



## Approved General Board Meeting Minutes

Thursday, November 19, 2009, 7:00pm

Hamilton Senior High School Cafeteria (venue changed to library)  
2955 S. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90034

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### I. Call to Order & Roll Call

SORO NC Vice President Jon Liberman called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

**Board Members Present:** Brian Bergman, Bette Billet, Susan Burden, Paul Del Piero, Gary Garcia, Joe Gjonola, Terrence Gomes, Nahed Guirguis, Ann Hammond, Barry Levine, Jon Liberman, Caitlin Lowe, Roy Nwaiser, Baila Romm, Marj Safinia, Kimber Smith, Paula Waxman

**Board Members Absent:** Harold Bock, Robyn Braun, Gerald Chavarria, Doug Fitzsimmons, Anne Gross, Adam Wheeler

**Guests:** Liz Carlin, Mark Davis, Rebecca Bernal, Brooke Powers, Maria Gray, Mario Gonzalez, Kristine Flores, Fabiola Gonzalez, Carmen Dominguez, Anne Sutton, Oliver Summers, Jose Sanchez, Cynthia Ojeda, Gil Cheron

**Doug Fitzsimmons**  
President

**Jon Liberman**  
Vice-President

**Ann Hammond**  
Secretary

**Terrence Gomes**  
Treasurer

### II. General Public Comment

Gil Cheron introduced himself as a business owner and Beverly Drive resident and announced he is opening a nonprofit medical marijuana facility at Venice and Cattaraugus. He said he will not allow students from Hamilton High School to access the facility. In response to several questions from Board members, he said he obtains marijuana from members of his collective, he has taken steps to ensure high levels of security, the store will be open no later than 8:00 p.m., he plans to open in December, and the facility sign will be a green cross at the front and rear entrances. He said he and his family have been business owners in this area for many years, including a recording studio and selling promotional items; family-owned properties are on Venice and La Cienega. Brian invited him to attend the next Land Use Committee meeting.

Carmen Dominguez, Principal, and Anne Sutton, Teacher, at Shenandoah School thanked SORO NC for being such a good friend of the school, including Fresh Fruit on Friday, Scatch, and the potential dance theatre program. They said that, a few years ago, Shenandoah was a struggling school, with limited academic achievement. By everyone working together, the school has turned around: student test scores have increased 300% in last five years. They said that test scores are now evening out, but test scores do not define the school. Anne said students especially love Fresh Fruit Friday, and they distributed 100 letters students had written to the Board, as well as a sign they had prepared, to express their thanks and appreciation.

Gary Garcia announced Hamilton had won the first playoff game. He said there would be another game on November 18<sup>th</sup> that must be a night

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game. If Hamilton wins that game, there will be more night games, which are held 7:30-9:00 p.m. and involve lights, a band, and cheering fans. He asked the NC to send a letter to forewarn the community, and he apologized to neighbors who might be inconvenienced by these events. He said Hamilton would open its parking lot so no one should be parking on the street. Board members congratulated the team on its success.

### III. Old Business

**Draft General Board Meeting Minutes of October 15, 2009 (Hammond/GB111909-1).** Ann noted a typographical error in a Board member's name; Baila asked that the draft minutes reflect that she and Terry had expressed interest in serving as NC C-PAB representative. Marj moved to approve the draft minutes with those changes; Paula seconded. **Vote: 13-Y, 0-N, 3-A. Minutes approved.**

### IV. Special Reports

**City Clerk NC Election update (Yun).** Kristine Flores of the City Clerk's office distributed the election procedures booklet, noting that it had been developed using SORO NC bylaws of June 1, 2009, and the stipulation worksheet SORO NC had submitted. The SORO NC election will be held Sunday, April 11, 2010, from 10a.m.-4p.m., a time and date assigned by the City Clerk, at the Robertson Recreation Center. Eligibility is based on self-affirmation and minimum age of 15. There will be 25 open positions. Each applicant can be a candidate for no more than one Board seat. Only people who are disabled are eligible for absentee ballots. Key dates are on page 26 of the booklet. The Board must endorse the booklet by December 2<sup>nd</sup>; if that is not possible, the Board must ask by email for an extension by December 2<sup>nd</sup>. All NCs are responsible for developing and paying for their own outreach for the election. Results will be posted on April 12<sup>th</sup>; official results will be available by April 20<sup>th</sup>. The public will be invited to view ballots. Volunteers are needed to staff the election.

### V. Community Reports

**a. Office of Councilmember Wesson (Carlin).** Liz reported the City Council discussed medical marijuana facilities, and there will be a joint session of PLUM and Public Safety on November 17<sup>th</sup>. The Council did not vote on proposals due to insufficient time for review before the meeting. Councilmember Wesson's two motions advocated a medical marijuana identification card be required and facilities be a specified distance from residential areas. Marj said members of her community are distressed that one proposal may be to decrease offset from 1000 to 500 feet and asked for the Councilmember's position on this. Liz said that, as of a week ago, the Councilmember wanted 1000 feet. Liz said she was trying to gauge community sentiment on this issue and asked for those present to indicate, in a personal capacity, their preference. Marj said the community should be involved in this discussion. Liz also reported tickets are available for CD-10 residents needing a free turkey and invited people to contact her; turkeys will also be given away in December.

(Caitlin arrived.)



**b. Office of Councilmember Koretz (Davis).** Mark reported Councilmember Koretz also proposed amendments on medical marijuana; he is concerned about security, the potential decrease to 500 feet as inequitable, and how much money is on site. Mark reported streetlights on Pico, off for four weeks due to loss of a transformer, are back on due to action by the Councilmember's office and SORO NC Board members. He said there will be a project next fiscal year to convert to low voltage.

**c. Office of the Mayor (Badger).** Terry said Jennifer is busy, but Jon and Terry are collaborating with her to ensure that children at Shenandoah receive holiday toys.

**d. Office of Senator Price (Bernal).** Rebecca distributed the Senator's "At Your Service" pamphlets inviting people to call his office for a list of reasons. She said unemployment is an important issue to him and he can help facilitate access to benefits. She said he has gotten through the Senate six bills that have been signed by the Governor; these are listed on his website, and one is a bill allowing 17-year-olds to preregister to vote. The Senator is hosting a free foreclosure assistance session on November 21<sup>st</sup> and a toy drive at Exposition Park on December 17<sup>th</sup>.

**e. LAPD Report (Gray & Gonzalez).** Maria and Mario said that, during this holiday season, LAPD needs public support and vigilance. They asked people to be aware of anything suspicious, get license plate numbers if possible, and serve as witnesses. They reported the Vons at National and Castle Heights was robbed at gunpoint during working hours; other recent incidents include a display case incident at Westside Pavilion, a cell phone robbery on Robertson, two burglaries north of Olympic, and many car break-ins. Maria thanked Bette for a neighborhood watch venue and noted an organized community cleanup should help reduce crime. She said LAPD is working with local synagogues to help avoid break-ins there during the holidays. Maria said LAPD email transmission of daily crime reports will soon resume. Paul asked about LAPD's relationship with medical marijuana facilities; Maria said LAPD attends to what goes on outside the facilities while activities inside the facilities are under the purview of other City authorities. Baila asked about a robbery on November 17<sup>th</sup>; Maria said she had no information about it.

**f. Robertson Recreation Center Report (Powers).** Brooke reported free yoga classes are available on Wednesdays at 7pm, and winter classes start in January.

**g. DONE Report (Ibanez).** Rose reported there was an October 10<sup>th</sup> Neighborhood Congress and Budget meeting; Jon and Terry were SORO NC's representatives and former Board member Christine Aghassi was alternate. Rose said an interactive survey will be coming out, hopefully, in early December. Decisions have not yet been made about NC rollover funds; there is a new funding administrator at DONE. Rose encouraged Board members to attend Regional NC training; it focuses on ethics, but not exclusively. She emphasized that the City Clerk's office will do no outreach in connection with the NC election, and Rose offered to work with the ad hoc election committee. Marj said Palms NC might like to pool resources for election outreach.



At this point, the Board agreed to consider new business before committee reports.

## VI. New Business

**a. Motion for fund \$1000 for the 2009 CD-10 Winter Wonderland (Gomes/ GB111909-3).** Liz Carlin said Councilmember Wesson's office has held this annual event for several years and briefly described it. She said they ask each school in CD-10 to invite 10 children who are unlikely to receive presents during the holiday season, and they ask all NCs in CD-10 to partner with them. Last year, 600 children attended. Liz committed to invite 15 children from SORO through the Child Care Center, in addition to 10 from Shenandoah. Liz explained that they target children in grades K-5, especially at-risk children; however, they do not turn anyone away. The per-child cost is \$35 (\$21,000 event divided by 600.) In response to questions about participation of other NCs within CD-10, Liz said one other Council has committed \$1500, and she has approached two others. She added that CD-10 will publicize SORO NC on event-related literature. She also asked SORO NC Board members to volunteer at the event. Bette commented that it is a wonderful event. Ann moved to approve the motion; Marj seconded. **Vote: Y-16; N-0; A-1. Motion approved.**

**d. Motion to fund up to \$5,511 for Fresh Fruit on Fridays at Shenandoah Elementary (Levine/GB111909-6).** Barry introduced Cynthia Ojeda, Executive Director of the Model Neighborhood Program, which manages Fresh Fruit on Fridays. Cynthia explained that SORO NC funded this program last year for \$6,200, including Shenandoah and Canfield elementary schools and the Child Care Center at Robertson Recreation Center. This year, the proposal covers only Shenandoah for 22 weeks, during the period March 2010 – December 2010. Cynthia described the program and passed around testimonials about it. She said it started more than eight years ago with money raised by parents. The purpose is to educate children about nutritious food and how it is grown. The program overall serves about 4,000 children weekly, of which about 700 are at Shenandoah. Each week, she selects a farmer and puts together information about the farm. The farmer picks produce on Wednesdays; it is then cleaned and prepared. Each Friday, either the school principal in assembly or teachers in class read about the farmer and the produce they will receive that day. They also show on a map where the farm is. It educates children about a variety of foods, and the quality of food served is very high. It has lasting influence on children's nutritional knowledge; it has reached children who are now in high school. Terry advised DONE could not pay volunteers as presented in the proposal. Gary moved to amend the motion to remove the \$495 for volunteers; Baila seconded. **Amendment approved unanimously.** Barry moved to approve the amended motion for funding up to \$5,016; Ann seconded. **Motion as amended approved unanimously.**

**b. Motion to fund up to \$3,000 for Fire Station 58 enhancements (Hammond/GB111909-4).** Ann introduced the motion, stating that this motion had been agreed upon at the November Public Safety Committee meeting. Ann said the Committee's approach is to be proactive with the Fire Station so that it is possible to plan for priority needs and avoid the situation encountered last year when the Board approved an expenditure





but was then unable to effect payment because the work was so urgent that it had already been done and the City would not reimburse the costs. She explained that the Committee had asked the Fire Station to submit a full list of priorities for the coming year, and the Committee had then selected items it agreed were priorities appropriate to submit for NC funding approval. Board members had many questions about whether or not: (a) the proposed funding level overall was excessive, (b) three cost estimates were needed for each item, (c) the City would pay for these items, (d) this list represented everything the Fire Station wanted, (e) some items were frivolous, and (f) proposed expenditures were linked to public safety. Jon said these were not items for which the City would pay; Bette added that after 9/11, a great deal of funding for such expenditures for fire stations was cut off. Bette said that there was supposed to be a joint approach between SORO NC and the Fire Station, but that approach seems to have been lost. Marj said we should look for donations for some of these items, thereby both conserving costs and helping to build further our sense of community. One Board member said that, in the absence of a fire, representatives of the Fire Department should attend SORO NC Board meetings. Ann moved to table the motion; Baila seconded. **Vote: Y-16, N-1, A-0. Motion tabled.**

**c. Motion to send a letter to the LAFD Fire Chief (Lieberman/GB111909-5).** Jon introduced the motion. He emphasized that paint peeling on the building looks bad and reflects badly on the community. There was extensive discussion on the proposed letter, focused especially on the section asking about alternatives to the City painting the building. Ann said the Public Safety Committee had agreed that a letter should be sent simply asking the question as to whether or not the outside of the building would be painted. Jon moved to approve the motion; there was no second.

**f. Motion to elect 5 authorized Community Impact Statement representatives (Fitzsimmons/GB111909-8).** In Doug's absence, Marj presented the motion. She said that, in terms of naming specific individuals, one possibility is to draw from existing Committee Chairs plus the Board President. Roy clarified that the five people would be authorized to serve in this capacity only to the end of their term of office, and he moved to amend the motion to that effect; Barry seconded; **Vote Y-16, N-0, A-1. Proposed amendment approved.** Barry moved to amend the motion to include the names of five current Board members: Brian Bergman, Doug Fitzsimmons, Ann Hammond, Jon Liberman, and Marj Safinia; Joe seconded. **Vote: Y-16, N-0, A-1. Proposed amendment approved.** Roy moved to approve the motion, as amended; Joe seconded. **Vote: Y-16, N-0, A-1. Motion as amended approved.**

**e. Motion to fund up to \$3,750 for physical education classes at Shenandoah Elementary (Gomes/GB111909-7).** Terry introduced the motion. He explained that Carmen Dominguez had brought to his attention budget cuts at Shenandoah that have affected their physical education and arts programs. One effect is that students report they do not have self-confidence. The PTA president at Shenandoah spoke in favor of the proposal, saying that such an intervention at this point in the students' lives is important as fifth graders then move on to middle school. Kimber said she is familiar with the Lula Washington company and spoke highly of



it. Marj asked what happened to the LA Best program the NC Board approved last year, an after-school program costing \$2,500 for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders; Barry said it is in the works and will be offered in the Spring. Marj asked from which budget funds for the current motion would come; Terry said it can come out of any budget. Barry said he was in support of the motion, but asked Terry why this proposed motion was not presented to the Board's Education Committee. Paul asked when the school year ends and why instructors would be paid \$100 for each one-hour class; Terry replied, respectively, June and that it was a negotiated fee. Paul asked if the school would co-fund; Terry said they have no money. Kimber raised a question about overall SORO NC support for schools within SORO boundaries, whether other schools might identify needs and, if so, would SORO NC funds be available. Gary said Hamilton High School needs are in the \$100,000s, far beyond the scope of the NC budget. Barry clarified that Shenandoah is neediest, and Marj added that Shenandoah receives most of NC support because it is the only Title 10 school within SORO boundaries. However, it was noted that there has been funding support made available for other schools when requested, and several specific examples were cited. Ann added that the Board has the possibility to reallocate funds across budget categories during the year, and there is normally a mid-year budget review in January. Baila asked why NC funding support is only available for public schools; Terry said the NC cannot pay for private schools. Some Board members challenged that assertion. Baila enumerated many issues that private school children face that might potentially benefit from SORO NC funding. With respect to the motion under consideration, Ann asked why only one company had been selected, and why this program was not subject to competitive bidding; Terry said many people had recommended the Lula Washington Dance Theatre. Brian asked why Terry had had concerns about the LA Best program but not this one; Terry said it was because LA Best was out of the Mayor's office. Ann asked if there was a firm commitment for the students to perform at the SORO Festival; Terry said Festival organizers would be contacted closer to the time of the event. Brian moved to approve the motion, Roy seconded. **Vote Y-12, N-1 A-3. Motion approved.** Bette asked that this not be a precedent, that future motions consider alternatives.

**g. Motion to nominate Harold Bock as C-PAB representative (Hammond/GB111909-9).** Ann introduced the motion, stating that this motion had been agreed upon at the November Public Safety Committee meeting. There was considerable discussion about whether the Committee's deliberations had been fully informed with respect to all potentially interested candidates and the backgrounds of those interested. Joe suggested this item be placed on the agenda for the next Board meeting. **Motion withdrawn.**

(Nahed left.)

**h. Motion to create an ad hoc Election Committee (Fitzsimmons/GB111909-10).** Jon introduced the motion, stating that it had been agreed upon at the November Executive Committee meeting. Ann said work had already been outlined and begun by the Ad Hoc Board Development Committee. Bette said there had not been committees established for past elections and she thought it was a good idea to do so. Terry moved to



amend the motion to ask for an extension of the City Clerk's December 2<sup>nd</sup> deadline to approve the election booklet received at this meeting; Barry seconded. **Amendment approved unanimously.** Ann moved that the motion be further amended to name Roy as committee chairman; Paula seconded. **Vote: Y-15, 0-N, 1-A. Amendment approved.** Ann moved that the motion, as amended, be approved; Paul seconded. **Motion as amended approved unanimously.** Roy asked for volunteers to serve on the ad hoc committee: Ann, Jon and Barry volunteered; Ann said Harold was also interested.

## VII. Committee Reports

**a. Executive (Fitzsimmons).** Jon reported the Executive Committee, in response to one Board member's request, had discussed at its November meeting the possibility of moving the Board's regularly scheduled December meeting date as it fell during the eight days of Hanukkah. Jon said it was agreed at the Committee's meeting to keep to the regularly scheduled third Thursday of the month. Baila noted that December 17<sup>th</sup> was a significant religious day to some members of the SORO community, and discussion ensued. Ann asked Baila to look at the 2010 calendar by month and advise the Executive Committee if any third Thursday fell on significant religious dates so this factor could be taken into account well in advance in planning the 2010 schedule.

**b. Treasurer Report (Gomes/GB111909-2).** The November 6, 2009, report was available to all present. It showed \$106,265 budgeted, of which \$6,977 had been disbursed, an additional \$8,799 had been allocated, and \$90,490 remained available. Terry reported that DONE has changed the merchant code that affects storage.

**c. Land Use & Economic Development (Bergman).** Brian reported on a meeting that had been called by Wendy Greuel, the new City Controller, to address the principal question of who follows up on land use audits. Many people at that meeting voiced concern that Building and Safety rules were not being enforced.

**d. Education (Levine & Braun).** Barry said that there was nothing to report additional to the motion submitted at this meeting.

**e. Green Team (Waxman & Hess).** Paula reported that plans are underway for fruit trees to be distributed to lower income SORO residents during January. Hopefully, this can be combined with an electronic waste and battery collection drive planned at Hamilton High School for January 23<sup>rd</sup>. Roy noted that Goodwill also does recycling. Paula said students are also looking into whether storm drains have screens. Paula reported that more than 40 compost bins were distributed, earning about \$1400 for the City. She said she submitted the grant proposal considered at last month's Board meeting and will hear in mid-January if the proposal goes forward. Joe asked about sewer screens that are going up, noting that this can imprison raccoons and they need a way to escape.

**f. Public Safety (Bock & Hammond).** Ann reported that, in addition to discussions about motions considered at this meeting, Harold had discussed with Station #58 the possibility of holding a community pancake breakfast in the Spring.



**g. Outreach (Safinia).** Marj said that, at the October 26<sup>th</sup> joint Outreach and Public Safety meeting, it had been suggested that efficiencies could be gained if West LAPD had a life scan machine. In follow-up, Marj had learned that every LAPD unit will get one, but this will take some time. Marj also reported that follow-up emails had been sent regarding plans for emergency preparedness activities, including CERT training in January-February 2010; Baila said only five people have signed up for CERT so far.

**h. Board Development (Bock).** Ann said the Committee has not met.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

Gary explained that the school does not have sufficient funding to pay custodial staff overtime to accommodate Board meetings lasting so late in the evening; he suggested Board meetings start earlier or the Board find another venue. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 p.m.