



## Approved General Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, June 17, 2009, 7:00 P.M.

Hamilton Senior High School Cafeteria  
2955 S. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90034

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**Board Members Present:** Christine Aghassi, Bette Billet, Harold Bock, Robyn Braun, Susan Burden, Paul Del Piero, Doug Fitzsimmons, Gary Garcia, Terrence Gomes, Anne Gross, Nahed Guirguis, Barry Levine, Jon Liberman, Roy Nwaiser, Adam Wheeler, Paula Waxman, Sandra Willard

**Board Members Absent:** Brian Bergman, Daniel Fink, Ann Hammond, Marj Safinia

**Guests Present:** Mark Davis, Rebecca Bernal, Elizabeth Carlin, Jennifer Badger, Brooke Powers, Oliver Summers, Torri Hill, Rose Ibanez.

### I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 P.M. by Vice President Jon Liberman, followed by Doug Fitzsimmons's arrival.

### II. General Public Comment

**Expo Line.** Torri Hill, a community relations representative with the Expo Line project, addressed the group. She said she is available to do an extensive presentation covering the status of the line in terms of construction. She also brought brochures about the project. Barry asked if phase one was on schedule and she replied that, officially, it is. She said there have been some delays in certain areas, but they are trying to expedite things by bringing in more crews. The Culver City station should be open in fall of 2010. Christine said she would like the Board to have a full presentation in the fall, and Doug suggested this be arranged through the Land Use Committee.

**Medical Marijuana.** Terry announced that a resident had been contacted about another medical marijuana facility opening on Venice boulevard. Like the other medical marijuana facilities, a hardship application has been filed. Oliver Summers, from the Greater Los Angeles Collective Alliance, was in attendance and clarified some matters. He said that, if a medical marijuana proprietor has filed for hardship, he is not allowed to operate the facility until the city rules on the application, but facilities are opening at a rapid pace. He said the City Council is finally taking action regarding the situation and, at the last meeting, 16 applications were on the agenda to be heard, 15 were denied. Oliver stressed the importance of neighborhood associations and councils submitting letters to the Council and noted that the Hancock Park Neighborhood Council was instrumental in getting a facility in their area shut down. Craig Rubin's hardship application was just filed on June 11. Robertson Caregivers, which is a legally operating facility, has agreed to tone down their signage. Barry asked what the average monthly income is for a medical marijuana facility. Oliver noted that, when he was in business, he paid \$115,000 in business tax to the city, which means that the money coming in is substantial.

(Rose Ibanez's report was moved up, due to her time constraints).

**DONE Report.** Rose Ibanez passed out a number of flyers. The NC's budget was due on June 19<sup>th</sup> and she understands it has been submitted. The Citywide Congress of Neighborhoods will be taking place on October 11, 2009,

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and, like last year, will be combined with the Mayor's Budget Day. Both Terry and Jon are on the Congress Planning Committee. The Board should select representatives to attend the Budget Day. June 27<sup>th</sup> is the Mayor's Volunteer Appreciation Festival, and his office is asking the Neighborhood Council Boards to attend so they may be thanked for their service. Regional training for the Harbor/South/West Area will take place on Saturday, August 1, 2009. The training will focus on workplace violence, as well as conflict of interest matters. Anne asked if DONE was doing anything to promote more widely the Neighborhood Councils, such as public service announcements on television. Rose announced that DONE's General Manager has hired a consultant to work on public relations and marketing for DONE and the Councils. Christine asked if this is a subcontractor; Rose replied it is a consultant. Rose will get the person's name and contact information for the Board. The consultant will also be reviewing the DONE website to make it more interactive.

(Rose then left and Public Comment continued, with further discussion of medical marijuana.)

**Medical Marijuana (continued).** Jon asked Oliver to describe the difference between a legitimate dispensary and an illegal one. Oliver explained that, in November 2007, the City of Los Angeles authorized 187 clinics to operate, but that no others were to open. However, he said they allowed dispensaries to file hardship applications, and this is when the influx began. Technically, he said, no facility that opened after November 2007 is operating legally. Roy asked whether Oliver and the Alliance are supporting these other dispensaries or not. Oliver replied, a little of both. He cited his own personal story, and how he shut down his dispensary in order to keep his landlord out of trouble. He has a hardship application pending.

Jon asked if a patient would have a different experience at an illegal versus a legal facility. Oliver explained there are some rules, such as requiring patients to show a prescription and identification; authorized dispensaries will verify these documents, but illegal ones will not. He said there is also a rule about how much marijuana one patient can buy in a week, and illegal facilities violate this rule all the time. Paula asked why marijuana cannot be dispensed through a pharmacy. He said that part of the problem is lack of precision in terms of potency and quantity required by each patient. Christine asked if the Collective was working with the City Attorney on language for the rules of operation. Oliver said yes, as the Collective had set up very strict rules for themselves. Christine then asked if any other city had legislation that could be used as a model. Oliver noted that Los Angeles regulations should be stricter than other cities because it is so much larger. Terry responded to Paula's question by explaining that pharmacies cannot dispense marijuana because, under federal law, it is still illegal, and pharmacies are regulated by the federal government. Adam asked how many dispensaries currently operate in Los Angeles; Oliver said that, as of that afternoon, 685, plus the 186 legal ones. Doug asked how many there were in San Francisco; Oliver said 20 to 40. He added there are only 550 Starbucks in Los Angeles.

Roy noted that Brooke was at the meeting, and asked if the motion regarding Brooke could be moved up on the agenda.

### III. Old Business

**Draft General Board Meeting Minutes of May 13, 2009 (GB021109-1).** A few minor changes to the minutes were suggested. **Vote to Amend Minutes: Y-16; N-0; A-0. Vote to Approve Minutes as Amended: Y-16; N-0; A-0. Minutes as amended approved unanimously.**



#### IV. Community Reports

a. **Office of Councilmember Weiss.** Mark Davis, who may be leaving the CD 5 office upon Councilmember Weiss's departure, thanked the Board for their work with him. He also touched on the La Cienega Heights Community Walk, which took place on Sunday, June 14<sup>th</sup>, and mentioned it was not well attended. Doug thanked Mark for his efforts on behalf of the community. Bette asked about the medical marijuana applications in CD5, and Mark replied that Councilman Weiss is trying to get them heard before he leaves office, but it may only be two at a time, as applications have to go through PLUM first. Bette asked if there was anything the NC could do. Mark suggested the NC send letters to PLUM and Councilmembers Huizar and Reyes. Doug noted the NC had already sent a letter about the medical marijuana situation to the City Attorney, City Council and Mayor's office. Mark explained there should be one letter sent per dispensary/hardship application. Bette suggested this be discussed at the next Land Use meeting.

(Robyn arrived.)

b. **Office of the Mayor.** Jennifer Badger first reported about the public uproar concerning the Lakers riot, and the fact that the city was going to pay for a victory parade for the team. She said they spent the weekend getting private donors to underwrite the cost of the parade. She announced that Mayor Villaraigosa was voted the Second Vice President at the US Congress of Mayors, which means he could be selected President in 2011. Jennifer said the Mayor's Day of Service is June 27<sup>th</sup>, followed by the Appreciation Festival (for which she had more flyers). She said they are trying to organize photo ops with the Mayor, City Attorney and Comptroller. Some Board members thought the Festival would conflict with the Day of Service, but Jennifer explained that Service activities would be wrapping up close to noon. She also noted they need volunteers for the Service project set up for our community, a series of mock job interviews for students who have gone through training with the L.A. Chamber of Commerce. Doug asked if the NC needed to assist in any other way, and Jennifer replied that only a few logistical matters remain.

c. **LAPD.** There was no report, as no representative was present.

d. **Office of State Senator Curren Price.** Rebecca Bernal, Senator Price's field deputy, introduced herself. Senator Price has filled the seat vacated by Mark Ridley-Thomas. The Senator wants a field deputy attending NC meetings, and she said she could also attend any committee meetings where her input would be needed. She announced there will be a swearing in ceremony for Senator Price at Exposition Park on Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup>. She also handed out month-at-a-glance flyers for the Senator's activities, and noted they are accepting nominations for the "Shero" awards; women in the community who have taken on leadership roles can be nominated, as long as they live in the 26<sup>th</sup> District. Nomination forms are due by June 30<sup>th</sup>. Terry asked what, exactly, the Senator's office does in terms of NC-related business. Rebecca explained, anything regarding state programs or budgets, and they also handle case work and community events. Paul asked if all of SORO is within 26<sup>th</sup> District boundaries; she said she believed so.

e. **Robertson Recreation Center/ Activities League (RAL).** Brooke Powers reported that registration for summer programs at the Rec Center has begun. The day camp is completely filled, due to cancellation of all summer school. The RAL parent meeting is tomorrow night, and she said she is not sure what



the turnout will be. RAL will be somewhat differently set up this year, as participating students will have to earn points doing community service in order to go on field trips. The Green Team will be planting a community garden at the Center next Wednesday, and this will be one community project for the students. They can help at the library, write letters to US troops in Iraq, assist with Heal the Bay cleanups, do neighborhood trash pickups, and assist at Movies in the Park evening at Reynier Park. Anne asked for clarification of the library where students will be volunteering--it will be the Robertson branch. Jon asked if the budget crisis was going to affect RAL; Brooke said no, because it is being funded through the police and the NC. However, she said the city was funding lunches for the program, and that money has been cut, so there will be no lunches or snacks for the students.

## V. Committee Reports

a. **Executive.** Doug reported that close to 100% of the Board has completed the Ethics Training. (One person, who remains anonymous, has not yet done it). There are also several openings on the Board, including the seat recently vacated by Jake Hakimi. The NC has taken care of pending organizational matters, such as budgeting, elections and scheduling. Jon asked if the website might be done by the end of June; Doug said he doubted it.

b. **Budget Committee & Treasurer's Report (GB021109-2).** Terry distributed copies of the budget for the next fiscal year, which had been voted on at the previous meeting. He said that SORO is one of the few NCs that has turned in a budget. He mentioned that the motion to fund certain improvements at the fire station will have to be re-voted on because the NC cannot reimburse the station for the gate as it had already been paid. There are other projects at the station, such as removal of asbestos tile or new lighting, for which we can consider funding. Bette asked if there was any commitment from the fire station to provide some sort of community effort in exchange for our funding these improvements, and if this commitment could be detailed when the motion was reconsidered. Harold said that this could be discussed at the next Public Safety meeting. Terry was concerned that the original motion did not contain any mention of quid pro quo from the fire station, but Bette felt this would merely be a re-extension of an invitation to the station to provide help and assistance to the NC. The deadline for all demand warrants is July 12<sup>th</sup>, and Terry said he has submitted them all. He said Purchase Orders have also been submitted to DONE. Jon asked for an update regarding RAL reimbursement for the winter program; Terry said it had been submitted with the demand warrants. Jon wanted confirmation that the summer program would have the expected funding, and Terry said it would.

c. **Bylaws.** The committee has not met during the past month, but Jon reported he sat down with Rose and went over the various bylaws changes approved by the NC to date. Rose will deal with them in two sections: those dealing with elections and those dealing with NC procedures.

d. **Land Use & Economic Development.** There was no report.

e. **Education.** Barry reported that there has not been a meeting in two months. He is having a barbecue for the Shenandoah mentors and their mentees at his house. The mentoring program will resume this October.

f. **Green Team.** Paula reported that she and Larry have been very busy. They manned a booth at the SORO Festival and distributed 180 trees. They also had thirty people sign up for the Green Team. They will be working on the



community garden at the Rec Center on June 24<sup>th</sup> at 1:00p.m. Larry is planning the garden; plants and amendments have been donated. She also received an email that there is a trash problem in Reynier Village. Hopefully, some residents will come to the Green Team meeting tomorrow night. Christine asked what the problem was; Paula explained that she was contacted by Martha Groves (a reporter for the Los Angeles Times), who complained there was trash on sidewalks and street and that it was distressing. The Green Team meeting will be in the library at Hamilton High School. Paula also reported that she attended the first meeting of the DWP MOU committee. She has been recruiting volunteers for the Mayor's Day of Service (mock job interviews with students) and will also meet with the Environmental Club at Hamilton to work on making Hamilton a completely green campus. On June 30<sup>th</sup>, she will meet with a representative from the city, as well as some other individuals, in order to assess Hamilton's needs, such as number of recycling bins. LAUSD also informed her that Hamilton will be set up with solar panels within the next four months. Terry asked why the city is coordinating the recycling and waste management program instead of LAUSD. Paula replied that it is a city program, handled by the city; there has already been a pilot program to set up recycling at the elementary schools. on mentioned that, two or three years ago, the Green Team set up a garden at Shenandoah Elementary, and Paula might want to contact Carmen, the Principal, to see how the garden is going.

g. **Public Safety.** Harold reported the next meeting will be the first Monday in July. He announced that No Parking signs went up on Robertson Boulevard. Terry and Paul noted that all of the trucks, RVs, etc. that used to park on Robertson are now parking in their neighborhoods. Harold asked if anyone had agenda items for the July meeting. Barry noted that our Senior Lead Officers (SLOs) have missed yet another Board meeting, and Harold should ask them please to start attending. Anne noted that last Sunday was Flag Day, but she didn't see flags anywhere. Terry told Harold that Deputy Chief Hara would like to be invited to a Board meeting. Paul said he was concerned about LAPD responsiveness; despite repeated phone calls and reports, he had not seen any officers come to check on drug dealers working out of a motor home. Christine suggested he and other residents email Mario or Maria about the problem, as they are required to pass it on. Paul said the drug dealing has been going on for three months. Robyn suggested going through the SLOs.

h. **Outreach.** Christine thanked everyone who helped at the SoRo Festival. There was a community survey, and they received about 100 completed surveys. She also felt discussions with community members were positive. New CD 5 Councilmember Paul Koretz was in the SORONC booth for some time, meeting stakeholders and hearing about problems and issues. The Outreach Committee is working to create some sort of coalition of business stakeholders and, perhaps, would like to host some sort of meet and greet for them. Susan Strick was given the Susan Bursk Award at the Festival. Christine felt they needed to publicize the award more, in order to get more nominations. There were twelve nominees this year, and Outreach would like to acknowledge them at the August Board meeting; Susan Bursk will also attend to present certificates to the nominees. Roy asked that the Board be apprised of the results of the surveys. Doug discussed his original confusion about the roles of the NC and of SoRo, Inc. in terms of the Festival; he said that he has come to realize that SoRo, Inc. is a partner with the NC and that the Festival is a SORO NC event, therefore, the relationship between the two entities should be strengthened and the NC should renew its commitment to the Festival.

## VI. New Business



a. **Motion to Support Father's Office Request for Continued Use of an Alcohol Beverage License (Bergman) (GB061709-3).** The restaurant has been in operation for over a year and is reapplying for a Conditional Use Permit to serve alcohol. Terry supported the motion, which he said is key to the restaurant continuing to succeed. However, he and many other Board members were confused about the letter attached to the motion. No one felt it was a good idea for the NC to copy this letter as proof of the NC's support, but, rather, the NC should submit its own letter. Harold moved that the phrase "a signed copy of the attached letter" be struck from the motion, and replaced with "a letter". Jon seconded. **Vote to accept amendment: Y-9; N-6; A-1. Amendment accepted. Vote to approve amended motion: Y-17; N-0; A-0. Motion approved as amended.**

b. **Motion to Draft a Letter of Support for Brooke Powers and the Robertson Recreation Center (Fitzsimmons) (GB061709-8).** Doug reviewed how the city budget crisis is affecting many departments and services and how important it is to let the city know how much we value Brooke. Nahed asked if there was a specific danger of Brooke losing her position. Doug said no, but it just seems prudent to send a letter proactively. Roy said that the city is probably receiving many such letters, so perhaps we might also suggest programs or services at the Rec Center which could be cut, in order to give the letter more credibility. Bette said there will be some Rec Centers that will not have letters sent in on their behalf. Paula suggested the letter mention that losing Brooke would mean a complete disruption of programs that the NC has already funded. Jon said that the huge reaction in response to the city's attempt to cut the NC budgets indicates that such community input can have effect. He said he plans also to write a personal letter on behalf of Brooke and recommended other Board members do so as well. Paul moved to take the motion to a vote and Christine seconded. **Vote: Y-16; N-0; A-0. (Jon recused himself). Motion approved.**

c. **Motion to Approve Paula Waxman and Larry Hess as Chair and Co-Chair of the Green Team (Fitzsimmons) (GB061709-4).** It was agreed that everyone is thrilled with Paula and Larry and no further discussion was needed. Terry moved to take the motion to a vote and Jon seconded. **Vote: Y-17; N-0; A-0. Motion approved.**

d. **Motion to Recommend an Additional Tier to the Current LADWP Three-Tier Rate Hike Plan and to Draft a Letter of This Proposal to the DWP (Waxman) (GB061709-5).** Paula reviewed the points of the motion, which requests that DWP add a fourth tier to the three-tier rate hike, as the increase adversely affects low-income families. She also noted that she found the DWP MOU committee discussion about this motion extremely confusing. She had hoped to have representatives from both sides (DWP, NC/MOU committee) attend this meeting to explain their positions, but no one could come. Paula was asked by the Board of Commissioners (all NC reps) to present this motion before our Board. Christine noted that she felt the rate hikes were unfair, as they are based on lot size, but not number of people in a household. Paula commented that she did not plan to vote for the motion, as she felt the form letter given to her by the Board of Commissioners as part of the motion was poorly written. There was a lot of discussion about the letter, what it meant, and what should be changed. Jon felt we should ask DWP to come up with a better plan, such as encouraging conservation of water, assigning penalties and dropping the rate hike altogether. Adam asked who this rate hike affects; Paula said homeowners. Bette gave some background as to how the DWP MOU got set up and the fact that, two years ago, DWP raised rates by 20% without notifying anybody; the MOU requires that DWP notify



Neighborhood Councils of proposed rate increases. Gary suggested the text of Paula's motion be submitted in letter form, rather than the problematic letter, and a vote was taken to amend the motion to reflect that (**Y-14; N-1; A-2**). However, with more discussion, the Board recognized that nobody really understood the whole situation, and the consensus was it would be better to wait until some representatives from the two groups could address the Board. Terry recommended we table the motion. Christine used her PDA to pull up an email from DWP that announced it was going to vote on the rate hike (meaning DWP had only given NC's 30 days notice instead of the required 90). Adam seconded Terry's request to table the motion. Bette wondered what the point of such a motion even was, given that DWP would approve the rate hike before the letter could even be submitted. Doug said it was his hope that we could have representatives come to explain both sides to us, as well as find out why NCs were not given sufficient notice. Paula noted there seems to be no consequence for DWP not adhering to terms of the MOU. Jennifer explained that she can help with getting a DWP rep to come, and that the new rate structure is being done to encourage water conservation. She said there has been more than 30 days notice about the rate increase. **Vote to table motion: Y-15; N-2; A-0. Motion tabled.**

e. **Motion to Shift the General Board Meeting to the Second Thursday of the Month (Fitzsimmons) (GB061709-7).** Doug explained the difficulty with the current Wednesday meeting date, and the fact that it requires agendas and motions to be posted on Friday, because there are not a sufficient number of posting venues open on Sunday. There was then input from the city representatives regarding what other NCs meet on the second Thursday and what kind of conflicts this would present. Jon asked what Board members would be inconvenienced, and Robyn stated that she would have a problem for several months. Terry suggested changing to the third Thursday, and Sandra suggested we move the shift to the fall, so Robyn might have an opportunity to plan ahead. The motion was amended to change the phrase from "to the second Thursday of the month" to "to the third Thursday of the month, starting in September." Bette moved to vote on the amendment, with Susan seconding. **Vote on amendment: Y-16; N-0; A-1. Amendment accepted. Vote: Y-17; N-0; A-0. Motion approved as amended.**

f. **Motion to Increase Food Allowance for the July General Board Meeting from \$100 to \$200 (Aghassi) (GB061709-6).** As Christine had already reviewed the fact that the Susan Bursk nominees would be honored at a Board meeting, she simply clarified that the increased attendance of nominees and their friends and family would require more food to be ordered, as well as including dessert and coffee. In addition, the motion needed to be amended to reflect that this would occur at the August, not the July meeting. There was discussion regarding how much food we currently have at the meetings, how much is left over, how much more might be consumed by nominees, friends and family, and whether an additional \$100 might be reduced to an additional \$50. Bette noted that this is one meeting, and it's only \$100 and there was really no need to overanalyze the matter. Doug moved to amend the motion to change "July" to "August" and Bette seconded. **Vote to amend motion: Y-17; N-0; A-0. Amendment accepted. Vote to approve amended motion: Y-16; N-1; A-0. Motion approved as amended.**

**Last Community Report - CD10/Councilman Wesson's office.** Liz Carlin, who arrived while the meeting was underway, distributed flyers for the Movies in the Park program. She said Councilmember Wesson had sent out a detailed email about the medical marijuana situation in CD 10. She said that, last week, the City Council approved a new ICO that removed the hardship exemption, and she understands 10 applications will be heard by PLUM. Once Liz knows



for certain which applications are coming up, if any are in SORO, she will notify the Board so we can attend the meeting. Among the attachments to the Councilmember's email, one lists all dispensaries that have filed hardship applications, one lists proposed changes to the zoning and planning code, and one contains the rest of the information on the amended ordinance. In addition, as part of the budget cuts, she said the Council voted to stop waiving event fees for many community events, and she will need to discuss with the Board how this will impact the 2010 SoRo Festival.

## **VII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

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*Special thanks to our official posting locations:*

Demers & Associates, The Robertson Blvd Library, The Robertson Recreation Center, The Office of Councilmember Jack Weiss, Malcolm Brown Insurance Co., Hamilton High School, and the SORO NC and DONE websites.

In compliance with Government Code section 54957.5, non-exempt writings that are distributed to a majority or all of the Board in advance of a meeting may be viewed at our website ([soronc.org](http://soronc.org)) or at the scheduled meeting. In addition, if you would like a copy of any record related to an item on the agenda, please contact us via phone at (310) 295-9920 or via email at [info@soronc.org](mailto:info@soronc.org).

Translators, sign language interpreters, assistive listening devices for the hard of hearing and/or other auxiliary aids/services are available upon request. To ensure the availability of services, please make your request at least three (3) working days before the scheduled date. If you have any questions regarding this notice, please call (213) 485-1360.

SI REQUIERE SERVICIOS DE TRADUCCION, FAVOR DE NOTIFICAR A LA OFICINA 3 dias de trabajo (72 horas) ANTES DEL EVENTO. SI NECESITA ASISTENCIA CON ESTA NOTIFICACION, POR FAVOR LLAME A NUESTRA OFICINA AL (213) 485-1360.