

South Robertson (SORO) Neighborhoods Council

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A Certified City of Los Angeles Neighborhood Council

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General Meeting Minutes April 9, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. Hamilton Senior High School – Cafeteria 2955 S. Robertson Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90034

I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:05p.m. by Victoria Karan.

Board members present: Christine Aghassi, Brian Bergman, Harold Boch, Robyn Braun, Daniel Fink, Doug Fitzsimmons, Gary Garcia, Anne Gross, Nahed Guirguis, Ann Hammond, Victoria Karan, Jon Liberman, Linda Rosen, Marjan Safinia, Sandra Willard

Board members absent: Bette Billet, Susan Burden, Terrence Gomes, Nahed Guirguis, Diane Hirsch-Garcia, Gina LaBeaud, Barry Levine, Roy Nwaiser

Guests present: Jennifer Badger, Liz Carlin, Rashad Sharif, Mario Gonzalez, Barry Stone, Mara Nelson, Kathy Lewis, Paul Radnia, Mitch Menzer

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Victoria suggested that, if members of the public were attending to comment on a specific motion before the Board, there would be an opportunity for them to speak before the Board considered the motion. She then invited public comment on any matter other than a specific motion, and there was none.

III. READING OF THE MINUTES AND APPROVAL

- a. A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft minutes of the General Meeting of March 12, 2008, and the draft minutes were approved unanimously. A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft minutes of the General Meeting of March 16, 2008, and the draft minutes were approved unanimously.
- b. A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft minutes of the General Meeting of February 13, 2008, and the draft minutes were approved unanimously.

- c. A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft minutes of the Goals Meeting of January 31, 2008, and the draft minutes were approved unanimously.

IV. ADVISORY REPORTS

- a. **Office of Assemblymember Karen Bass:** No report was made as no representative was present.
- b. **Office of Councilmember Jack Weiss (CD5):** Councilman Jack Weiss' Aide Jennifer Badger reported: (i) action will be taken to address concerns about over-sized trailers parked on South Robertson; (ii) the super rapid sign issue has gone to the office of the City Attorney and there will be no appeal; (iii) workshops on housing needs are being held throughout the city, and one will be held for the west LA area on April 24th; and (iv) a new recycling program is going into effect. She emphasized that, in light of today's accident at Whitworth and Wooster, the Councilmember's office is trying to push the City Department of Transportation (DOT) to take action to address safety at that corner. Victoria explained that the corner does not have a 4-way stop and it is a busy intersection with a lot of cut-through traffic; this afternoon, a car jumped the curb and crashed into the Kaballah Day Care center, destroying playground equipment and damaging the building. Victoria said that no children were injured but the occupants of another car involved were hospitalized. Victoria thanked the Councilmembers' offices for being so responsive.
- c. **Office of Councilmember Herb Wesson (CD10):** Elizabeth Carlin reported: (i) Councilman Wesson is a co-sponsor of the meeting on April 10th at Hamilton High School to address public safety in light of recent shootings in the SoRo neighborhood; and (ii) she is working on the list of tasks related to the June 1st SoRo Festival including a traffic control meeting with DOT and preparing a motion for Council consideration. All present congratulated her on her recent marriage.
- d. **LAPD:** Senior Lead Officers Gonzalez and Sharif explained that SoRo falls within the boundaries of their respective areas of responsibility. They reported that, during the past few weeks, there have been three shootings: on Sherbourne (1700 block), on Garth (2600 block) and, resulting in a death, on Garth (1900 block). There are no suspects but there are persons of interest, and LAPD is searching for witnesses. All shootings appear to be gang-related. Captain Easton will give an update at the meeting on public safety on April 10th. As a result of these shootings, residents will see an increased police presence in the SoRo neighborhoods.

Officer Sharif noted that, despite these recent shootings, there is a 15 percent decline overall in crime in west Los Angeles. Property crime is most prevalent. He added that, north of Whitworth, there has been an increase in robberies between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.; whereas normally there is about one robbery every three months, there have been three incidents in the past six weeks. There have also been two recent break-ins in the women's locker room at LA Fitness on 18th and La Cienega, as well as four car break-ins in the LA Fitness parking lot, where items were left in full or partial view. He encouraged people to leave their cars empty or totally junky to deter theft.

Officer Sharif also explained that traffic is the number one complaint in the city of Los Angeles. If there are no injuries in an accident, no police report is filed. If there is an injury, it falls within the purview of the west LAPD traffic division. The corner at Whitworth and Wooster is the only corner without a 4-way stop in that area, and LAPD

normally prefers a stop sign at every other corner. Therefore, he will see with LAPD can do about making that corner a 4-way stop.

Officer Gonzalez explained that there have recently been a number of street robberies in the area, most of them related to students and cell phones. He is collaborating with Hamilton High School Principal Gary Garcia to establish safe passage areas, especially focusing on Robertson, Cattaraugus and National where children catch busses. He invited all who would like more information about this to contact him.

Officer Sharif reported that Nicole Griffin has been transferred and Brooke Powers has assumed her responsibilities at the Robertson Recreation Center. He is hopeful that the kinds of programs developed over the past few years will continue. He noted that graffiti is essentially gone and that his division, Division 19, will continue to be the safest of all in the City.

Officer Gonzalez provided details of the recent Sushi Academy robbery. Two suspects entered the building after 5:00 p.m. It is believed that the suspects had driven by, seen an open door, and then made enquiries. One suspect was armed with a gun; he took personal property and petty cash. There was a car license number obtained, but the car turned out to have been stolen. Police have a good description of the suspects, and have put on extra patrols and added new lights to the area.

Anne Gross suggested that lines be painted down the middle of narrow streets to help alleviate traffic problems. Jon Liberman commented that, in connection with his work on the Public Safety Committee, he has concluded that the SoRo community has two of the hardest working and most dedicated Senior Lead Officers in the City. Robyn Braun added her thanks for their work in the La Cienega Heights neighborhood where she lives.

- e. **DONE:** No report was made as no representative was present.

VI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

- a. **President's Report:** Victoria reported that she has not yet received indication of priority goals from all Board members and urged those who had not yet responded to do so. Results received will be tallied at the next Executive Committee meeting. She also emphasized the importance of communication amongst committees on issues that relate to more than one area of responsibility, for example, Public Safety sending announcements to Outreach and the Board, and if Land Use has an issue that needs publicity, informing Outreach. Victoria also urged Board members to use the process of making motions if there is something that they want accomplished; they should go to the appropriate monthly meeting of the relevant committee, have someone from the Committee prepare a motion, and ensure that it is emailed to the Board by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before the next SORO NC Board meeting.
- b. **Treasurer's Report:** Victoria reported that the Treasurer's Report was sent by email to the Board as Terrence could not attend this meeting.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Proposal to provide up to \$6,720 for the Fresh Fruit on Friday Program (Motion GB040908-4).** Harold Boch explained that the Education Committee had looked at this proposal in depth and talked with the schools, and all Committee members backed the proposal. He introduced Mara Nelson and Kathy Lewis of the Model Neighborhood Program and invited them to provide details. They explained that, under the program they now operate at several schools, every child receives a snack from a local Farmer's Market. When students see what their peers are eating, it helps educate and sensitize them to a healthy diet. This program also supports local farmers and provides fruits that are juicier than those they receive under the school lunch program. This proposal would expand the program to Shenandoah Elementary and possibly to Castle Heights. After a great deal of discussion indicating Board members needed more information to reach a decision, Victoria moved to table the motion to the next meeting; Robyn seconded. **Vote: 6-Y; 4-N; 1-A. Motion tabled.**
- b. **Proposal for Local School Councils Attendance at SORO NC Board meeting (Motion GB040908-5).** Harold introduced a motion to invite all local schools leadership councils to attend one or more SORO NC Board meetings. Brian moved to approve the motion; Victoria seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- c. **Proposal to approve Cashio Robertson Mixed Use Development (Motion GB040908-6).** Brian explained that Paul Radnia, owner of the gas station currently at 1502 South Robertson, had originally proposed a 6-story development for the property but, based on feedback that that would be too high, came back with a proposal for a 4-story development. He introduced Mr. Radnia, who explained that, in response to a concern expressed by a member of the community that more people living in the area as a result of this proposed development might lead to increased traffic and crime, he wants to improve the area and is prepared to invest a lot of money to do that. Mr. Wiselman then posed the question to the Board of how the Council considers relative community values of development vis a vis concerns about traffic and crime. Brian replied that it was a good question and sometimes hard to weigh the relative values; in this case, the Committee had asked the developer to scale back the proposal. He added that the existing gas station probably presents more traffic than the development would. Additional discussion clarified that the Board can only recommend, not approve, land use issues and that the NC is a collaborative effort that does not always result in a unified voice, but rather provides a forum so the community can develop a shared vision. With respect to environmental concerns, Harold said that a Hazmat team would test the area after groundbreaking. Brian suggested that wording of the proposal submitted should be changed to read "support applicant's plan for Cashio/Robertson Mixed Use Development" rather than "approve" the development. Marj moved to amend the wording of the proposal; Victoria seconded. **Motion to amend passed unanimously.** Brian moved to approve the amended proposal; Harold seconded. **Amended motion passed unanimously.**
- d. **Discussion and possible board action regarding the Museum of Tolerance proposed expansion Case No ENV-2007-2476-EIR (Motion GB040908-7).** Daniel Fink introduced a proposal regarding the Museum of Tolerance expansion, provided details on the history of the issue and summarized residents' concerns. Victoria explained that, as Board member Susan Burden was not able to attend this meeting due to work-related travel, Mitch Menzer, Counsel to the Museum of Tolerance, had been invited to attend to speak to the issues.

Mr. Menzer said that the Museum of Tolerance was not trying to stifle discussions about the Museum's proposed expansion but wanted to be able to present a proposal at an

appropriate time for there to be a dialogue about the issues. He expressed concern that the SORO NC Board was being asked to rush to judgment. He said the project is not yet finalized and studies related to various issues such as noise were not yet completed.

Victoria invited public comment and several spoke: Vicki Arenson, Sharron Lerman, Susan Gans, Sylvia Krasnick, Jean Colton, and Ed Wizelman. Concerns centered around several points: the proposed expansion represents a change from agreements originally reached with the community in 1986 when the Museum was established; the proposed changes were likely to have adverse impact on the neighborhood, especially with respect to noise and parking; and while the community can support the objectives of the Museum, the proposed changes make the Museum appear to be moving in the direction of a business rather than supporting its original mission.

Board discussion took into account the support of the community and of the Board for the overall cultural objectives of the Museum and its service to the broader community, information about the proposed expansion provided by the Museum's Counsel, issues of timing of various steps that had already been taken and those expected during the coming weeks, and the strong objections voiced by so many members of the community to the proposed Museum expansion. After extensive discussion, the motion was revised such that the wording "...requesting that the City reject the proposed project..." be modified to read "...requesting that the City reject the project as currently configured in the Notice of Preparation of March 20, 2008..." and agreed that a letter would be sent from SORO NC to the Department of City Planning voicing the community's concerns. **Motion to amend passed unanimously.** Victoria moved to approve the amended motion; Harold seconded. **Amended motion passed unanimously.**

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. **By-Laws:** Jon reported that there has been no meeting. Victoria asked that this Committee meet monthly in the future.
- b. **Education:** Robyn reported that the two action items on tonight's agenda reflect recent action by this Committee.
- c. **Green Team:** Victoria reported that there is a candidate for chairman of this Committee.
- d. **Land Use:** Brian reported that, at its next meeting, this Committee will consider the West LA Community Plan, oversized vehicle parking, and a proposal for collaboration with Chrysalis, a non-profit organization in Santa Monica.
- e. **Outreach:** Marjan and Christine reported that: the Committee is developing a program for discounts with neighborhood merchants, which will be launched at the SoRo Festival on June 1st; they are putting out flyers for the Festival; and they are developing content to post on the SORO NC website. This Committee will meet next on April 28th at a new location to be announced.
- f. **Public Safety:** Jon reported the Committee has been working closely with the Land Use Committee on issues of joint concern having to do with the Skin Gentleman's Club, and there would be a regular meeting on the first Monday in May. Jon also reported that Harold Boch would be brought before the Board at its next meeting as the proposed Co-Chair of Public Safety. It was also stressed that there was to be a large Public Safety meeting on Thursday, April 10th, and it was important for Board members to come.

- g. **Ad hoc Board Development:** The Committee has not yet met.
- h. **Ad hoc Inter-NC Committee:** The Committee has not yet met.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gary Garcia announced SORO NC will have a table at Back to School Night.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:18p.m.

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