



General Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 19, 2012, 7:00pm
Hamilton Senior High School Cafeteria
2955 S. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90034

I. Call to Order and Roll Call

SORO NC Board President Doug Fitzsimmons called the meeting to order at 7:04.

Board Members Present: Rachel Lester, Kimber Smith, Harold Bock, Robyn Braun, Bette Billet, Michael Lynn, Nick Burkhardt, Paula Waxman, Meredith Levine, Terrence Gomes, Barry Levine, Troy Richardson, Marjan Safinia, Sam Jagger, Martin Epstein, Victor Mitry, Doug Fitzsimmons

Board Members Absent: Armando Roman, Nahed Guirguis, Brian Kite, Susan Burden, Erick Morales

Guests: Larry Hess, Larry DeMers, HarSimran Khalsa, Holly Nuckols, Maritza Przekop, Elizabeth Carlin, Carol Duan, Kirk Anderson, Chelsea McFarland, Rob McFarland, Geebs Bailey, Yamileth Bolaños

II. General Public Comment

HarSimran Khalsa thanked the SORO NC board for its support of the 2011 Peace Picnic. Goals for next year include drawing more people, providing shade, and moving directly through the SORO NC Outreach Committee.

III. Applicant for open Board seat

Meredith Levine was considered by the Board for At-Large Seat 1.

Meredith stated that she has lived in this neighborhood all of her life, and that she is interested in the process of helping the community.

Marj asked Meredith why she is interested in joining now.

Meredith noted that she was involved with the Occupy movement over the summer, and that she believes that it is a good time to become involved with legislation and political institutions. She also stated that it is a good time to start making change from a local level.

Marj: Where do you see yourself being active with the board?

Meredith: I am interested in issues of education, and I am starting to get clued in on development and similar issues.

Bette: In many situations when relatives serve on boards, people are concerned about the independence of the other member.

Meredith: Those of you who know my father know that process isn't his greatest concern, but it is something that I am concerned with. I am very interested in bylaws and process.

Troy: What do you do?

Meredith: I have a Master's degree from UCLA, and I have just applied for a job to teach in the San Gabriel Valley.

Doug Fitzsimmons
President

Brian Kite
Vice-President

Terrence Gomes
Treasurer

Nick Burkhardt
Secretary

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Neighborhoods Council**

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Victor moved to accept the nomination, and **Bette** seconded.

- **Vote: 14-Y, 0-N, 1-A.**
- **Outcome: Meredith Levine now holds the Board's At Large Seat 1.**

Note: At this point, Meredith became eligible to vote on subsequent motions.

IV. Old Business

Confirmation of Board committee memberships and absence requests (GB011912-2)

- **Vote: No action taken.**

Draft Board Meeting Minutes of December 11, 2011 (Fitzsimmons / GB011912-3).

- **Vote: No action taken.**

Treasurer Report and vote to approve monthly expenses (Gomes / GB011912-4).

- **Vote: No action taken.**

V. Community Reports

LAPD Report. Mario Gonzalez: Miss Donuts was robbed on New Year's Eve, around 1:00pm. Two suspects accosted the owner, taking \$30 from the cash register. One suspect was arrested on Beverlywood Dr., but his accomplice is still outstanding. Another robbery took place on the 27th of December, with a perpetrator taking a Domino's Pizza delivery person's bag, taking pizzas and money. There was also a similar robbery on Olney, where a perpetrator used a simulated gun, taking a delivery person's money to a sum of \$55. Burglaries, particularly north of Cadillac have increased – about 4 or 5 to date. The area along National Blvd between Robertson and Castle Heights has been hit with car break-ins.

Doug inquired after updates on La Cienega and Horner shooting.

Mario Gonzalez: No news, but Hollywood detectives say that an arrest will probably be made.

Doug: Anecdotally, it seems that we've had an unusually high number of robberies and shootings in the area.

Kimber: Are you picking up a lot of people who have been released recently?

Mario: We check on parolees, and we monitor their actions and their movements. Anytime a robbery has been committed, we check on parolees.

Kimber: Zone 2 has recently seen a noticeable change in perception of public safety.

Office of Councilmember Wesson. Liz Carlin: Craig McCain of Reynier Park helped to catch a copper wire thief, so please congratulate him if you see him! The redistricting process is happening, and will be in progress over the next several months. They expect to publish preliminary maps at the end of this month. There is still time for public input, which can be provided either through their website, or through community meetings. The City of LA is placing bike corrals on sidewalks in front of businesses throughout the city, so please contact Liz with ideas for where bicycle racks might be placed.



Office of Councilmember Koretz. **David Giron:** Thanks to SORO NC and its Land Use Committee with the Temple Beth Am situation. Also, CD 5 will introduce a council motion to pay a SoRo Inc. demand warrant.

Doug: Will a Robertson Recreation Center meeting happen soon?

David: Yes – we will be putting this together by the end of the month.

Office of the Mayor. No report.

Office of Senator Price. No report.

Robertson Recreation Center. No report.

Robertson Library. **Carol Duan:** The Bark Book Club is a program in which children can read to trained therapy dogs. The West LA Children’s Choir will be performing at the library on Sunday, February 12 at 2pm. The Friends of Robertson Library group needs additional volunteers to help with the organization of book sales. There is also a Tuesday crocheting meeting, from 5:15pm to 6:30pm. Online homework help is also available from 3 to 10pm. E-reader clinics are held on the third Thursday of every month, from 5:30pm to 7pm. Free computer classes for the community on Mondays from 4 to 5pm, and on Tuesday from 3:30 to 4:30pm. The LA Public Library provides free adult literacy tutors, offering classes twice per week. Robertson Library is also the only branch open on Sundays.

NOTE: At this point, following public comment from Larry DeMers, Paula moved to consider motion GB011912-7 early. Kimber seconded.

- **Vote: Y-16, N-1, A-0. Motion GB011912-7 moved up on calendar.**

VI. Committee Reports

Executive. No report.

Land Use. No report.

Education. No report.

Green Team. No report.

Public Safety. No report.

Outreach. No report.

Bylaws. No report.

VII. New Business

Motion to file a community impact statement supporting a temporary ban on medical marijuana dispensaries. (Fitzsimmons / GB011912-7).

Doug: This is an item that we have tried to take on before but has failed because of timing in earlier months. There is a letter from CA Attorney General Kamala Harris, detailing her office’s difficulties in dealing with the poor wording of the current legislation. The letter generally highlights the problems that cities are facing. Councilmember Huizar introduced a motion before the council to implement a temporary ban on medical marijuana dispensaries. The issue for us is that in a world where the city is unable to regulate the operation or establishment of medical marijuana dispensaries, this opens up a land use nightmare. We have been working to bring back a positive business environment, but now, four dispensaries are opening within two blocks of one another. At least two of these are operating outside



the conception of what dispensaries should be – they are operating for profit, and they are not paying taxes. This is a problem for any city, and in the city of LA, this got out of hand really quickly. The motion before us tonight is to support this temporary ban, while also recognizing the importance of getting this right. I think it is a tragedy that we are in this situation – poorly crafted legislation has put us in an untenable situation.

Larry DeMers: I believe in our community and its people – I have never been in a dispensary, but medical marijuana helps my wife, and these dispensaries are truly a savior for our residents. These dispensaries are courteous tenants, and they are a reliable stream of income for struggling commercial property owners. Don't punish our people because of what downtown people can't do!

Yamileth Bolaños: I am here for the patients. Dispensary owners that are doing right are being audited frequently by the IRS and others, and our doors are open to those who want to see how we operate. We are a clinic, and we operate to distribute medicine and provide information. What will the patients do? It is very difficult to grow medical marijuana. The city is doing nothing for the patients of Los Angeles! There are ways to get rid of the bad players. I am asking you on behalf of my patients – the AIDS patients, and the cancer patients – to not recommend a ban.

David Giron: Councilmember Koretz is supportive of medical marijuana, and he wants a system that is fair to medical marijuana users and residents near dispensaries. Councilmember Koretz also is working on a resolution asking the federal government to move the drug from Schedule 1 to Schedule 2.

Liz Carlin: Councilmember Wesson sees the need for those who are legitimately ill to have access to marijuana. We expect Councilmember Huizar's motion to appear before the Planning and Land Use committee next Tuesday. At a recent meeting, the City Attorney asked that the council rescind the ordinance currently in force.

Paula: I have heard that crime is associated with medical marijuana dispensaries. Is this apocryphal, or is there data to support this? Is this a problem criminally in our neighborhood?

Doug: There is no study directly linking medical marijuana to crime in our neighborhood.

Bette: There was a lot of pushback from the City Attorney concerning a RAND Corporation study which claimed that there was no association linking crime and medical marijuana. The city persuaded RAND to remove the study from their website.

Doug: Attorney General Kamala Harris seems to believe that there is an issue here... I wouldn't make that link, but I do believe that this is a land use issue. We have twice as many medical marijuana dispensaries as we have traditional pharmacies in South Robertson. The system that we have in place is not working.

Meredith: This would be an indefinite ban upon medical marijuana, relying upon a court decision over which we have no control?

Doug: Yes, this is correct.

Doug: If reclassified as Schedule 2, doctors would have to write a prescription for medical marijuana. It would also remove the legal barriers that have made implementing the city council's existing ordinances impossible. Pharmacies today



dispense all sorts of drugs that would be desirable to people who want to abuse them.

Barry called for a point of order – time for debate had expired.

Marj moved to extend time for debate, **Bette** seconded.

- **Vote: Y-13, N-4, A-0. Motion approved.**

Marj: While Larry DeMers' testimony was compelling, we have heard from residents near dispensaries that they feel unsafe living near them. We are tackling issues of compassionate access, which we believe is fair, and also the rights for people to live in a community.

Sam: If they don't get banned, what is the process for regulation?

Doug: According to the City Attorney, there is no regulation. The problem, as the City Attorney sees it, is that any authorization of the sale of marijuana is ultimately illegal under federal law. Therefore, in their interpretation, permitting is impossible.

Kimber: I am trying to understand the practicalities of a ban. What is in the motion that actually manages a ban? Will the city go out and shut down all of the dispensaries, or will they attempt to just shut down the bad ones?

Doug: The City Attorney has told me that it is difficult to shut down a bad business, because you have to prove that it is a bad business. In the case of Little Amsterdam, for example, it took years. Doing this for every dispensary is outside of their abilities because of limited resources.

Kimber: There are enforcement measures in the motion?

Doug: They say that there are.

Paula: The ban is a moratorium on developing new ones?

Doug: No – everything goes.

Marj moved to split the motion into four separate motions, with each of the four paragraphs of the original motion standing as a single motion, and consider each one separately. **Bette** seconded.

- **Vote: Motion approved by general consent.**

Motion GB-011912-7a (Paragraph I from the original motion) was considered individually.

- **Vote: Y-15, N-0, A-2. Motion approved.**

Motion GB-011912-7b (Paragraph II from the original motion) was considered individually.

- **Vote: Y-14, N-2, A-1. Motion approved.**

Motion GB-011912-7c (Paragraph III from the original motion) was considered individually.

- **Vote: Y-5, N-7, A-4. Motion not approved.**

Motion GB-011912-7d (Paragraph IV from the original motion) was considered individually.

- **Vote: Y-17, N-0, A-0. Motion approved.**



Kimber: is there a way to express concern about the proliferation of dispensaries in our community?

Marj moves to reconsider the first motion, **Kimber** seconds.

- **Vote: Y-5, N-10, A-2. Motion not approved.**

Marj expressed concern that the Board had disregarded the community's opposition to the proliferation of dispensaries in failing to include the language from motion GB-011912-7c within the submitted Community Impact Statement.

Motion to approve \$4999 for Fresh Fruit on Fridays for Shenandoah Elementary School. (Levine / GB011912-5).

Barry noted that he is bringing back the Fresh Fruit Friday motion due to budget cuts that have decimated public education budgets once again. He suggests that it is well worth spending the money, for a total of 34 cents per student for twenty weeks.

Holly Nuckols (school nurse at Shenandoah Elementary School): For those who do not know the demographics of Shenandoah, 90% of our 700 students are on free and reduced lunch. I am here to thank you for supporting the program – it has been a highlight for the kids at the school, and it has been a marvelous opportunity for them to have a sampling of fruit every Friday, and it gives them an opportunity to be exposed to fresh fruits and vegetables. Obesity is a huge problem, and one in every six kids in America today is overweight – and there is also a huge increase in type 2 diabetes among students. At Shenandoah, we have 96 fifth-graders: out of them, 27 are overweight, and 10 were at risk for being overweight. One in every three fifth graders were deemed overweight or at risk. I have a big job, and our community has a big job. One of the best ways to combat this is to expose them to exercise and healthy eating. I am requesting that you continue to provide full funding so that these children switch out kumquats for sour patch kids and snap peas for their Takis.

Robyn: This is a great program, but what else is being done to educate the parents? This should be a bigger program, to expand its reach to parents also.

Holly: Parents are very involved, picking up fruit and distributing it. This is a trickle-up program too – children are encouraging their parents to eat fresh fruits and vegetables. More education needs to come to the parents about healthy cooking, and this is our next step.

Bette: What is the total number of school-aged children in the SORO area?

Barry: Approximately 4700 students.

Bette: What is the total budget allocation for the education committee, and what percentage is being dedicated to this?

Barry: About ninety percent, and there is no request pending from other sources.

Marj: Education did promise to fund the educational component of the We Are SORO program, an initiative of the Outreach committee.

Kimber (to Holly): Being someone who is intimately involved in education, what are the other needs of students at your school?

Holly: Our librarians have been cut, and nursing time has been cut. We don't have a P.E. coach, and we have need for assistance with after-school tutoring. We always



need more parent education – I would love to see more nutrition education – cooking education, exercise programs, an organized soccer team.

Troy (to Holly): Someone goes to pick up this fruit?

Holly: Parents pick up fruit from the farmer's market. It is a win-win situation.

Meredith: This is important because it introduces the neighborhood council to children who are still learning about what government can do, and what local government can do for them, in a very real way. It may encourage civic participation in the future.

Kimber: I do appreciate what this program does, but given the tremendous other needs that Holly mentioned, I would like to see us look at where we could have the greatest impact.

Mike: Being that funding deadlines are coming up shortly, what is the chance that we could get other programs developed soon?

Barry: Not very likely – we need more volunteers, and time is tight. We support programs that come to us, and this is us doing our job to support our community.

Nick: Considering the upcoming funding deadline, there is no reason to not support this motion at this time.

Bette: I am not convinced that all of this money should go to this program – there are other alternatives.

Doug: We are a volunteer board, and anything we are doing happens because of our own ability to make it happen. My personal feeling is that it is not fair to criticize any of the board members for taking action proactively and question what more they could be doing.

Bette: We did hear right before us a full set of other alternatives, all of which would need to go through a funding process and be developed into actual programs.

Kimber: It does the community and the board a great service to hear what other needs there may be. I don't think that it's necessarily criticism of a board member to hear other ideas for community needs.

Harold: At each Education Committee meeting, we discuss possible investments. This program reaches every single student at the school, as well as their parents and the community more broadly.

Martin: Healthy living is an extremely important issue, and should be a top priority... it should be at the top of our list regardless.

Harold: Shenandoah is significantly more impacted than other schools in our area based on the economic characteristics of its students.

Terry: We need to have a copy of the neighborhood purpose grant.

- **Motion withdrawn by Barry.**

Motion to approve \$3000 for Fresh Fruit on Fridays for Shenandoah Elementary School. (Levine / GB011912-6).

No discussion.



- **Motion withdrawn by Barry.**

Motion to Submit a Community Impact Statement RE: Proposed Sidewalk Repair Ordinance. (Lynn / GB011912-8).

Mike: Back in 1911, the state of California authorized cities to assess homeowners for repairs of streets, sidewalks, etc. In 1974, the city of LA implemented an ordinance stating that the city would take care of damage to sidewalks and curbs. Currently, there is a movement to get homeowners to repair for these repairs, and several motions have been proposed in City Council committees.

- **Robyn** moved to vote; **Rachel** seconded.
- **Motion approved by general consent.**

Motion to encourage the City of LA to adopt bee keeping pilot program and revise current regulations. (Waxman & Hess / GB011912-9).

Paula: A similar motion has been adopted in the City of Santa Monica, and it has been passed by three neighborhood councils (Mar Vista, Griffith Park, and Del Rey). Mar Vista did a feasibility study: there were presentations made to the Green Committee, Outreach, and PLUM committees which included a 1,200-signature petition in support of urban beekeeping. An online survey (with 275 responses) concluded that over 80% of respondents were in favor of urban beekeeping. We are encouraging that the City of Los Angeles launch a pilot program.

Kirk Anderson: I have been a beekeeper since 1970, and since 1988 in LA. The County agriculture agency told us that there are between 7 and 9 feral bee colonies throughout Los Angeles. I've never seen so many bees in one place in my life! There are 800 members in a bee club that I had started – there are gardeners, and people of many different backgrounds. We placed a bee swarm hotline on the Internet, and we received over 4,000 calls! Los Angeles is promoting the diversity of the bee population – the bees are already here, and we would like to allow people to keep them in boxes in their backyards.

Chelsea McFarland wished to be placed on the record as supporting this motion.

Rob McFarland: My wife and I became involved in beekeeping by chance, when a swarm of bees arrived in our yard. The problem for us was that giving them a home was illegal, but exterminating them was legal. We started an organization called honeylove.org, an organization that supports urban beekeeping. One in every three bites of food is thanks to a bee. Since 2006, more than one third of honey bee colonies have collapsed, and this is a phenomenon called colony collapse disorder – but we believe that this is a result of the practices of industrialized beekeeping. If present trends continue, scientists believe that there will be no more bees by 2035. So what do we do? The future of beekeeping is within the urban environment – cities provide safer habitat than rural areas. Cities provide great biodiversity for foraging bees. Many cities have legalized urban beekeeping, and several communities in Los Angeles have endorsed the creation of a pilot program.

Maritza Przekop: I am a board member of the Mar Vista Community Council. I was approached by Chelsea and Rob, and I learned that beekeeping is not permitted in residential districts in the city of LA. The first thing I said is that we need to find out whether or not there is an interest. The interest is strong, and I urge you to support this.

Geebs Bailey wished to be placed on the record as supporting this motion.

- **Marj** moved to vote; **Kimber** seconded.
- **Motion approved by general consent.**



Motion to release \$12,161 to fund Phase I of the South Robertson Tree Planting Project. (Waxman & Hess / GB011912-10).

Larry Hess: The Green Team has been working on getting trees planted on South Robertson Boulevard. The current trees are in poor shape – many have been blown over by wind, and many have a long deciduous period. A list of non-native trees was supplied by Million Trees LA, and I narrowed it our choices for Phase 1 down to the Chinese Elm. I am also a proponent of native trees, and I have selected the California Sycamore. It has a short deciduous period, and a wonderful canopy. We have selected an installation date of March 24, 2012, though this is contingent upon us receiving the California Sycamore. The expenses for phase 1 add up to about \$12,000. We have this set aside from last year, and this motion releases the allocated money to plant the trees.

Meredith: Do these trees impact sidewalks?

Larry: No, these are trees that are approved as street trees by the City of Los Angeles.

Kimber: Is Council District 10 still matching funds?

Marj: Councilmember Wesson pledged to meet any expenses to help in the funding of the project.

Liz Carlin: I will have that conversation with him. Maybe we should develop a cost for Phase 2, before we move forward with Phase 1.

Larry: Phase 2 is expected to cost \$37,500, but approximately \$50,000 might be necessary to complete the project as outlined.

Doug: Resources are finite and we understand that, but I would be opposed to extending the discussion process. We need to move quickly to disburse our money.

Doug proposed to **amend the motion** to replace “**Chinese Elms**” with “**Chinese Elms or California Sycamores**”. **Kimber** seconded.

- **Amendment approved by unanimous consent.**
- **Kimber** moved to vote; **Harold** seconded.
- **Motion approved by unanimous consent.**

Motion for \$1050 to Purchase Emergency Trauma Kits. (Lynn / GB011912-11).

Mike: Last year, we passed a motion in support of a Neighborhood Team Program, which recruits CERT members to lead community-based emergency response teams. This proposal would purchase four fifty-person trauma kits, enabling emergency first aid for approximately 200 people.

- **Nick** moved to vote; **Robyn** seconded.
- **Vote: 8-Y, 2-N, 4-A, 3-R. Motion approved.**

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:57 p.m.



Current Committee Membership

Board members must attend at least 7 committee meetings within a 12 month period.

Note that Bylaws, Econ Revitalization, and Board Development meet infrequently. Those three ad hoc committees may only have 6 voting members.

Committee	Edu- cation	Green Team	Land Use	Out- reach	Public Safety	Finance	Exec	Bylaws	Econ Revital	Board Dev	Parks & Rec
Rachel Lester											
Kimber Smith											
Harold Bock											
Robyn Braun											
Bette Billet											
Michael Lynn											
Nick Burkhart											
Zone 8											
Paula Waxman											
Armando Roman											
Meredith Levine											
Nahed Guirguis											
Terry Gomes											
Brian Kite											
Barry Levine											
Troy Richardson											
Marj Safinia											
Sam Jagger											
Martin Epstein											
Sue Burden											
Victor Mitry											
Organization 3											
Doug Fitzsimmons											
School 1											
Erick Morales											



Vote Tally

1: moved | 2: seconded | Y: yes | N: no | A: abstain | R: recuse | X: missed vote
C: passed by general consent

Motion	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13	14
Rachel Lester	Y	Y	Y	C	A	N	Y	Y	Y	C2	C	C	C	--
Kimber Smith	Y	Y2	Y	C	Y	Y	A	Y	Y2	C	C2	C2	C1	Y
Harold Bock	Y	Y	N	C	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	C	C	C	C2	--
Robyn Braun	X	Y	Y	C	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	C1	C	C	C	Y2
Bette Billet	Y2	Y	Y2	C2	Y2	Y2	A2	Y2	Y	C	C	C	C	N
Michael Lynn	Y	Y	Y	C	A	Y	A	Y	N	C	C	C	C	Y
Nick Burkhart	Y	Y	Y	C	Y	Y	N	Y	N	C	C	C	C	Y1
Zone 8														
Paula Waxman	Y	Y1	Y	C	Y	Y	A	Y	A	C	C	C	C	A
Armando Roman	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Meredith Levine	--	Y	N	C	Y	Y	N	Y	A	C	C	C	C	A
Nahed Guirguis	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Terry Gomes	A	Y	Y	C	Y	Y	N	Y	N	C	C	C	C	Y
Brian Kite	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Barry Levine	Y	Y	N	C	Y	Y	N	Y	N	C	C	C	C	Y
Troy Richardson	Y	Y	Y	C	Y	A	N	Y	N	C	C	C	C	A
Marj Safinia	Y	Y	Y1	C1	Y1	Y1	A1	Y1	Y1	C	C1	C	C	A
Sam Jagger	Y	Y	Y	C	Y	Y	N	Y	N	C	C	C	C	N
Martin Epstein	Y	Y	Y	C	Y	N	N	Y	N	C	C	C	C	Y
Sue Burden	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Victor Mitry	Y1	Y	N	C	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	C	C	C	C	--
Organization 3														
Doug Fitzsimmons	Y	N	Y	C	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	C	C	C1	C	Y
School 1														
Erick Morales	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Votes taken

1. Appointment of Meredith Levine to At-Large General Board Seat
2. Move up consideration of motion GB011912-7
3. Extend debate on motion GB011912-7
4. Split motion GB011912-7 into four separate motions
5. First medical marijuana motion: GB011912-7a
6. Second medical marijuana motion: GB011912-7b
7. Third medical marijuana motion: GB011912-7c
8. Fourth medical marijuana motion: GB011912-7d
9. Motion to reconsider first medical marijuana motion (GB011912-7a)
10. Sidewalk repair
11. Urban beekeeping
12. Amendment to tree planting motion
13. Tree planting: approval of first phase
14. Purchase of emergency kits