

# South Robertson (SORO) Neighborhoods Council

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A Certified City of Los Angeles Neighborhood Council

**Victoria Karan**  
President  
**Jon Liberman**  
Vice President  
**Ann Hammond**  
Secretary  
**Terrence Gomes**  
Treasurer

## APPROVED General Meeting Minutes June 11, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. Hamilton Senior High School - Library 2955 S. Robertson Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90034

### I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m. by Victoria Karan.

**Board members present:** Christine Aghassi, Brian Bergman, Bette Billet, Harold Boch, Robyn Braun, Susan Burden, Daniel Fink, Doug Fitzsimmons, Gary Garcia, Terrence Gomes, Anne Gross, Ann Hammond, Diane Hirsch-Garcia, Victoria Karan, Gina LaBeaud, Barry E. Levine, Jon Liberman, Linda Rosen, Marjan Safinia, Sandra Willard

**Board members absent:** Nahed Guirguis, Roy Nwaiser,

**Guests present:** Jennifer Badger, Elizabeth Carlin, Stephen Cawetti, Jonathan Goldman, Josh Kline, Brooke Powers, Rashad Sharif, Carolyn Sharp, Barry Stone, Jenny Wood

### II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Barry Levine announced that Shenandoah Elementary School had given the SORO NC an award for the SCATCH (Shenandoah Caring Adults Teaching Children How) program. Harold announced that Barry Levine had received a special commendation from the school for his work. Anne Gross announced the Robertson Branch Library was thrilled with the June 1<sup>st</sup> SoRo Festival.

### III. READING OF THE MINUTES AND APPROVAL

Several corrections were noted on the draft minutes of the General Meeting of May 14, 2008. Jon moved to approve; Terrence seconded, and, with corrections, the draft minutes were approved. **Vote: 16-Y; 0-N; 1A.**

Ann announced she would not be able to attend the next meeting, and Sandra volunteered to take the minutes.

#### IV. ADVISORY REPORTS

- a. **Office of Assemblymember Karen Bass:** Assemblymember Bass' Aide Jenny Wood reported the Assemblymember was sworn in as Speaker on May 12<sup>th</sup>. She has three priorities: (i) the state budget crisis, in light of which she aims not to have too many cuts and is looking for citizen feedback; (ii) next year's state budget, in the context of which she is looking for long-term solutions related to ways to increase revenue to avoid these cyclical budget crises; and (iii) continuing to champion foster care reform. Jenny announced the Assemblymember has appointed a commission, headed by former Governors Davis and Wilson, to look into long-term budget solutions. She also expressed the Assemblymember's thanks to all for their support of her.
- b. **Office of Councilmember Jack Weiss (CD-5):** Councilmember Jack Weiss' Aide Jennifer Badger reported she had no major new news to report aside from the projects on which she is already working on with the Council. Terrence said the Department of Transportation (DOT) did an excellent job at the June 1<sup>st</sup> SoRo Festival and has been actively enforcing the 72-hour rule with motor homes parked on South Robertson. Linda said she is concerned about code enforcement with South Robertson merchants who leave materials on the sidewalk. Terrence said sandwich signs on the sidewalk are illegal and asked how to get the City to enforce them; Linda added they are unsightly and present liability issues. Jennifer said the City is doing a sweep. Linda noted she had left a phone message for Jennifer and had received no return call; Jennifer said she received no message and will check with her office.
- c. **Office of Councilmember Herb Wesson (CD-10):** Councilmember Herb Wesson's Aide Liz Carlin distributed the most recent newsletter. She reported that, following a recent meeting of representatives with Councilmember Wesson regarding traffic, his office had asked DOT: (a) to study pedestrian counts to determine if crosswalks were sufficient and (b) to review signage at intersections directly around the Skin Cabaret to see if there are any structural adjustments needed. DOT initially reported back there were no concerns on either issue, however, at the Councilmember's request, is looking into the matters in more detail, including greater clarity on traffic entering from driveways. Liz reported the Councilmember's office is also working on "movie nights" to be held throughout CD-10 during summer and fall.

Christine noted dangers at the South Robertson crosswalk at Olin; lights seem to blink randomly and cars ignore or cannot see adequately pedestrians in the crosswalk. Discussion on a beehive at the SoRo Festival led to clarification that those with beehives on private property can call the Health Department to arrange removal. Ann thanked both Jennifer and Liz for their tremendous help on the SoRo Festival.

- d. **LAPD:** Senior Lead Officer (SLO) Rashad Sharif, reporting since new SLO Maria Gray is on vacation, said La Cienega Heights had only five crimes last month, the lowest he has seen since serving this area. He noted the Captain has been putting a lot of effort into that neighborhood. He said SLO Gonzalez has been stepping up patrols around Hamilton High School in light of recent cell phone robberies, and the Safe Passage program is continuing. Barry Levine asked if LAPD is able to devote more resources to crosswalk patrols on South Robertson, especially near the High School while school

continues in session, and Rashad said he would look into it. All present thanked Rashad for his wonderful service to SoRo neighborhoods and wished him well in his new job.

- e. **DONE:** Barry Stone announced there are amendments to the Brown Act that will take effect July 1<sup>st</sup>. In essence, these amendments require the community to have access to everything the SORO NC Board sees. Discussion focused on when and where postings in the community would be sufficient, and whether it was realistic to expect posting locations to post everything, for example, the many pages of motions attached to meeting agendas. Barry Stone noted SORO NC already makes available more information than most other Neighborhood Councils, for example, background documents on motions. He said there are still areas of uncertainty, even within DONE; however, it is clear that information must be available within SORO NC boundaries. He said he would check with the City Attorney to see if postings on the SORO NC website are sufficient. Daniel suggested a binder could also be made available at the Robertson Branch Library, noting there are a significant number of our constituents, including elderly and immigrants, who do not have access to computers.

Barry Stone reminded the Council that stakeholder surveys and Board member surveys are due back to DONE by June 30, and he has received nothing as yet. He also reported that any request for funds not received by June 13<sup>th</sup> will not be paid until mid-July, as the City stops payments during this period so its books can be audited.

## VI. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

- a. **President's Report:** Victoria reported the top ten priorities identified as a result of the goal-setting process are: (tied for 1<sup>st</sup>) graffiti removal, more effective community outreach, and stopping gangs; (tied for 4<sup>th</sup>) a safer neighborhood and distributing crime reports to all; increased communication between the community and NC; better informed and trained Board members; more Board accountability; more Board influence; and community revitalization and renewal. The Ad Hoc Board Development Committee, currently comprised of Harold and Ann, will assign each of these issues to one or more standing committees for follow-up.

Jon added that the Executive Committee, at its last meeting, decided that both draft minutes of Board meetings and the Treasurer's monthly report should be given to the Board by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before the monthly Board meeting, along with the agenda, as is expected of all Committee motions and other background materials for agenda items. Victoria emphasized that motions were needed at least by that time as well so she can respond to requests for information from community members. She asked that Committee Chairs email to her exact wording for the agenda so she can cut and paste what is sent directly into the agenda.

- b. **Secretary's Report**

**Report of Grievance Panel.** Ann reported the Grievance Panel met on May 22, 2008 to consider the grievance filed by Stakeholder Noah Bleich on February 6, 2008. The Panel produced both minutes of their deliberations and a detailed report. At 5:00 p.m., on June 11<sup>th</sup>, the Report, signed by five Panel members, was submitted to Ann. Ann distributed

paper copies to all SORO NC Board members present, and all quickly reviewed it. After discussion, which clarified that the responsibility currently before the Board was simply to accept the Panel's report as consistent with bylaws requirements without regard to the substance of the Panel's findings and recommendations, Jon moved that the Board accept the report and Harold seconded. **Vote: 18-Y; 1-N; 0A.**

Victoria moved the Report be referred to Executive Committee. After discussion, which clarified that the Executive Committee would be responsible for reporting back to the Board at its next meeting its recommendations for decision on the Panel's findings and recommendations, and proposed follow-up actions if any, Doug seconded. **Vote: 16-Y; 3-N; 0A.**

Jon moved to thank the Grievance Panel for its work and all agreed.

- c. **Treasurer's Report:** Terrence distributed a written report and said \$6,252 is left in the budget. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that a working group, comprised of the Chairs of the Standing Committees, would meet to clarify the current budget situation and develop proposals for any necessary reallocations. Barry Stone noted a special NC Board meeting may be needed to approve a revised budget.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Proposal to amend Bylaws to incorporate Grievance Panel suggestions (Fitzsimmons) (Motion GB061108-3).** Doug explained the Bylaws Committee was originally going to submit one overall proposal in response to the Grievance Panel suggestions, but then decided instead to formulate the two detailed proposals, GB061108-4 and GB061108-5. Therefore, this agenda item is moot.
- b. **Proposal to amend the SORO NC Bylaws regarding posting materials to the website (Fitzsimmons) (Motion GB061108-4).** Doug said the Bylaws Committee spent a lot of time considering the Grievance Panel report and recommendations and determined two steps were needed. The first proposal is to append a *new Article VIII, section 8.1.1* to the current SORO NC Bylaws, reading as follows: *As a supplement to the physical postings required by the Brown Act, the Board will make a good faith effort to post meeting agendas, minutes, and other public communications to the SORO NC website in a timely manner.*

Victoria invited public comment on the proposal. Josh Kline said he is opposed to this motion as, in his view, it is not strong enough, that the Board should be required to post. He added the full text of proposals should be on the web, and greater transparency will lower the bar to greater participation. Doug replied that the current SORO NC Bylaws are already in compliance with Brown Act requirements, and the proposed amendment aims to meet the spirit of the Grievance Panel's recommendation. Discussion followed about why the proposed wording was "good faith effort" rather than "required" with the explanation made that we cannot control all factors that might effect ability to post. Several Board members noted that we are all volunteers doing the best we can. Victoria moved to pass the proposed Bylaws amendment; Jon seconded. **Vote: 16-Y; 0-N; 0-A.** **Motion passed unanimously.** Ann noted that, as there are 22 Board members, the

affirmative vote of 16 members represents a 2/3 majority and stands as a vote to amend the Bylaws, now to be forwarded to DONE for approval.

**Proposal to amend the SORO Bylaws regarding meeting scheduling (Fitzsimmons) (GB061108-5).** Doug summarized the second proposal. Specifically, it is proposed to append a *new Article VIII, section 8.2.1* to the current SORO NC Bylaws, reading as follows: *The Board will make a good faith effort to avoid scheduling regular meetings at times when a significant portion of its Stakeholders would not be able to participate. Should unavoidable, known meeting conflicts arise, the Board will explain why the meeting was scheduled for that date and time within the meeting agenda.* Victoria invited public comment. Josh Kline said he supports this proposal. Jon moved to pass the proposed Bylaws amendment; Barry Levine seconded. **Vote: 16-Y; 0-N; 0-A. Motion passed unanimously.** Ann noted that, as there are 22 Board members, the affirmative vote of 16 members represents a 2/3 majority and stands as a vote to amend the Bylaws, now to be forwarded to DONE for approval.

- c. **Proposal to rent a piano for Robertson Activity Center Recital (\$1000) (Levine) (Motion GB061108-6).** Barry Levine introduced Robertson Recreation Center Manager Brooke Powers to provide background on the proposal. Brooke explained the families of the students who participate in the piano lesson program pay \$85 for 10 weeks of instruction and, in the past, have also chipped in to cover costs of the recital program. As this represents a financial hardship for many of the families, and as the presence of a grand piano for recital purposes contributes to the enjoyment and prestige of the occasion, the proposal was developed for SORO NC to cover the costs of the recital this year. Terrence clarified that public funds cannot be used for awards. Christine moved to amend the proposal to fund up to \$753.50 to cover costs of rental, delivery, tuning and picking up the grand piano, and costs of snacks, for the June 21, 2008 piano recital; Brian seconded. **Vote: 19-Y; 1-A. Motion to amend passed.** Victoria moved to pass the amended proposal; Brian seconded. **Vote: 19-Y; 1-A. Motion passed.**
- d. **Proposal to support the Summer 08 RAL Program (\$4000) (Motion GB061108-7).** Jon summarized the history of the RAL program and SORO NC's support of it. He explained the purpose of the current proposal is to formalize the program year in and year out. He reported LAPD has committed two policemen to the program, and Beth Ryan has told him she expects the Police Foundation to invest \$8,000 in the program, at which point the NC will commit the sum of \$4,000. Doug asked if there was any problem in implementing the program, if funds are not available until after July 1. Brooke replied she can order supplies in mid-July but would need food purchased earlier; Terrence confirmed the credit card could be used for this purpose. Rashad said the LAPD supports the program wholeheartedly, and he will still be involved in it. Victoria said the proposal supports SORO NC's priorities of a safer neighborhood and, based on what she knows of RAL and its relationship with LAPD, she is fully behind the program; it can serve as a model for neighborhoods throughout the city.

Sandra said SORO NC had previously been asked to pay \$5,000 for a study of the RAP program on the grounds that findings from the study would be used to obtain grant funds so the program would no longer rely on SORO NC funding. Jon replied the people then involved in the program, Beth Ryan and Nicole Griffin, are no longer

involved. RAL is the only program around to keep at-risk children ages 10 to 15 out of gangs. Robyn asked why the program, previously serving 80 to 100 children, was now being limited to 40, and asked if the program would be open to everyone as in the past. Brooke replied her department funds are being cut by 15 percent, so the aim is to try to continue to serve as many children as possible; the key expense is the busses. Rashad clarified priority will be given to children from La Cienega Heights; once those needs are met, enrollment will be open to children from other neighborhoods in South Robertson neighborhoods. Terrence noted the Board has so far allocated \$22,000 to this program in less than two years, and there are no statistics to assess its effectiveness. The motion was seconded. **Vote: 19-Y; 1-A. Motion passed.**

- e. **Proposal to increase our storage space (\$1400) (Lieberman) (GB061108-8).** Jon presented the proposal; Robyn seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**
- f. **Proposal to have a picnic/barbecue on August 10<sup>th</sup> (\$400) (Lieberman) (GB061108-9).** Jon withdrew the proposal and said he would submit it at the next meeting.
- g. **Proposal that SORO NC write a supporting letter for resident requests for the installation of speed humps along Gibson Street between Robertson and Canfield (Safinia) (GB061108-10).** Marj said members of the community had approached her to ask for SORO NC Board's support for their request for speed humps to be installed on their block in light of danger to residents and especially children. With summer coming up, and more children likely to be out on the streets, this request is urgent. Resident Jonathan Goldman described the traffic situation and danger presented. Terrence asked if there had been a traffic study and if other neighborhoods had also asked for similar support. Jonathan said there has not been a traffic study, but neighbors have made observations and taken pictures. Marj said other neighborhoods had not approached the NC with similar requests. Diane seconded. **Motion passed unanimously.**

## VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. **By-Laws:** Doug said the Committee had met, and its work had been presented to the Board at this meeting.
- b. **Education:** Barry Levine said the mentoring program had concluded for the academic year, having served 22 children for ½ hour each week. He said there was a kick-off for the Fresh Fruit program, to which Kaiser had added \$2,500; the children loved it. Victoria asked everyone to spread the word about the education committee and encourage people to join.
- c. **Green Team:** Victoria said Larry Hess has received the background information from her and will advise her of his decision soon. Ann reported Larry had arranged the donation of 200 trees to be given out at the June 1<sup>st</sup> SoRo Festival.
- d. **Land Use:** Brian said the name of Elizabeth Swanson would be presented to the Board at its next meeting for approval as Co-Chair of the Land Use Committee. Linda said that, when she returns from vacation in July, she, Marj and Sandra will meet to discuss how to get a South Robertson renovation project going.

- e. Outreach:** Marjan and Christine said the kickoff at the June 1<sup>st</sup> SoRo Festival had been a great success, with more than 200 new people signed up and put on the bethechange email distribution list, bringing that total to well over 300. More than a dozen businesses have already signed up as participants with the SORO cards and are now receiving cling signs for their windows; they asked each Board member to sign up three merchants by the next meeting. There are 54 lampposts in SORO neighborhoods available for street banners, and they have filed a permit to hang them on South Robertson up to Pickford. Once the banners are up, they would like to launch the walking campaign, involving the media and perhaps having the two Councilmembers join the walk. Marj and Christine have attended the media training. Brian asked the Board if they had seen any impact of the clean-up by Chrysalis, and all replied no.
- f. Public Safety:** Jon said the Committee had met, and its work had been presented to the Board at this meeting.
- g. Ad hoc Board Development:** There was no report as Harold had left the meeting.
- h. Ad hoc Inter-NC Committee.** Doug said he will attend the meeting of Neighborhood Councils on June 12<sup>th</sup>.

**X. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.