



Approved General Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 12, 2008, 7:00pm
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 7:05 p.m. by Doug Fitzsimmons, President.

Board members present: Christine Aghassi, Brian Bergman, Bette Billet, Robyn Braun, Paul Del Piero, Daniel Fink, Doug Fitzsimmons, Gary Garcia, Terrence Gomes, Anne Gross, Nahed Guirguis, Ann Hammond, Jon Liberman, Marjan Safinia, Adam Wheeler, Sandra Willard

Board members absent: Harold Bock, Susan Burden, Jake Hakimi, Gina LaBeaud, Barry E. Levine, Roy Nwaiser

Guests present: Jennifer Badger, Elizabeth Carlin, Tamara Williams, Maria Gray, Mario Gonzalez, Richard Valverde, Kathleen Kurkjian, Anmdrew Kurkjian, Ali Lexa

Doug Fitzsimmons
President

Jon Liberman
Vice-President

Ann Hammond
Secretary

Terrence Gomes
Treasurer

II. General Public Comment

Doug explained there was a full agenda, and time for discussion might therefore be limited. He said that time for public comment would be made available after each motion was presented. He encouraged people to check out the SORO NC website and perhaps volunteer to serve on a Committee. Marj suggested people sign up for the "bethechange" email distribution list and SORO discount card.

Raymond Yu announced upcoming events and contact information: the Rose parade in Pasadena on January 1, the Cesar Chavez parade on January 18, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day parade on January 19 from 11am to 2pm, the Chinese New Year parade on January 26 celebrating the Year of the Ox, and the Golden Dragon parade on January 31 from 2-6pm, and the Firecracker 10K run on February 8.

Christine noted a meeting to be held on January 10, 2009, regarding Proposition B, related to a solar plan initiative by LADWP that will be on the March ballot.

Jon noted a meeting for the community to be held on December 11 at Felicia Mahood Center regarding a reallocation of LA police officers from West Lost Angeles. Jennifer Badger provided a flyer.

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III. Old Business

- a. **Draft General Board Meeting Minutes of November 12, 2008 (Hammond) (GB121008-1):** Bette moved to approve draft minutes of the General Meeting of November 12, 2008; Sandra seconded. **Vote: Y-14; N-0; A-2. Minutes approved.** Gary, Adam and Paul all said they are not yet on the SORO NC mailing list, and Terrence committed to follow up.
- b. **2008 Goals Report.** Doug presented a brief report of SORO NC accomplishments during 2008, highlighting: progress on graffiti removal; public safety meetings held for the community; outreach activities including street banners, a working website, merchant cards, SORO Walks at 7, a “living green” town hall meeting in November, and a CD-5 Candidates Forum meeting scheduled for February 2009; steps toward safer neighborhoods including encouragement of the Neighborhood Watch program, funds allocated for fire station improvement, organization of CERT training, activities related to the Skin club, and a meeting of all neighborhood associations for the purpose of sharing information and finding solutions. A full report on SORO NC accomplishments for the year will be posted on the SORO NC website by the end of the year.

IV. Community Reports

- a. **Office of Councilmember Jack Weiss (CD-5):** Field Deputy Jennifer Badger reminded all about the community meeting on November 11. Some LAPD divisions are losing 60 to 80 officers; West LA is slated to lose 28. Jennifer reported the Safe Passages program in CD-10 is slated to go forward and will not expire at the end of this month. She also reported continuing action on Robertson Blvd. parking enforcement; some cars and trucks are being towed, and hopefully this will address the problem of the advertising trucks. She noted copper pipes had been stolen. Jon thanked her and Councilmember Weiss for their commitment to and action on the Safe Passages program, noting that it is protecting 3500 schoolchildren.
- b. **Office of Councilmember Herb Wesson (CD-10):** This report was postponed as Liz Carlin was delayed.
- c. **Office of Mayor Antonio Villaragosa.** Stephen Cheung apologized for not having been able to attend SORO NC meetings for the past few months. He announced: (i) the Mayor’s office is recruiting volunteers for CERT training. These volunteers help do community outreach, and are very important for helping to ensure community needs are met. For further information, see www.lacity.org. (ii) The mayor is again sponsoring a budget survey. This year, as was the case last year and will be the case



next year, the City is facing financial tough times. There will be an estimate \$11 million shortfall, and the challenge is how to balance all the needs. Community members are encouraged to participate in the survey through the website of the city or mayor. A regional budget day is again scheduled to allow community members the opportunity to speak with the Mayor directly; two SORO NC representatives can be selected to attend this meeting in February.

- d. **LAPD Report:** Senior Lead Officers (SLOs) Maria Gray and Mario Gonzales, whose areas border each other within the South Robertson neighborhoods, reported crime in both areas is down. Recent robberies have involved student phones and one South Robertson business, Jack and Jill, was robbed of \$11. Gangs recently robbed students off Robertson, but they were able to identify individuals and caught three out of the four suspects. Two CFL (Crazy for Life) gang members were caught for attempted robbery. LAPD is now stepping up patrols due to the holiday season. The SLOs said LAPD always tries to send resources to South Robertson. They encouraged the community to attend the town hall meeting about LAPD officer redeployment. SLO Gray said her email address is 30469@lapd.lacity.org, and both left business cards with their phone numbers.

Sandra, noting that the robbery at Jack and Jill was the second in a few months, asked if business owners on Robertson should be concerned? The officers replied that these were probably more a reflection of the upcoming holiday season and poor economy, and they stressed LAPD is providing more patrols. The SLOs have also walked up and down the area to give people their business cards. They said storeowners seem to like it here. In relation to the motion on the NC agenda about shifting LAPD resources, Christine asked if they were aware of any analysis on how response times would be influenced by shift. The SLOs replied that, just due to normal traffic that evening, it had taken them 45 minutes to get from the West LAPD station to the NC meeting. They added that, because of gang activity in the South Robertson neighborhoods, LAPD will have more officer concentration in this area. Jon asked if the reduction in force would impact the specialized units dealing with narcotics and gangs; the SLOs replied they did not know where the reductions would come from but hoped the Chief of Police would address this at the town hall meeting.

On behalf of residents of Zone 6, Paul thanked the officers for what they are doing on the CFL problem.

- e. **DONE:** No report was made, as no representative was present.



V. New Business

- a. **Motion requesting Board letter opposing Early Start Variance for project at 3233 Fay Avenue (Willard) (GB121008-3).** Sandra presented the motion, and Doug invited public comment. Many community members voiced concerns. These included the view that the contractor has not been responsive to the concerns. One homeowner, who lives north of the proposed project, said he is about to convert his home to solar energy; this project would cut out the sun to his panels. Another voiced concern about the number of units (7) proposed; he said he would prefer only six. Proposed setbacks are another concern; five feet is too close to the sidewalk. The developer proposes three stories; two for living and one for parking. The homeowner prefers 2-1/2 stories like the building across the street. Another concern is sanitation; the proposed occupancy would require space for up to 21 trash containers. There would be many problems with that many additional containers. Finally, the homeowner was concerned with establishing a precedent for this type of development in the community. Another homeowner said that, because buildings will be so close to houses, they will lose their privacy. She said that the street has been quiet for 35 years, but now a huge building would overlook their bedroom and back yard. Concern was expressed about parking problems, especially with the extra trash bins; even with two parking places per unit incorporated into the building plan, not all building residents may want to park there. Speakers said they were speaking for the neighborhood, not all of whose members could attend.

Grant Levitt then spoke, representing the development company. He explained they are eligible to build 10 units on the two lots; however, because of community concerns voiced at a meeting last year with the Land Use Committee, they have made many concessions. They are allowed to build 43,000 square feet, but are only building 11,000; they have increased the setback beyond what they are allowed and providing more parking spaces than required. He noted that the proposed project has been accepted by City Plancheck. On style, he said that the neighborhood contains many styles, and the proposed building, which will use stucco rather than an extreme modern design, is one of them. He added that the early start variance would keep them from losing money; this is a small company, and cannot afford to be delayed for a year. He said that those who work at the company live in the community and their office is in the community. He urged those present to look at what is allowed and to recognize that the company has imposed restrictions on itself. If the project is delayed, for economic reasons, they would be obliged to build something larger, closer to the allowances, so they could recover their investment.



Several Board members asked specific questions and Mr. Levitt responded. Marj noted that the Council represents not just homeowners but also businesses. Christine expressed appreciation for someone prepared to invest in our community. Jon noted that greater density is a fact of life in Los Angeles. Sandra asked community representatives to look ahead and ask whether they prefer large apartment buildings, or duplexes that are two feet in front and three in back. Daniel noted the objective is to preserve quality of homeowners' life.

Christine moved to approve the motion; Jon seconded. **Vote: 2-Y, 8-N, 6-A.** No action will be taken as majority neither voted for approval or denial.

- b. **Motion to request extension of public comment period on the Museum of Tolerance Draft Environmental Impact Report (Fink) (GB121008-4).** Daniel presented the motion, explaining the short amount of time that had been given in light of the holiday season, along with the large volume of material to review. Terry moved to approve; Jon seconded. Daniel recused himself. **Vote: Y-15; N-0; A-0. Motion approved.**
- c. **Motion to protest Police redeployment to Olympic Station (Lieberman) (GB121008-5).** Jon presented the motion and explained intentions for a letter-writing campaign, whereby members of the community would request that police not be reassigned. Christine suggested the letter be copied to Mr. Eaton and Councilmembers, be corrected with respect to the Mayor's name, add a notation about increased traffic in our area, and request increased analysis before proceeding with the redeployment. Doug moved to approve the amendments; Marj seconded. **Vote: Y-15; N-0; A-1.** Daniel moved to vote on the amended motion; Nahed seconded. **Vote: Y-15; N-1; A-. Amended motion approved.**
- d. **Motion to fund up to \$250 for yard signs to promote the 2009 Town Hall: a Candidates Forum for the Council District 5 seat (Safinia) (GB121008-6).** Marj presented the motion, noting that the motion covered only half of the cost of the yard signs as the Town Hall concerns only CD-5. Bette moved to approve the motion; Dan seconded. **Motion approved unanimously.**
- e. **Motion to co-sponsor with the 2009 SoRo Festival a student art contest on the theme of "Living Green" (Safinia) (GB121008-7).** Marj presented the motion, noting that there wa no cost involved. Paul moved to approve; Nahed seconded. **Motion approved unanimously.**
- f. **Motion to correct Fresh Fruit on Fridays school allocations (Safinia) (GB111208-8).** Marj presented the proposal, with the understanding that funding would be provided out of budgeted



Outreach funds. She asked Terrence why the Treasurer's report showed Outreach at a deficit. This led to a discussion about the budget and a decision that the Budget Committee should meet as early as possible in the new year. Doug confirmed that this is not new money, but rather a clarification for the record of what had previously been approved. Bette moved to approve the motion; Nahed seconded **Vote: 10-Y; 2-N; 4-A. Motion approved.**

- g. **Motion to request inclusion of Neighborhood Councils in the City planning process (GB121008-9).** Doug presented the motion. Ann moved to approve; Terrence seconded. **Motion approved unanimously.**
- h. **Motion to request accounting of 5117 parking and Quimby funds (Fitzsimmons) (GB121008-10).** In interests of time, Doug offered to withdraw five motions, but it was decided to continue. He gave a brief background about the Westside group and Quimby. Doug presented the motion, which calls for accounting of funds. Jon moved to approve; Terrence seconded. Brian recused himself. **Vote: Y-14; N-0; A-1. Motion approved.**

Report of Office of Councilmember Herb Wesson (CD-10): At this point, Liz Carlin presented her report. She said they still need volunteers for the Winter Wonderland event on December 20th at Councilmember Wesson's office. She also reported that the City Council voted this week to fund Safe Passages through March 31; a proposal to extend the program will go through Council again on April 1st. Jon reiterated thanks to both Councilmembers and to their aides, Liz Carlin and Jennifer Badger.

(Nahed and Christine left.)

- i. **Motion to request moratorium on offsite and supergraphic signs (Fitzsimmons) (GB121008-11).** Doug presented the motion. Jon moved to approve; Terrence seconded. **Motion approved unanimously.**
- j. **Motion to request enforcement of intersection gridlock regulations (Fitzsimmons) (GB121008-12).** Doug presented the motion. Marj moved to approve it; Sandra seconded. **Vote: Y-8; N-6; A-0. Motion approved.**
- k. **Motion to request that Neighborhood Councils have the right to appeal City department decisions (Fitzsimmons) (GB121008-13).** Doug presented the motion. He explained that clarifications are needed as to whom an appeal should be filed and whether Neighborhood Councils could appeal. Marj moved to approve the motion; Daniel seconded. **Vote: Y-13; N-0; A-1. Motion approved.**



VI. Board Development

- a. **Board Retreat.** Marj reported on the proposed Neighborhood Council retreat. She said the intention would be Board Development. Sue Burden offered Museum of Tolerance. A facilitator would be used. Money has already been approved for this activity. It would be held on a weekend. It would be open to the public due to Brown Act requirements. Although a date has not yet been set, sooner would be better than later. Robyn said that, in her view, the previous retreat was not helpful; Marj said she aims to use a professional facilitator. Gary said he thinks that the emphasis should be on training rather than getting to know each other. Marj will send out email about this, and asked all to please respond.

Marj also introduced a guest, Paula Waxman, who may be interested in serving as a Board member representing Beverlywood and also serving on the Green Team.

- b. **2009 Goals.** Doug suggested that existing goals should carry over as a starting point for 2009's goals. Robyn said goals should focus on short-term and longer-term. Bette said we should focus on getting input from community. Ann said we should build on the Neighborhood Associations. Anne said we should involve faith institutions.

(Anne left)

VII. Adjournment

As there was no longer a quorum, the meeting adjourned at 10:03 p.m.
