

# South Robertson (SORO) Neighborhoods Council

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A Certified City of Los Angeles Neighborhood Council

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President  
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Treasurer

## APPROVED General Board Meeting Minutes September 10, 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 7:05 p.m. by Jon Liberman.

**Board members present:** Brian Bergman, Bette Billet, Harold Bock, Daniel Fink, Doug Fitzsimmons, Anne Gross, Barry E. Levine, Jon Liberman, Linda Rosen, Sandra Willard, Terrence Gomes, Roy Nwassir, Gina La Beaud, Marjan Safinia, Christine Aghassi, Gary Garcia.

**Board members absent:** Robyn Braun, Diane Hirsch-Garcia, Victoria Karan, Ann Hammond, Nahed Guirguis, Susan Burden.

**Guests present:** Barry Stone, Jennifer Badger, Adeena Bleich, Brooke Powers, Stephan Blustajn, Tacha Freeman, Mike Rafi, Daniel Moreh, Jane Ulman, Lorrie Stone, David Solaiman Tehrawi, Joubin Nasser.

### II. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Jon welcomed the attending guests.

### III. READING OF THE MINUTES AND APPROVAL

Harold moved to accept the minutes. Bette seconded.

**Vote: Y-11; N-0; A-4 (note that Christine was not yet present). Minutes approved.**

#### IV. ADVISORY REPORTS

**a. Office of Speaker of the House Karen Bass:** No report was made as Jenny Wood was not present.

**b. Office of Councilmember Jack Weiss (CD-5):** Field Deputy Jennifer Badger reviewed the ongoing situation regarding the opening of medical marijuana distribution centers throughout the city and within SORO. While the Councilmember's office has received requests from some centers requesting hardship exemptions to the current moratorium, none are within SORO boundaries. The Councilmember's office is also keeping an eye on existing clinics to make sure they do not violate any laws. Marj mentioned that she, Jon, Bette and Sandra had met with Liz and Andrew at CD10 regarding the opening of a distribution center at 2370 South Robertson. She asked about Robertson Caregivers at 2515 South Robertson and wondered if it had opened after the establishment of the moratorium.

Jennifer also announced the Peace Picnic will be on Sunday, September 21<sup>st</sup>. She also said that Department of Transportation is drafting a letter regarding the No Overnight Parking zone on Robertson and that Captain Eaton supports this measure.

Brian asked about setting up a four-way stop sign at the 1600-1700 block of Bedford, where it crosses Airdrome. He said large houses on the corners are preventing drivers from seeing oncoming traffic on Airdrome. Jennifer said that getting the four-way stop would be tricky, but she would look into it. Dan asked about the building wrap at Robertson and Pico, and Jennifer said she will check on the status of the injunction. Terrence noted new billboards with satellite dishes on Robertson contribute to more blight, and he reported streetlights are not working at Cashio and Bedford.

**c. Office of Councilmember Herb Wesson (CD-10):** Liz Carlin was not present, but Jon read from an e-mail report she had sent. The International Unity Parade will be held on Sunday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, in Little Ethiopia, on Fairfax from Saturn to Whitworth. The last of the Movies in the Park series will be September 13<sup>th</sup> at Seoul International Park. Councilmember Wesson hosted a three-day camping event at Hansen Dam for at-risk youth: 146 children attended. Terrence, who participated in the event, described how the campers were able to experience fishing, horseback riding and other outdoor activities.

**d. Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD):** No report was made as Senior Lead Officer Maria Gray was not present.

**e. DONE:** Barry Stone announced two events taking place on October 11<sup>th</sup>--the Congress of Neighborhoods and the Mayor's Budget Day. He also said that LADWP wants feedback regarding sustainable water supplies and recycling water.

**f. Robertson Recreation Center:** Brooke Powers reported on the conclusion of the RAL Program and passed out summaries of monies spent and student attendance. The program came in under budget. Due to a mix-up on the day of the scheduled trip to Magic Mountain, there was no bus provided by CD10, so the trip has been rescheduled to October 9<sup>th</sup>. Other upcoming activities are the Peace Picnic on September 21<sup>st</sup>, the usual fall classes, sports and activities, and the Halloween Carnival.

**g. Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD):** Tacha Freeman and Stephan Blustajn discussed the LAUSD Homeless Education Unit, which works with students who attend LAUSD schools and whose families are homeless or who are homeless themselves. The

District is aware of more than 13,000 homeless youths enrolled in LAUSD schools; even more have not yet been identified. The program is funded through the No Child Left Behind Act. It provides families and students with needed resources, as well as advocating for the students at their schools. With the foreclosure crisis, homeless rates are going up. Often, multiple families are living in one apartment or house. Stephan distributed contact telephone numbers. Linda asked if the program also does referrals to doctors and dentists, which it does.

## V. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

- a. **President's Report:** On behalf of the Executive Committee, Jon reported that Bette Billet was named the LA Pearl (an award given yearly by the City Attorney's Office to a senior who is notable for his or her civic and community service.) Jon then discussed the way that members of the Board often transition from being focused on one or two key issues to recognizing the large variety of issues facing the district.
- b. **Treasurer's Report:** While a written report was submitted to the Board via e-mail, it did not meet the 72-hour-in-advance requirement, so could not be considered. However, Terrence did report that there is \$107,000 in the account, but only \$59,000 is available for spending. He also reminded the Board members that when they submit a motion that requires funding, other forms must be completed. Certain demand warrants are currently in limbo because those funding forms have not been turned in to him. He also needs original receipts, not copies. Barry asked about the payment for the Fresh Fruit on Fridays program; Terrence said that DONE is trying to figure out what happened to the paperwork, which was submitted to them.

## VI. OLD BUSINESS

**Grievance Panel Report Process:** Bette Billet wanted to clarify that, when the Board receives a grievance panel report, it is only the beginning of the process. The report should be sent to the appropriate committee and reviewed for accuracy, something which has not been done in the past. Once all aspects of the grievance report have been vetted, the report should be submitted to the Board for acceptance. Doug noted that, currently, there is no official process for the Board to receive grievance panel reports and recommendations.

Christine noted that the next day was the anniversary of September 11<sup>th</sup> and asked for a moment of silence.

Marj suggested that the Chabad motion be moved up on the agenda to accommodate attending community members. All Board members agreed.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

**a. Motion to issue a letter advising the LA Department of City Planning that SORO NC cannot support the expansion of the Chabad Community Center at 9001-9041 West Pico Blvd in its present form. (Willard) (GB091008-5).** Jon invited public comment.

Lorrie Stone, who lives with her family near the proposed construction, said that, while the community is not opposed to the construction of a new community center, the scope of the project as currently proposed is way too big for the area. She described how the community behind Chabad went through a similar process in 2001, when the school one block over was built. As there was no neighborhood council system then, residents had to attend the zoning commission meeting. Chabad was granted the variances it requested with conditions attached, but since then, has not met any of those conditions. Therefore, residents believe the same thing will happen again with the proposed community center expansion. They are also concerned that such a huge structure as is proposed would change the character of Pico.

Brian asked Lorrie if the community would accept a building that matched the height of the school. Lorrie responded that, because of Chabad's refusal to honor any of its commitments to the community, residents are leery about conceding anything. Jon drew an analogy to the Cedars Sinai complex, which started out as one building and is now three million square feet (statistic provided by Dan). He would like to know what future plans Chabad has for its other holdings. Marj asked if residents had organized at all, as was discussed at the Land Use meeting, and she asked for contact information. Barry Levine noted that Chabad had not sent any representatives to this meeting, but Brian explained that the representatives had been at two prior Land Use meetings.

Dan asked for an amendment to the motion, to change the wording from "does not support" to "opposes". Brian had concerns about this, as he felt that too strong wording might cause the NC to be eliminated from future mediations, which has apparently happened with the Museum of Tolerance expansion. There was much discussion about this proposed amendment. Christine stated that, really, the NC is just opposing the variances. Doug felt that the NC has no role if it is too categorical. Bette felt that this letter is only a temporary measure, to let the zoning officials know our current stand until mediation between the community and Chabad takes place; she said that stronger wording is not a problem. (Gina leaves at this point). Jon was in favor of providing a bully pulpit as residents do not have the same access to zoning officials that developers have.

Sandra moved to accept Daniel's amendment. Bette seconded. **Vote: Y-12; N-2; A-1.**  
**Amendment accepted.**

Marj also requested an amendment, to rewrite the second sentence to read: "This letter will also state that Chabad and its reps have agreed to meet with concerned members of the community and the NC in an effort to reach a mutually agreeable resolution."

Marj moved to accept the amendment. Daniel seconded. **Vote: Y-15; N-0; A-0.**  
**Amendment accepted.**

Harold moved to vote on the motion, as amended. Terrence seconded. **Vote: Y-15; N-0; A-0. Motion passes.**

**b. Motion to host a Town Hall Meeting on Energy Saving (Safinia) (Motion GB091008-3).** Marj explained that our bylaws require us to have a public town hall meeting each year. It is proposed that this year's town hall be about energy saving measures. There would be speakers, giveaways, etc. Doug noted that the bylaws require some speakers be government officials, and Marj said appropriate city departments would be invited.

Terrence moved to approve the motion. Harold seconded. **Vote: Y-14; N-0; A-0. (Daniel Fink was not in the room for the vote). Motion passes.**

**c. Motion to contact local businesses about voluntary compliance with the Municipal Code provisions on merchandise displays on the sidewalks. (Rosen) (GB091008-4).** As this motion was not submitted to the Board, no vote could be taken. However, Linda distributed copies of the letter she drafted and discussed the situation. She explained that a working group has been formed to deal with issues on Robertson, and the first step would be a general clean-up of the street from Pico south to National. Jennifer Badger has made a list of businesses not complying with code by having merchandise out on the street. If the NC passes the motion, Linda would visit each of those businesses, letting them know that the Neighborhood Council is working to beautify the area and that they need to be in compliance with Municipal Code provisions on merchandise displays on sidewalks. She would propose to visit a second time those businesses that had not followed through. If a business then continues to be in violation, the letter would be sent.

There was a discussion about what the penalty would be if businesses do not comply. Linda was also unsure as to the procedures for getting the letter printed, signed, mailed, etc. Anne stated that she does not necessarily object to merchandise in front of a store; it depends on the arrangement and amount. She thinks there should be a negotiation with business owners. Roy asked that the Berri Good shop be cited because their giant sundae cone blocks the sidewalk. Also he felt that the letter should note that businesses can't put signs, giant sundae cones, etc., in the street as well. Brian also noted that Linda needs to keep a list of who is sent the letters.

**d. Vote to nominate and elect two Neighborhood Council representatives to attend the Mayor's Budget Day on October 11<sup>th</sup> (Lieberman) (GB091008-6).** Terrence, Christine and Jon were interested in attending Budget Day. As Terrence will already be downtown chairing the Congress, Jon and Christine volunteered to be the NC representatives. Marj moved that Christine and Jon be appointed to represent SORO NC. Terrence seconded. **VOTE: Y-15; N-0; A-0. Appointments made.**

## VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

**a. By-Laws:** Roy and Jon reported that there was no meeting during the past month.

**b. Education:** Barry Levine reported that three mentors attended the Education Committee meeting. He sent out minutes. The committee discussed the possibility of Paul Racs, head of the city's Department of Beautification, coming to Shenandoah to talk about the Stormwater project and handing out posters to kids, telling them not to throw things in the street that could go down into the gutters.

**c. Green Team:** We still need a chair for this committee. Roy suggested posting on Craigslist. This will be considered.

**d. Land Use:** Brian reported that the matter of most interest at the last meeting was the Chabad project. About 40 people attended—3/4 were opposed to the project and 1/4 were in favor. Philip Brown, the architect and urban designer who addressed the full Board in July, also gave a presentation regarding improved flow lanes in the basin, and will be submitting a motion to the Board regarding it taking a stand on Measure R. The committee also discussed how to incorporate the priority goal tasked to it (beautification of Robertson) and will be continuing to develop plans to tackle it.

**e. Outreach:** Marj announced that the blog LAist wrote about the SORO cards and what a good idea they were. The tentative kickoff date for SORO Walks at Seven is September 25<sup>th</sup>. However, with more discussion, Marj and Christine realized they would not have enough time in the next two weeks to prepare properly, so that date was discarded. Barry Levine will be taking the Ask Me Table to Baskin Robbins. Christine attended the most recent Public Safety meeting and felt there are many issues that the two committees could address in tandem, including finding warehouse space for confiscated vendor carts. She also felt there needs to be more communication amongst community members.

**f. Public Safety:** Jon said that the committee is working to develop an approach to its assigned priority goals, of which there are many. Once specific plans are hammered out, he will bring them to the full Board.

**g. Ad hoc Board Development Committee:** Harold said there was no report.

**h. Ad hoc Inter-NC Committee:** Doug said there was no report.

## X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Record of votes attached.

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## Voting record, by agenda item

Representing	Name	091008-5 Amend.1	091008-5 Amend.2	091008-5 As amended	091008-3	091008-6
Zone 1	Daniel Fink	Y	Y	Y	MISSING	Y
Zone 2						
Zone 3	Harold Bock	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Zone 4	Robyn Braun					
Zone 5	Bette Billet	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Zone 6	Diane Hirsch-Garcia					
Zone 7	Jon Liberman	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Zone 8	Sandra Willard	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Zone 9						
Zone 10	Vikki Karan					
At-large 1	Brian Bergman	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
At-large 2	Christine Aghassi	A	Y	Y	Y	Y
At-large 3	Terrence Gomes	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
At-large 4	Anne Gross	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Business 1	Marj Safinia	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Business 2	Barry Levine	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Business 3	Linda Rosen	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Business 4						
Business 5	Roy Nwaiser	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Organization 1	Doug Fitzsimmons	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Organization 2	Ann Hammond					
Organization 3	Nahed Guirguis					
Organization 4	Susan Burden					
School 1	Gina LaBeaud					
School 2	Gary Garcia	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Totals		Y-12; N-2; A-1.	Y-15; N-0; A-0	Y-15; N-0; A-0	Y-14; N-0; A-0	Y-15; N-0; A-0

Key: Y=Yes; N=No; A=Abstain