier Park when school starts. Hamilton High is on the road to a recycling system, which should work where others in the past have failed; students are designing posters, etc. Paula added that Hamilton's Principal (and SORONC Board member) Gary Garcia has been wonderful in supporting these steps. Later this month, it is planned to plant succulents along Pico, and a project dealing with compost is planned for September. **(Anne left.)** A World Climate Change Day project is planned for October 24th. In November, an "adopt a parkway" project is planned, involving planting trees with Councilmember Wesson's office. Paula reported that Motor Avenue looks great; the bottle brush trees never took off. Mark Davis and Paul Koretz are now working with Larry Hess. And, another project is planned for December. Doug added that a World Climate Change conference will be held in Copenhagen in December.

g. Public Safety (Bock & Hammond). Ann reported the Public Safety Committee met on August 3rd. Discussion included Harold's planned meeting with the Fire Department to discuss their funding priorities for the year, medical marijuana dispensaries, trailer and RV parking on residential streets, and the Crimestoppers program. Marj added that she, Christine and Jon had attended the PLUM hearing on dispensaries; Rubin's hardship application was denied and the other received a continuance. Marj said it is a good idea to go to PLUM meetings and to be more proactive on this issue. Susan Strick said it is a very good idea to log information about the dispensaries; one issue is medicating in the dispensary parking lot. Bette asked what would happen, now that Rubin's application has been denied. Susan said he will receive a cease-and-desist order; if he does not cease operations, the City will take action. Christine added that the City is still drafting regulations; we need to get in touch with Councilmembers' offices. Susan added there are problems with jurisdiction, including multiple layers. It was noted that Oakland has a good ordinance that might serve as a model. The City's raids earlier in the day on two dispensaries – one in Culver City and one at Overland and Pico – were discussed briefly.

h. Outreach (Safinia & Aghassi). Marj reported that an Outreach Committee meeting was held, but only Harold came. She said that, with loss of Christine as Co-Chair, this Committee may meet every other month in future.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 p.m.