



Board Training & Retreat Minutes

Sunday, March 17, 2013 10:00am—4:00pm

Simon Wiesenthal Center 3rd Floor

1399 S. Roxbury Dr., Los Angeles, CA 90035 (Pico and Roxbury)

I. Call to Order & Roll Call

Board Members in Attendance for New Board Member training: Doug Fitzsimmons, Hector Garza, Kevin Gres, Bethie Kohanbash, Ellen Lanet, Barry Levine, David Mattis and Beth Ryan

II. General Public Comment - *no public in attendance*

III. New Board Member Training

Doug Fitzsimmons presented an overview of the history of the Neighborhood Councils, the Charter and details on the history of the South Robertson Neighborhoods Council. The responsibilities of the individual board members regarding attendance and involvement with committees was also discussed. And new board members reviewed the by-laws and rules and regulations and parliamentary procedures.

There was an open dialog with great questions and each new board member was presented with a binder of materials including the by-laws, standing rules, code of civility, board member handbook, treasurer's handbook and map of the SORO boundaries.

Upcoming trainings were discussed as well as the new mentor program.

Thanks to Bette Billet for securing a donation of bagels and cream cheese for the morning session.

IV. Lunch was served.

Thanks to Terrence Gomes and Bethie Kohanbash for coordinating kosher and non-kosher food for the retreat.

V. Full Board Retreat

Board Members Present for Board Member Retreat: (17): Kevin Gres, Kimber Smith, Beth Ryan, Robyn Braun, Bette Billet, Michael Lynn, Jon Liberman, Ellen Lanet, Paula Waxman, Bethie Kohanbash, David Mattis, Barry Levine, Marj Safinia, Terrence Gomes Hector Garza, Doug Fitzsimmons and Erick Morales

Board Members Absent (6): Michael Bloom, Nahed Guirguis, Brian Kite, Susan Burden, Victor Mitry and Martin Epstein

- After a welcome and brief overview of the new board member training, Beth Ryan presented a form for board members to share their contact information and to indicate if they would be interested in serving as a mentor to the new board members.
- The board members then shared their tips and tricks and knowledge they wish someone would have shared with them early on in their involvement with the SORO.
- Terrence Gomes gave an overview of funding procedures including demand warrants, P-cards and NPG grants.
- Marj Safinia provided an overview on the outreach efforts of SORO NC and

Doug Fitzsimmons
President

Brian Kite
Vice-President

Terrence Gomes
Treasurer

Beth Ryan
Secretary

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- indicated that we are all responsible for outreaching to the community.
- Each board member was then asked to write down their interests and motivations including specific goals that they would like to see implemented.
- During the break, these topics were put into categories so the board members could indicate their interests to come up with a common vision amongst the board members.

The board members participated in a lively discussion brainstorming ways to:

- provide two-way discussions with the community
- recruit, expand and reach out to the local business community
- increase SORO's public profile
- in addition to other ideas including
 - a speakers series
 - better use of our parks
 - creating contact databases
 - researching demographics information
 - reaching out to all residents to organize a way for neighbors to connect with neighbors within their zones
 - create and host local events throughout the community

Doug and Marj presented a new way for board members to think about our priorities by focusing on Big Ideas. The concept is that our board discusses and agrees on one big idea and then we dedicate our time and resources toward making major strides in that area over the upcoming fiscal year. We would create short term and long term goals as well as how we will continue to support this commitment after the year is over.

Overall the board was receptive to this idea agreeing that we would need to spend more time discussing it, agreeing on a big idea for the board to focus on, create short and long term goals and flushing out any potential problems.

Beth presented an evaluation form for the retreat as well as a board self-evaluation for the board members to fill out.

VI. Board Retreat Evaluation

The results of the retreat evaluations indicated the following:

- the two items the board members enjoyed the most were:
 - hearing from and sharing ideas with fellow board members
 - the conversation about the "big idea"
- the day's event that participants did not enjoy were:
 - that not everyone participated
 - and many indicated that it was a long day - especially for the new board members who attended a new board training for the first two hours of the day in addition to the retreat
- follow-up feedback from board members included:
 - one board member felt that we should not have another retreat
 - one board member felt we should have another retreat in a month's time
 - and the remaining board members felt we should have another retreat in six months
 - the vast majority of the board members agreed that the upcoming retreat should last between 2 - 3 hours
- all board members felt that the retreat met (or exceeded) their expectations



VII. Board Self-Evaluation

Board members were also asked to complete a 3-page board self-evaluation that we can use as a baseline to determine areas where the board is strong, where we need to make improvements and where our weaknesses are.

In the areas of **Selection and Composition**, there was general consensus amongst the board members.

- The members felt the board was strong in the following areas:
 - balance of new and experienced board members
 - skill sets of board members
 - board members interested in the work of the board
- Nine of the 19 members felt that the SORO board was reflective of community we serve while nine additional members felt that this was an area in need of improvement. Only one board member felt that the board does not reflect the community in which we serve.
- The two areas the board felt we most needed to improve in the area of selection and composition was concerning:
 - Having a pool of potential board members for the future
 - And grooming board members through the use of volunteers on committees

In the areas of **Orientation and Training**, there was general consensus that the board was strongest in the following areas:

- Understanding the organization's mission and legal framework and liabilities
- Providing additional training and a manual as well as an orientation for new members
- One area where several members were divided was regarding the board signing a document outlining the responsibilities of a board member.
- And the area where the majority of board members (over 50%) indicated we were working on it, but weren't all the way there was regarding having clear goals and action items based on a strategic plan.

The area of **Structure and Organization** is where the board scored itself the highest.

- 100% of the board indicated that SORO has strong by-laws which are used to conduct business and that there is an executive committee to take care of issues as they arise
- The board also scored highest (80% and above) in the areas of the process of choosing a chair, relationships between president and board are strong, active committees and our relationships with city officials and agencies.
- The board scored itself 60% in the areas of periodic review and evaluation of committee assignments and in the clarity of the board and community about their respective duties and responsibilities.
- All categories in the Structure and Orientation of the board scored 60% or above.

Scoring in the area of **The Board at Work** ranged from a low of 32% to 100%.



- All of the board members polled felt that the board met at least 4 times a year while half felt we began and ended on time and half felt we could use some work in this area.
- Three-fourths felt that there was adequate time for review of materials.
- Two-thirds believed that board meetings are characterized by open discussion, creative thinking and active participation, that committee assignments are completed in a timely manner and that the board has an annual review of its work.
- Half of the board felt that we could use some work in the following areas – with no more than 1 board member in each area indicating we didn't do it at all:
 - Involving all board members in the planning of short and long term goals
 - Discussing our goals and evaluation at board meetings
 - Board members accepting and carrying out assignments in their areas of expertise
 - And being aware of local, state and national concerns facing the board
- And only 32% felt that we have mastered communicating our accomplishments and obstacles.

The final area on the self-evaluation was **Fiscal Capacity**.

- The board scored itself above 80% in the areas of
 - Reviewing the financials each month
 - Choosing a treasurer, second signatory and p-card holder
 - And ensuring that the board is fulfilling its fiduciary responsibility
- Three-quarters of the board believe that the board
 - Receives the financials in a timely manner before the meetings
 - Submits the budget and necessary reports on time
 - Has sufficient well-trained members regarding NC funding
 - The board takes the leadership role in utilizing an active treasurer and budget committee in managing and auditing the NC funding

Overall, the board scored well in the vast majority of the categories with 9 members indicating that they felt the board was in great shape, 8 indicating they felt we were well on our way and only 2 board members indicating that they felt the board needed a lot of improvement. None of the board members felt that we were currently experiencing problems.

We will use the feedback provided by the self-evaluation to assist the board to become stronger and will re-take the assessment to gauge our success.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 PM.
