

South Robertson (SORO) Neighborhoods Council

SORO Neighborhoods Council
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A Certified City of Los Angeles Neighborhood Council

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Secretary
Terrence Gomes
Treasurer

General Meeting Minutes May 14, 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, Bette Billet, Harold Boch, Daniel Fink, Doug Fitzsimmons, Gary Garcia, Terrence Gomes, Anne Gross, Ann Hammond, Victoria Karan, Gina LaBeaud, Barry E. Levine, Jon Liberman, Roy Nwaisser, Linda Rosen, Marjan Safinia

Board members absent: Brian Bergman, Robyn Braun, Susan Burden, Nahed Guirguis, Diane Hirsch-Garcia, Sandra Willard

Guests present: Jennifer Badger, Gerald Chavarria, Stephen Cheung, Mario Gonzalez, Maria Gray, Josh Kline, Brooke Powers, Rashad Sharif, Carolyn Sharp, Barry Stone, Chris Thayer, Randy Thayer, Raymond Yu

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Raymond Yu announced several upcoming meetings and events in the city that might be of interest to the SoRo neighborhoods. Paul Koretz, a candidate for City Council, introduced himself and spoke of his qualifications and objectives.

III. READING OF THE MINUTES AND APPROVAL

- a. Ann apologized for the short turnaround time given for review. A motion was made and seconded to approve the draft minutes of the General Meeting of April 9, 2008, and, with several corrections noted, the draft minutes were approved. **Vote: 14-Y; 0-N; 2A.**

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):** Councilmember Jack Weiss' Aide Jennifer Badger reported: (i) there is money in the general purpose funds for Shenandoah, Castle Heights and Canfield elementary schools; (ii) the super rapid sign at Pico and Robertson is no longer there; (iii) the Councilmember's office will make every effort to get street banners up before the SoRo Festival; (iv) action is being taken to deal with graffiti at the Robertson Recreation Center and a sweep is planned for each Monday; and (v) on May 16th, City Hall will hear citizens' concerns about the budget, and people need to speak up in person or in writing about what they feel is very important. Jennifer distributed the most recent issue of the Weiss Wire, and introduced Brooke Powers, the new Robertson Recreation Center manager.

Brooke announced she has been working closely with Jennifer and is getting the Park Advisory Board going. That Board meets six times each year. She invited people to come and see her.

Terrence asked Jennifer about the Councilmember's views on cutting the budget for Neighborhood Councils by 40 percent; Jennifer committed to get back with an answer. Linda asked if money has been allocated for the beautification of South Robertson; Jennifer urged her to go to the May 16th meeting and speak up. Christine encouraged all Board members to attend the May 16th meeting, as departments have been asked to make cuts averaging 10 percent, and the proposal to cut 9 percent to DONE would lead to a 40 percent cut to Neighborhood Councils. Terrence encouraged Board members to send letters and emails to the Councilmembers and to Mr. Garcetti.

- c. **Office of Councilmember Herb Wesson (CD10):** Victoria said Liz Carlin was unable to attend and encouraged Board members to email Liz with questions or concerns.
- d. **LAPD:** Senior Lead Officer (SLO) Rashad Sharif said he is transferring out of SoRo neighborhoods largely by his choice, but he will continue for the next month while Senior Lead Officer Maria Gray is on vacation planned long ago. He reported new gang activity around the 1800 block of Robertson but, so far, only tagging, not crime.

New SLO Maria Gray said she will be full-time after June 16th. Her email address is 30469@lapd.lacity.org, and her cell phone number will be the same as Rashad's has been: 310-622-3987. She brings 15 years of LAPD experience to her current assignment, and she looks forward very much to her work in this community.

SLO Mario Gonzalez said a small gang interested in establishing a reputation has engaged in some tagging. He reported a recent shooting at Beverlywood and Garth. Crime in his area is most prevalent south of National, with opportunity crimes resulting in loss of items such as i-pods and computers through car break-ins, where items were in plain sight, and residential burglaries, where front doors were unlocked. The Hamilton High area has been quiet. He encouraged people to brace themselves with summer coming up. He said he hopes the Robertson Activities League (RAL) program will be up and running again to keep neighborhood youths occupied.

Christine asked about sneakers on wires on Cadillac. Mario encouraged people to note what they see, as documentation is important in court. Anne asked about enforcement of

laws against residents having lawn sprinklers on during the day and, specifically, who is checking on the gardeners. Mario replied that lack of police enforcement on sprinkler use is due primarily to other priorities, and gardeners often use water because of restrictions on leaf blowers.

- e. **DONE:** Barry Stone announced that, at this stage in the budget process, it is imperative that citizens speak up about their concerns and priorities through attending the May 16th meeting and sending emails and letters.
- f. **Mayor's Office:** Stephen Cheung arrived later in the meeting, and Victoria invited him to speak. He said a list of relevant resources has been developed in response to many calls received by the Mayor's office about home foreclosures. He invited SORO NC to send him an email if foreclosures are a big problem in this community. He reported emergency certification training aimed at members of Neighborhood Council Boards is being arranged for the first three Saturdays in September. And, he said an executive summary of the Mayor's budget proposals is available at www.lacity.org/mayor.

VI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

- a. **President's Report:** Victoria said she has not yet received indication of priority goals from all Board members but it is important to move ahead. All Board members agreed.

Victoria said she attended the April 14th Grievance Panel meeting and the Panel members did an amazing job, providing a great service to the community and to the SORO NC Board. She also praised highly the work of the Outreach Committee, especially with respect to its preparations for the SoRo Festival.

- b. **Secretary's Report**

i. Report of Grievance Panel. Ann reported the Grievance Panel met on April 14th to consider the grievance filed by Stakeholder Noah Bleich on November 28, 2007, and after deliberating for more than four hours, considering each element of the grievance in detail, concluded its work. The Panel produced both minutes of their deliberations and a detailed report. On May 13th, the Report, signed by five Panel members, was submitted to Ann and distributed electronically to all SORO NC Board members for consideration and decisions on action at the May 14th meeting. This process is stipulated in the bylaws. Ann then distributed paper copies of the signed Report to all Board members present.

Many Board members spoke in appreciation of and praise for the work of the Panel and the Report. The Panel's final recommendation, "Ensure Mr. Liberman has made, and continues to make, all minutes, notes, conversations and other forms of communication and action regarding SORO NC business available to the public" received special attention. The Board agreed that this recommendation, in fact, should apply to all Board members, not just Mr. Liberman. Messrs. Chavarria and Kline, two Panel members in attendance at the meeting, were thanked, invited to share their views and did so.

It was clarified that the Board's responsibility was to accept the report and decide on follow-up action. It was agreed that: (i) Bylaws Committee would need to take specific action and report back at the next Board meeting; and (ii) all Committees during the next 30 days would consider at their monthly meetings what steps they should take to help implement the Panel's findings. Daniel moved to accept the Panel's report; Barry Levine seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

ii. Selection of Stakeholders to serve on the Ad Hoc Grievance Panel. Ann said DONE had originally advised that the February 6, 2008, grievance filed by Stakeholder Noah Bleich could be heard by the then-existing Ad Hoc Grievance Panel, so it was put on the agenda for their April 14th meeting. However, because that grievance was not heard due to time constraints at the April 14th meeting, DONE subsequently advised another panel needs to be selected, and those who served on the first panel were eligible to serve again, if willing and able to do so. Stakeholders were then contacted for expressions of interest and availability, and six had done so. Ann then selected at random from the group of six: Gerald Chavarria, Terry Ring Schonwald, Josh Kline, Stephanie Marquez, and Sherry Brennan; Christel Wilson was selected as alternate.

- c. Treasurer's Report:** Terrence said a total of \$70,699.39 had been provided to SORO NC; \$21,695 had been allocated, leaving a balance of \$49,004.39 that could be allocated. The next grant will be made on July 1, 2008. He suggested there be a meeting to discuss a new budget, and the Board defer action on any financial commitments until its next meeting, especially since the Board could not assume another annual allocation of \$50,000. Barry Stone said, when there are time constraints such as those posed by the motions before the Board at this meeting for expenditures for outreach for the SoRo Festival on June 1, 2008, financial commitments can be made on the basis of a resolution signed by two Board members and specifying a particular vendor. Terrence said he understood from DONE this was not sufficient.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Proposal to provide up to \$6,720 for the Fresh Fruit on Friday Program (Levine) (Motion GB051408-4).** Barry Levine introduced Kathy Lewis of the Model Neighborhood Program, who said the proposal submitted at the previous Board meeting had been revised, clarified, and included more detail, and would simply expand the program to Shenandoah Elementary. Terrence said the Five-a-Day program already covers Shenandoah Elementary and the school is starting a gardening program. Barry Levine moved, and Doug seconded, to correct the proposal wording to clarify "up to \$6,720." **Vote: 12-Y; 1-N; 3-A. Motion passed.**
- b. Motion for SORO NC to support KoSushi's request for a license to serve alcohol (Bergman) (Motion GB051408-5).** Doug said this new Kosher Sushi restaurant on Pico Boulevard near Beverly Drive seeks a license to serve alcohol in time for its upcoming grand opening. If requested by the applicant, the Land Use Committee would provide a letter acknowledging SORO NC's support for the applicant's request. Daniel, a neighborhood resident, said the license covers only beer and wine and the establishment would be open only until midnight; therefore, in his view, this was not a problem for neighbors. During discussion, it was clarified that the restaurant's name is Sushiko, and the motion wording was corrected. Christine seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- c. Motion for SORO NC to send a letter to Commission Investigation Division regarding the Skin Cabaret investigation (Bergman) (GB051408-6).** Doug said that, at the April 30, 2008, LA Police Permit Review Panel Hearing, the Commission Investigation Division (CID) opposed the Hearing Examiner's recommendation not to receive a permanent permit to operate based on its opinion that there was no connection between the owners of the Silver Reign strip club and Skin Cabaret. Subsequently, the head of CID, Lieutenant Dawson, attended a joint meeting of the SORO NC Land Use and Public Safety Committees and discussed other investigations that could yield additional information helpful to reaching an informed final decision. For example, if the investigation of possible moral turpitude by the Skin Cabaret owners in the past

were expanded to cover Riverside and San Bernadino Counties, additional pertinent information may surface (ref. point 20 in the proposed letter). Doug moved, and Victoria seconded, to expand point 20 in the proposed letter to specify investigation in the two additional counties. **Motion to amend passed unanimously.** Doug moved, and Victoria seconded, the amended motion. **Amended motion passed unanimously.**

- d. **Motion for SORO NC to provide \$1650 to Chrysalis for a Community Beatification project (Bergman) (Motion GB051408-7).** Doug explained that Chrysalis, a non-profit organization, finds meaningful work opportunities for homeless individuals. The Land Use Committee proposes to arrange for a work team from this organization to clean up South Robertson Boulevard before the June 1st SoRo Festival, to make the street both more appealing to residents and visitors and less appealing to criminal elements. There was extensive discussion of a number of issues, including whether products used to get rid of weeds would be environmentally friendly, how this step might help encourage local businesses to feel empowered keep the neighborhood beautiful over time, what precise segment of South Robertson would be covered, if this would duplicate or supplement street cleaning already planned by the Councilmembers' offices in preparation for the Festival, and whether the \$1943 already allocated in the budget for community cleanup would be sufficient to cover the planned work. Doug then proposed, and Victoria seconded, to amend the motion: (a) delete a sentence in the full proposal stating one rationale for this expenditure would be a "surplus of money;" (b) fix the typographical error in the motion to "beatification;" and (c) extend the pilot area for cleaning to cover Venice to Pico. **Amendment passed unanimously.** Roy moved and Bette seconded, to pass the amended motion. **Vote: 15-Y; 1-N. Motion passed.**
- e. **Motion for SORO NC to send a letter to City Council members Weiss and Wesson thanking them for supporting the community at the Police Permit Review Board Hearing (Bergman) (Motion GB051408-8).** Marj presented the motion, Terrence seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- f. **Motion for the purchase of SORO NC 8-foot Banners (Safinia) (GB051408-9).** Marj described recent Outreach Committee work and said the set of proposals at this meeting represented specific steps the Committee recommends be taken to launch the new SORO NC logo and website and to "re-brand" SORO NC. The intermediate objective is to increase NC visibility, starting with the June 1st SoRo Neighborhood Festival; the ultimate objective is to foster closer relationships and engagement with the community we serve. The motion is to fund up to \$500 for the purchase of two 8-foot table banners, branded with the new SORO NC logo, to be used at public events. Victoria seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- g. **Motion for the purchase of SORO NC Promotional Street Banners (Safinia) (GB051408-10).** Marj said that, in cooperation with Councilmember Weiss' office, who were requesting that the permit fee be waived, 100 street banners would be hung at intervals along Robertson and Pico within SORO boundaries. This would promote visibility of the NC as well as specific initiatives such as SORO WALKS AT SEVEN. A member of the public from Culver City noted that that city's decision to post promotional street banners was extremely helpful to the city and its objectives of fostering a greater sense of community. Discussion included the large amount of money involved, \$14,000, and whether this was a reasonable "start-up" cost. Victoria seconded. **Vote: 11-Y; 4-N. Motion passed.**
- h. **Motion for the purchase of SORO NC Logo Business Cards (Safinia) (GB051408-11).** Marj said up to \$500 would be spent to purchase 5000 SORO NC logo business cards for

Board members (about 217 cards per member). Terrence said money was already for business cards was already allocated. Discussion centered around whether cards with the city logo or NC logo would be more credible and whether separate cards, or two-sided cards, would be more effective. Marj moved to table the motion to the next meeting to allow further discussion by Outreach and financial clarification. Victoria seconded. **Motion to table passed unanimously.**

- i. **Motion for the potential Collaboration with Helios House, British Petroleum (Safinia) (GB051408-12).** Marj said she had met for some time with the managers of the British Petroleum (BP) gas station that is a very visible, community-oriented business within SORO NC boundaries. The Outreach Committee proposes that SORO NC allow its name to be used in conjunction with Helios House, BP, specifically for the cross promotion of mutually agreeable community initiatives and events. Discussion centered around the environmental reputation of BP. Robyn seconded. **Vote: 6-Y; 9-N. Motion defeated.**
- j. **Motion for the renewal of BurellesLuce Media Service for 1 year (Safinia) (Motion GB051408-13).** Marj said SORO NC previously contracted with this service, which allows the NC to promote its work and submit press releases for all matters concerning the NC, but the contract has lapsed. Board members would need to be trained to use it. One-year renewal costs \$750. Victoria seconded. **Vote: 13-Y; 1-N; 1-A. Motion passed.**
- k. **Motion for the purchase of SORO NC Promotional Pens (Safinia) (GB051408-14).** Marj said up to \$2000 would be spent for 5000 pens, branded with the new SORO NC logo, to be distributed at the June 1st Festival and beyond. Victoria seconded. **Vote: 13-Y; 2-N. Motion passed.**
- l. **Motion for the purchase of SORO NC Promotional Postcards (Safinia) (GB051408-15).** Marj said up to \$2000 would be spent for 10,000 4x5 postcards to promote SORO NC and its initiatives. Victoria seconded. **Vote: 12-Y; 2-N. Motion passed.**
- m. **Motion for the purchase of SORO NC Promotional Tote Bags (Safinia) (GB051408-16).** Marj said up to \$8500 would be spent for 5000 cotton tote bags, branded with the new logo. She said thousands of stakeholders walking through the Festival with bags with the logo, using the bags in their daily lives, would exponentially increase NC visibility. Discussion surrounded the considerable expense of all of the proposals and the quality of the proposed tote bags. Christine seconded. **Vote: 0-Y; 10-N; 2-A. Motion defeated.**
- n. **Motion for the purchase of SORO NC Promotional Water Bottles (Safinia) (GB051408-17).** Marj said up to \$5500 would be spent for 5000 water bottles, branded with the new SORO NC logo, to help increase visibility of both the NC and of the proposed outreach initiative, "SORO WALKS AT SEVEN." This initiative would take advantage of summer evenings ahead to encourage community members to come out of their homes and take a walk at 7:00 each evening, thereby fostering closer ties amongst neighbors, healthier living, and lower crime. Victoria seconded. **Vote: 7-Y; 6-N; 1-A. Motion passed.**
- o. **Motion for the "The SORO Card" Membership Program (Safinia) (Motion GB051408-18).** Marj said up to \$5000 would be spent for membership cards and merchant window cling stickers to promote the SORO Card initiative. This initiative would be a free membership program, wherein stakeholders give SORO NC their information in exchange for a free SORO CARD entitling them to discounts with merchants who had negotiated set discounts with SORO NC. Participating merchants would post a cling sticker in their windows and be featured on the SORO NC website as participants. Victoria seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

- p. **Motion to confirm Harold Bock as co-chair of PS Committee (Lieberman) (Motion GB051408-19).** Jon asked the Board to confirm the election of Harold Bock as Co-Chair of the Public Safety Committee. Terrence seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- q. **Motion to send letter to LA Dept. of Transportation re. a dangerous intersection at Whitworth & Wooster asking for a four way stop sign (Lieberman) (Motion GB051408-20).** Jon presented the motion and disclosed his personal interest insofar as his relatives had been injured in a recent accident at the intersection. Discussion clarified that, as Jon's interest was personal rather than financial, it did not serve to disqualify him from involvement in the motion. Terrence seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- r. **Motion to provide Hamilton HS with the security system purchased by us for RAC (Lieberman) (Motion GB051408-21).** Jon said the Robertson Activity Center is looking for a new camera system, and Hamilton High has asked the Board to purchase a camera system for their use. The proposal is to offer the existing camera system to Hamilton High School. Gary said the school does not know the cost for installation and may have to come back to the NC to ask for help with this cost in light of current budget constraints for LA Unified School District. **Motion passed unanimously.**

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. **By-Laws:** Roy said the Committee has been discussing possible changes to clarify enforcement and removal processes when a Board member has not attended three consecutive meetings with no excuse (ref. para. 7.14). The Committee will meet the third week of May, consider issues raised by the Grievance Panel Report, and report back to the Board at its next meeting.
- b. **Education:** Barry Levine said the mentoring program, which has involved 22 children this year, is winding down for the summer. There will be a party in June for the volunteer mentors. At its June 10th meeting, the Committee will evaluate the mentoring project experience.
- c. **Green Team:** Victoria said Larry Hess is very interested in heading up the Green Team and will make a final decision as soon as he receives background information from her.
- d. **Land Use:** Brian said the Committee had a long meeting with Lieutenant Dawson about the Skin Cabaret, which resulted in motion GB051408-6.
- e. **Outreach:** Marjan and Christine said the proposals at this meeting resulted from their recent efforts. They said there would not be an Outreach meeting in May because the standing date fell on Memorial Day.
- f. **Public Safety:** Jon said the Committee is concerned about a recent rise in graffiti and has invited the City to be represented at their next meeting.
- g. **Ad hoc Board Development:** Harold said the Committee will report next month.
- h. **Ad hoc Inter-NC Committee.** Doug said he will attend the meeting of Neighborhood Councils on May 17th.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 p.m.

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