

South Robertson (SORO) Neighborhoods Council

SORO Neighborhoods Council
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A Certified City of Los Angeles Neighborhood Council

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APPROVED General Meeting Minutes July 9, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. Hamilton Senior High School 2955 S. Robertson Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90034

I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Victoria Karan.

Board members present: Christine Aghassi, Brian Bergman, Bette Billet, Robyn Braun, Susan Burden, Daniel Fink, Doug Fitzsimmons, Terrence Gomes, Anne Gross, Nahed Guirguis, Victoria Karan, Barry E. Levine, Jon Liberman, Roy Nwaiser, Marjan Safinia, Sandra Willard

Board members absent: Harold Boch, Gary Garcia, Ann Hammond, Diane Hirsch-Garcia, Gina LaBeaud, Linda Rosen

Guests present: Jennifer Badger, Elizabeth Carlin, Brooke Powers, Barry Stone, Phil Brown, Adeena Bleich, Joey Freeman, Rick Kirkbride, Robert Schwartz, Elizabeth Swanson, Raymond, Officer Mario Gonzalez, Officer Matt Kirk

The LAPD report was moved up to accommodate Officer Gonzalez's schedule:

Senior Lead Officer (SLO) Gonzalez gave the LAPD report. While there has been a series of home invasion robberies on the West Side, in the South Robertson area, things have calmed down since school let out. There have been no cell phone robberies or other similar crimes. There has been the usual number of car break-ins, so as usual, LAPD advises people to keep valuables out of sight. Officer Matt Kirk, SLO for West Los Angeles, was with Officer Gonzalez.

II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Raymond had two announcements: The Lotus Festival will be taking place the weekend of July 11th, starting Friday the 11th at 5:00 P.M. and concluding Sunday, July 13th at 8:30 p.m. This is the 31st anniversary of the Festival, which takes place at Echo Park Lake. The Department of Recreation and Parks is sponsoring. For more information, see www.laparks.org and click on

the Lotus Festival icon. Second, Sunday, August 17th, will be the 68th annual Nisei Week Parade, held at the conclusion of Nisei Week, a nine-day festival that will highlight Japanese and Japanese-American culture. The parade starts at 5:00 p.m. and will travel through Little Tokyo. For further information, see www.pageantryproductions.com and click on Nisei Week.

Phil Brown, an architect and urban designer, addressed the Board about his concerns and plans regarding transportation issues in the Los Angeles basin. He said that, in his view, the city has no kind of overall strategy, as evidenced by the fact that there is no transportation planning division within the Department of Transportation. Instead, planning was transferred to L.A. County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which only focuses on the issues of commuters. He said that, given the onslaught of development within the basin, unless some sort of planning is done, transportation problems already plaguing the city are going to get worse.

He brought a map to illustrate his suggestions--ringing the central basin with improved vehicular and rail routes. Residential areas would be left alone. For example, he said the subway should go down Santa Monica Boulevard, not Wilshire. He said he would like to come back next month and give a fifteen-minute Power Point presentation with more detailed plans. Vikki suggested that he talk to Brian regarding doing his presentation at Land Use first. Doug suggested that the Public Safety committee should also be involved.

Adeena Bleich announced she is running for the 5th District Council seat that will be vacated by Jack Weiss.

III. READING OF THE MINUTES AND APPROVAL

Sandra moved to approve draft minutes of the General Meeting of June 11, 2008 with Marj seconding. **Vote: 15 -Y; 1-A. Minutes approved.**

IV. ADVISORY REPORTS

- a. **Office of Speaker of the House Karen Bass:** Jenny Wood was not present to give a report. Victoria noted our agendas need to be changed to reflect Assemblymember Bass's title of Speaker of the House.
- b. **Office of Councilmember Jack Weiss (CD-5):** Field Deputy Jennifer Badger reported that she has been getting phone calls from concerned residents regarding the rash of home invasions on the West Side. She sent a notice containing information about the situation to the Be The Change list. With regards to Linda Rosen's issue of businesses putting merchandise out on the street, Jennifer has been in contact with the Street Use department within the Bureau of Street Services regarding code enforcement; unfortunately, the money for doing sweeps has been cut. Therefore, individual locations will have to be reported and investigated. In addition, the city will be changing its policy regarding fee waivers for special events. Previously, fees for non-profit organizations were waved; this will no longer be the case. However, the full policy has not been finalized. Terry asked if the SORO Festival will have to pay the higher fee, but Jennifer wasn't sure. Each district may be given a certain 'credit' in fee waivers, which can be allocated to events as the district sees fit. This policy will also affect farmers' markets, which have historically received the waivers. She also brought flyers regarding community beautification grants.

- c. **Office of Councilmember Herb Wesson (CD-10):** Councilmember Herb Wesson's Aide Liz Carlin was not yet at the meeting during the Advisory Reports. Her report is summarized between New Business and Committee Reports.
- d. **DONE:** Barry Stone was also not at the meeting yet; his report also comes between New Business and Committee Reports.

V. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

- a. **President's Report:** Victoria reported that the committees were given the 'Top Ten List' of goals, as announced at the June meeting, resulting from the Board member survey/goals meeting. They are being discussed within the committees in terms of implementation. There will be more discussion of the goals at the next Executive meeting. Executive meetings will be taking place on the third Tuesday of every month.
- b. **Treasurer's Report:** Terrence reported that, due to the NC's budget being in limbo, we have \$36. Once the SORO NC's budget is approved at this meeting, we'll have \$62,200. Barry asked if, during this limbo period, the credit card can be used. Terry said yes, but that nothing needs to be purchased--the T-shirts for RAL have been paid for.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **Revisions to budget 2007-2008 (Lieberman) - Motion GB070908-2.** Jon moved that the Board approve the revised budget. Barry Levine seconded. **Vote: Unanimous. Motion passed/Budget approved.**
- b. **Adoption of budget 2008-2009 (Lieberman) - Motion GB070908-3.** Nahed asked for verification that funding for the Peace Picnic is included in this budget. Jon confirmed it is under the Public Safety allocations. Jon moved that the Board approve the 2008-2009 budget. Victoria seconded. **Vote: 15-Y; 1-N; 0-A. Motion passed/Budget approved.**
- c. **Modification of Summer RAL Program to expand items the NC will pay for (Lieberman) - Motion GB07098-4.** The purpose of this motion is to build more flexibility into the funding for the program in the nature of a block grant that can pay for whatever items are needed. Brooke Powers of the Robertson Recreation Center reported that the program started on Monday, the 8th. There will be six buses instead of five, and the program will go for eight weeks. The first day eight kids signed up, but by today, that number has increased to twenty-two. Bette gave a special thank you to Jon and Brooke for getting the program going. She also asked about the \$5,000 evaluation that had been done on the program, and whether the findings could be applied to the new program and therefore allow for outside funding opportunities. (Barry Stone enters at this point). Brooke replied that she thinks the real world success of the program will do more to encourage funding than the evaluation. Robyn asked Brooke if she's actually reviewed the evaluation, as Robyn felt the study wasn't particularly thorough and was skewed in favor of the program. Brooke had gone over the program, and agreed--there isn't enough detail and it's not very useful in terms of garnering grants and other outside funding. Robyn also asked that, if any other surveys on the program are done, the NC has a chance to review them so that the problems that have been encountered with the current evaluation can be avoided in future. **Vote: 13-Y; 0-N; 2-A. Motion passed.**

VII. NEW BUSINESS

(Motion GB070908-09 was advanced to accommodate the attendance of Elizabeth Swanson).

- a. **Motion to approve Elizabeth Swanson as co-chair of the Land Use and Economic Development Committee (Bergman) - Motion GB070909-09.** Brian briefly discussed his desire to have a co-chair and introduced Liz, who greeted the Board. Christine moved to approve. Bette seconded. **Vote: 15-Y; 0-N; 1-A. Motion passed.**
- b. **Motion to create a "consent calendar" system for passage of motions at the General Board meetings (Bergman) - Motion GB070908-05.** Brian explained how the consent calendar works--at the start of the meeting, all of the motions would be part of the consent calendar. Motions in this consent package do not need any discussion before a vote. Unless a board member or community member feels that an item should be discussed and requests the removal of that item, the entire package is voted on at once without any additional explanations or comments. There was an enormous amount of discussion regarding this matter. Doug clarified that either Board members or stakeholders can ask for an item to be removed from the calendar at any time. Roy said he thought there are some gaps in the Board's voting methods not covered in the bylaws. In addition, Roy said he thought the consent calendar should not be incorporated into the bylaws; rather, it should be a procedure.

Terry had some concerns that if a stakeholder asked for a motion to be pulled from the calendar, the Board could then table it rather than discuss; however, the NC already has the ability to table motions, and has been doing so. Terry also asked Barry Stone about votes for motions--doesn't the Board have to vote, rather than merely announce motions as being passed, as the consent calendar procedure seems to indicate? Terry suggested that the entire block of consent calendar motions require one roll call vote. Christine indicated she was uncomfortable with the idea, as she thinks the public will find it confusing, and that it may limit the fullness of discussion that naturally evolves. Bette agreed with Christine, feeling the consent calendar would undermine the public service aspect of the NC. Victoria said she supported the consent calendar, as there are many motions that come before the Board that don't require discussion. Doug felt the consent calendar procedure could be interactive, as the President would inquire about each motion remaining on or being removed from the consent calendar as the new business part of the agenda was covered. Marj stated that it is incumbent on the Board to do their homework and read the motions in advance. She also asked if there could be a trial run of the consent calendar before including it in the bylaws. After more discussion of whether using the consent calendar would allow a proper level of discussion, Terry stated that if we are to use the consent calendar, all the motions must be sent to the Be The Change list, so the public knows what would be discussed at a meeting. Roy again recommended that the Board create a set of meeting procedures, rather than incorporating them into the bylaws, but Victoria reminded him that the previous, ever-amended set of procedures became confusing to the Board and public, and ultimately no one knew what the proper ones were. Roy suggested that any set of procedures be posted, so that Board members and stakeholders will be aware of them. Seeing the level of discussion the issue was creating, Brian moved to table it. **Motion tabled.**

- c. **Motion to provide the President with the power to provide in-meeting legal and bylaw interpretations (Bergman) - Motion GB070908-6.** Brian made a change to the wording of the motion. In the last sentence, "If the Los Angeles City Attorney's Office notifies the President that an interpretation was made in error, the President shall act to correct the effect of the original bylaw interpretation to the extent possible", the phrase after "error" shall read, "recommend to the Board how SORO NC shall correct the effect of the original bylaw interpretation to the extent possible." Terry asked: shouldn't this

job be done by the Parliamentarian? The problem is, once the motion to negate all guidelines and procedures apart from the bylaws was passed, the position of Parliamentarian was eliminated. However, Doug said that, because the Board elected a Parliamentarian, that position still stands. Victoria asked about the definition of the Parliamentarian's job, and Brian responded that there is no description now in the bylaws. Roy suggested that bylaw 7.7 be amended to state that any time a non-executive position is created, a job description must be included. Doug suggested we also vote in a backup Parliamentarian. Vikki agreed with this. Brian agreed to amend the motion to change all mentions of "President" to "Parliamentarian, or member of the Board acting as the Parliamentarian at the meeting". Vikki moved to approve this amendment, Marj seconded, and the amendment was approved. Vikki moved to approve the motion, Doug seconded. **Vote: 15-Y; 1-N; 0-A. Because a bylaws amendment requires a 2/3 vote of the Board, it was determined that of 22 Board members, 16 would be needed to pass this motion. Motion did not pass.**

- d. **Motion to provide the President with the power to control discussion during Board meetings (Bergman) - Motion GB070908-7.** Given the outcome of Motion GB070908-6, Brian deduced this would not have sufficient votes to pass and tabled it. **Motion tabled.**
- e. **Motion to simplify food ordering for the General Board Meeting (Safinia) - Motion GB070908-10.** Marj stated that the impetus for this motion comes from the fact that the local restaurants are amused/annoyed by the NC requesting a spread for twenty-five-plus people for only a cost of \$100, and don't want to be bothered. Furthermore, the task of paying for/picking up the food is onerous for Terry. Vikki inquired about the mention of pizza in the motion--does that mean there will be pizza at every meeting? Marj replied that pizza is easy to order, transport, etc. Vikki also wanted to know if drinks, plates and napkins will be provided. She also asked that the NC support a local business, as opposed to a chain. Jon suggested we try to work something out with Dolce Isola, the Ivy bakery, a notion, which while appealing, was quickly quashed due to financial impracticality. Discussion ensued regarding the 'showcase' aspect of the monthly food selection, as part of the problem is that the restaurants feel they're being taken advantage of, not showcased. Terry noted that when he picks up the food, the managers don't have cards, menus, etc., as part of the package, so that the restaurant can be showcased. Adeena mentioned that the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association allocates a full hour prior to each meeting for a restaurant to provide food, talk about its menu, etc. Robyn suggested perhaps the restaurant-of-the-month could be mentioned on the website. Marj reminded the Board that the purpose of this motion is to simplify the meal situation, not make it more elaborate. Christine added that she and Marj, as the Outreach co-chairs, are working to get the merchants more involved with the NC, but at this point, our meetings are not heavily attended, and the current meal process is annoying and difficult. Better we revisit the matter when relationships have been established. Terry was of the belief that the motion was unnecessary because the meal 'showcase' time frame had timed out, but Vikki reminded him that a second motion had been passed that was still in effect. Barry moved to approve the motion and Terry seconded. **Vote: 15-Y; 1-N; 0-A. Motion passed.**
- f. **Motion to fund up to \$300 for a SORO NC retreat (Safinia) - Motion GB070908-11.** Sandra asked Marj to confirm that there will be some educational aspect to this retreat, in the sense of a review of the duties and responsibilities of Board members. Marj said that this would be a small component, and that the Brown Act requirements would be reviewed as well. Jon asked if there would be a facilitator, and Marj confirmed that an 'improvisational' facilitator would lead the retreat. The cost breakdown would be \$250 for the facilitator and \$50 for food. Robyn objected to the specific time frame of "half a

day", stating that the retreat should take as long as need be. Marj agreed to remove this phrase. Barry asked who the facilitator would be, and Marj replied it is someone she knows. Vikki moved to approve the motion and Roy seconded. **Vote: 15-Y; 0-N; 1-A; Motion passed.** (Bette Billet leaves at this point).

- g. **Motion for SORO NC to formally oppose the passage of Proposition 8, which seeks to reverse the California Supreme Court's decision permitting gay and lesbian marriage (Fitzsimmons) - Motion GB070908-12.** Doug reviewed the Supreme Court decision and the specifics of the motion. While the NC has no power to overrule this initiative, it does affect stakeholders, and Doug felt NC should take a stand. The Silver Lake NC has already taken a position against it; SORO would be the second NC to do so. Doug cited the mission of the NC, to address matters affecting the social well-being of the community. It is important to protect the rights of minority populations. Liz Carlin spoke on behalf of herself personally, to say that as an openly gay person, she urges the NC to approve this motion. Vikki noted that when she was in law school, she focused on gay rights. There are close to 2,000 federal rights that married couples have which same sex couples currently do not. Terry voiced an objection to part two of the motion, which opposed the inclusion of Proposition 8 on the ballot, as he feels that California's initiative process is part of the democratic system, and people should have the right to vote on those items that make it to the ballot. Doug clarified that the reason why the initiative should be opposed is because it is more than a simple piece of legislation; it seeks to restructure the state constitution, and should therefore require a 2/3 approval from each legislative house before being submitted to the voters. Roy, while stating his support of equal rights for all, felt that making judgments on constitutional law is not the role of a neighborhood council. Jon, while disgusted by Proposition 8, also had concerns about the NC approving this motion, as our stand would have no effect on the passage or non-passage of the initiative. Christine reviewed her background working on initiative campaigns and discussed the evolution of Proposition 5. She agreed with Terry that part two should be removed--the courts have not decided whether or not to hear the lawsuit related to Proposition 8, so that portion is not relevant. She also felt that we have no information about how our stakeholders feel about this issue, and reminded the group that Proposition 22, a 'defense of marriage' act, passed in California by a large majority. She is not in favor of the NC taking a political position on issues that don't directly affect our stakeholders. Rather, we should encourage our stakeholders to become engaged in the process and exercise their own political rights. Robyn, while in favor of Proposition 8, also felt that we are supposed to represent the South Robertson community, and shouldn't be telling stakeholders what their position should be. Vikki noted that, historically, change (for example, the civil rights movement) is pushed through even though the majority isn't necessarily behind it. She feels the NC should be bold and push boundaries, not shy away from controversy. Barry Levin also felt it behooved the NC to take a moral position. Christine asked Doug to strike paragraph two, and Doug agreed. Doug moved to approve the motion and Vikki seconded. **Vote: 8-Y; 2-N; 5-A. Motion passed.**

VII. ADDITIONAL ADVISORY REPORTS

DONE - Barry Stone reminded the Board about the beautification grant forms being available. There will also be another Board orientation in August. He also needs an up-to-date roster for the NC with all of the new members' information.

CD 10 - Liz Carlin congratulated everyone on the resumption of the RAL program. There will be a beautification grant workshop coming up. Also, July 26th will be the first

Movies In The Park event, sponsored by CD10. Councilman Wesson came up with the idea and during the process of looking for venues, stated his desire to go to Reynier Park first, based on his pleasure on what SORO NC has been doing with regards to the sponsorship of RAL and development of the SORO Walks At Seven program. The first movie in the series will be "The Neverending Story" and hot dogs and popcorn will be served. The cost will run between \$700 and \$1,000 and CD 10 is asking the NC to make a contribution towards this. Outreach will handle the matter. Also, Terry asked about the supergraphic banner for "Journey to the Center of the Earth" on the building next to the freeway offramp. Liz replied that Building and Safety has been contacted.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- a. **By-Laws:** The most recent meeting had produced a series of motions from Doug and Brian. Doug could not bring his before the Board at this meeting because they had not been accurately described in the Bylaws agenda. Bylaws will meet on the third Thursday of the month.
- b. **Education:** Barry reported that the last meeting was attended by himself and Michele Wytko. Michele would like the NC to provide funding to extend the Beyond the Bell program at Shenandoah Elementary by half a hour. Barry needs to talk to the principal, which he will do in August. Also, there are free summer programs at Crescent Heights Elementary and Castle Heights Elementary.
- c. **Green Team:** Vikki reported that she has not heard back from the possible Green Team Chair candidate. It may be time to brainstorm to come up with another possibility.
- d. **Land Use:** Brian reported that, at the last meeting, people from City Planning came to talk about the ongoing work revising the community plan. A working group has been formed to look into the idea of creating a dog park or skate park in the area. If anyone is interested in working on this, contact Brian or Liz.
- e. **Outreach:** Marj reported that, at the last meeting, there was a discussion about how to increase the interest factor at the general meetings, and avoid getting bogged down in discussing minutiae about procedures, or other topics which the public finds less than riveting. Also, they are still working with AAA Flag & Banner to get the street banners up, but AAA keeps filling out the forms incorrectly. For the Movies in the Park evening, Marj would like to have the Ask Me table set up and asked for volunteers to work it.
- f. **Public Safety:** Jon announced that the intersection at Whitworth and Wooster will be getting a four-way stop sign in two weeks, based on his efforts and a passionate letter submitted by Vikki. There is a Park Advisory Board meeting on July 3rd. The Peace Picnic will be on September 21st, and volunteers are needed to work on the committee. A chair is needed as well. The next meeting for that group is July 30th. Summer basketball registration is going on, as well as sign-up for summer camp. The next Public Safety meeting will be dedicated to more discussion of how to get better graffiti abatement in our area.
- g. **Ad hoc Inter-NC Committee:** Doug wondered if someone else would like to chair this.

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

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