

NC Plan Review Committees issue recommendations

Last Saturday, the NC Plan Review Committees issued multiple recommendations to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners regarding important policies which govern the Neighborhood Council system. Last night at a special meeting, the Commission discussed the recommendations and decided to postpone voting on them for 60 days to allow Neighborhood Councils and stakeholders the opportunity to weigh in. All Neighborhood Councils are asked to agendaize, discuss and issue official board resolutions expressing their views on the recommendations, and submit them to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners. Individuals are also encouraged to weigh in through sending emails or letters.

Please send all correspondence on this issue to NCPlan@empowerla.org or to the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, 200 North Spring Street, 20th floor, Los Angeles, CA 90012. In the subject line of your email or letter, please indicate which items you are referencing (ie.-1a, 2, etc.)

Thank you in advance for your input and feedback. The recommendations for your consideration are as follows:

1) Neighborhood Council subdivision/boundary adjustment policies

Proposed recommendation that sections of the City's Administrative Code which touch upon Neighborhood Council subdivision/boundary adjustment be amended as follows:

A new Neighborhood Council may be created from within the boundaries of an existing Neighborhood Council by the following process:

- a. The subdividing group shall undertake the process for Neighborhood Council formation as already described for new councils.
- b. The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment shall set an election to take up the question within 90 days of verifying all paperwork is complete.
- c. A majority of the votes cast by stakeholders of the entire original Neighborhood Council shall be required to complete the separation and create a new council.
- d. If an area leaves a Neighborhood Council, the original council should simply be required to adjust its boundaries and board structure and not recertify.
- e. If an area moves between two existing Neighborhood Councils, neither should be required to recertify.

2) Grievances and complaints policies and procedures

Proposed recommendation that sections of the City's Administrative Code which touch upon Neighborhood Council grievances and complaints procedures be amended as follows:

- a. The grievance procedure and the complaint process be merged into one system; that the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (Department) establish a single set of procedures with a regional grievance panel empowered to render a final decision on a grievance without further right of appeal, which shall be based on the grievance policy recommendations already made by the Department as reflected in its report dated November 22, 2011, and contained in Council File Number 11-1018.

3) Rules for governing board selections

Proposed recommendation that:

- a. The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment look at establishing rules and guidelines for Board selections so that they are more uniform and more open to the public.

4) Election policies and procedures; term limits

Proposed recommendation that sections of the City's Administrative Code which touch upon Neighborhood Council election policies and procedures be reaffirmed or amended as follows:

- a. Reaffirm support for the authority having been returned to the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment to conduct Neighborhood Council board elections and to partner with the City Clerk for back office administrative services.
- b. All Neighborhood Councils need to participate in elections or selections at least every two year cycle.
- c. Existing Neighborhood Council boards are encouraged to partner with other Neighborhood Councils and with the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment for candidate recruitment and election outreach.
- d. The City of Los Angeles should not require Neighborhood Councils to impose term limits. It should be left to each Neighborhood Council's discretion.
- e. There shall be participatory involvement of Neighborhood Councils in reviewing election policies and procedures prior to Neighborhood Council elections.

5) Brown Act and posting policies

Proposed recommendation that the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners reaffirms and/or amends its policies to reflect the following:

- a. Reaffirm support for the Brown Act for Neighborhood Councils and its single accessible 24 hour posting requirement, and reaffirm current board policies regarding electronic mail and website posting, with only one physical posting site as opposed to many. The email requirement shall specify that agendas be sent to “NCSupport” with the intent that the Department will post them to the city’s agenda system.
- b. Neighborhood Councils that do not have a website must post in at least five (5) physical locations.

6) Department of Neighborhood Empowerment General Manager and Board of Neighborhood Commissioners appointments, and Neighborhood Council involvement in the formulation of rules and regulations

Proposed recommendation that sections of the City’s Administrative Code which touch upon the appointment of the Department General Manager and the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, and sections which touch upon the formulation of Department rules and regulations be amended to reflect the following:

- a. Neighborhood Councils should have a greater role in the formulation of rules and regulations as promulgated by the Department and shall continue to have an advisory role in the appointment of the Department General Manager and the members of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners.

7) Duties of the Department in Sec 22.801(j) which currently states that “[The Department shall] with the assistance of the Information Technology Agency, create and maintain an internal and external information and communication network, including a Citywide database of neighborhood organizations and similar information, that would be available for public use;”

Proposed recommendation that Sec 22.801(j) of the Administrative Code be amended as follows:

“with the assistance of the Information Technology Agency, create and maintain an internal and external information and communication network that would be available for public use to:

- a. Provide organized access to all current rules, regulations, and election/selection/voting and any other procedures adopted by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment,
- b. Provide organized access to all historic rules, regulations, and election/selection/voting and any other procedures adopted by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment that are no longer in force,
- c. Provide organized access to all current legal opinions by the City Attorney on matters relating to the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, Board of Neighborhood Commissioners,

Department rules or regulations, and Department procedures for elections/selections/voting and any other matter,

- d. Provide organized access to all historic legal opinions by the City Attorney on matters relating to the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, department rules or regulations, and department procedures for elections/selections/voting and any other matter that are no longer in force,
- e. Provide a Citywide database of existing neighborhood organizations and similar information, sortable by areas and individual Neighborhood Councils;"

8) Duties of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners

Proposed recommendation that sections of the City's Administrative Code which touch upon the duties of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners be amended to reflect the following:

- a. The Board of Neighborhood Commissioners be given more power to enforce its policies.*

9) Duties of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and Board of Neighborhood Commissioners **

Proposed recommendation that sections of the City's Administrative Code which touch upon the duties of the Department and the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners be amended to reflect the following:

- a. As part of exhaustive efforts the Department shall be able to recommend to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners that the board of a neighborhood council be removed prior to having to recommend involuntary decertification.

*Note: For Item 8, you are invited to comment on which powers and policies you or your neighborhood council board may or may not support for the Commission to be given.

**Note: Item 9 was not brought before the Commission on June 27, but it will be at a subsequent meeting. In the meantime, you are requested to also weigh in on the issue as it is one of the recommendations from the NC Plan Review Committees.