

CITY WATCH

An Insider Look At City Hall

September 28, 2004 Volume 2 Issue 18

CITY WATCH

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Say What?

***"I can no longer
serve on a
Neighborhood Council
that refuses
to adhere
to its own bylaws."***

**--Mary Rodriguez
Former President
GGPNC**

DONE Sends Memo

No Quorum. No Meeting! One President Resigns Over Issue

By Ken Draper

Few things get in the way of a Neighborhood Council's progress or productivity like procedure. Brown Act, Robert's Rules, DONE rules, City Attorney interpretations can slow a Council to a crawl faster than a stakeholder with a club in his hand. Yet another festering difference on procedure has bubbled to the surface and has set board member against board member and Neighborhood Councils against City agencies.

It also became the last straw for Mary Rodriguez, Greater Griffith Park NC President, who resigned because she feels her Council "refuses to adhere to its own bylaws" which call for "fair, open and transparent procedures" when conducting Council business.

A bit of background: The GGPNC had a board meeting scheduled last week and when it came gavel time, they were short a quorum. The DONE Project Coordinator was in attendance and reminded them: No quorum. No meeting. He suggested they adjourn promptly.

President Rodriguez agreed but there were a few board members with a different point of view who suggested the DONE rep had it wrong and that they could continue if they didn't take any action. Some shouting ensued, according to witnesses, and letters hit the internet.

Continued on Page 8. See "No Quorum"

CITY WATCH

Another Side to the NC Story

By Ken Draper

The answer to how well LA's Neighborhood Council system is doing depends whom you ask. Or, as a friend once said, "The answer depends on one's expectations."

If you've followed NC news lately, you could deduce that the whole system is underwater and running out of breath. Troubled Councils make for sexier headlines and there have been enough of those lately to make the NC pond look like a sewer. Councils unable to manage their meetings, generate a quorum or hold their elections dominate the gossip streams, fascinate the media and usurp DONE's precious short-handed time. But there is another side to the Neighborhood Council story.

While the BONC monitors the progress of a parade of dysfunctional and defiant Councils on one side of town, down the street at DWP headquarters, a task force of NC reps sits with the management of the City's largest agency and craft an unprecedented agreement that will insure their participation in the budget and policy planning of the water and power company.

Continued on Page 9. See "City Watch"

City Watch Op & Ed Page

City Clerk Retires

Martinez to Follow Mike Carey: Will it Affect LA's NC's?

By Mark Siegel

LA City Clerk, Mike Carey announced his retirement last week. For Neighborhood Councils, Carey's leaving prompts the question: How will it affect us?

The City Clerk post is a low profile job, but it's one of the most important offices in City Hall. With the departure of Carey, the City loses a whole lot of institutional memory. Carey ascended to the City Clerk title several years ago with the departure of Elias Martinez who had several run-ins with Mayor Bradley. Carey distinguished himself as a staunch defender of the City during the Riordan Administration's push for charter reform.

Clerks Office Provides Support

The clerk's office provides administrative support for the Council, cataloguing council files, agendas and minutes. They also administer city elections and collect license fees. The office maintains a massive archive of official city documents.

Carey has been a loyal, no nonsense bureaucrat who served the City ... and Neighborhood Councils ...well. The creation of the Early Notification System for NC's happened on his watch. He will be handing the City Clerk reigns over to Frank Martinez.

Continued on Page 10. See "City Clerk"

Guest Commentary

ROAD TO (RESOURCE) RECOVERY

By Nicole Bernson

In the last issue, I used this space to advocate resource recovery as an alternative to the outdated, polluting and environmentally precarious practice of landfilling waste. Resource recovery involves extracting useable components, raw materials, or other feedstocks and re-manufacturing, dismantling or otherwise converting them for reuse.

The construction industry has its own classification of reuse. Construction and Demolition (C&D) waste – particularly wood, bricks and steel can be recovered and reused. In many cases materials from demolition are reused onsite as part of the new construction. Though some items can't be reused in their present form, cement, for example, can be ground, remixed and repoured. A percentage of building materials reuse is required to attain the prestigious Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification.

Your trash is being delivered to someone else's back yard. In this case, it's your neighbor in Granada Hills. That's the way it works when urban landfills are the system for the City's trash disposal. There has to be a better way. This is the second in an occasional series.

Broken glass and terracotta present a major contamination problem for Materials Recovery Facilities (where recyclables are processed) and C&D Facilities. The Red Shovel Glass Company of San Francisco collected this glass and tile, tumbled it in a cement mixer and created landscaping products so desirable, they can't make enough to fill their orders.

Continued on Page 10. See "Recovery"

CITY WATCH

The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

September 28, 2004
Volume 2 Issue 18

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City Briefly

Pilot Program: City and Property Owners Share Costs of Sidewalk Repair

By Sara Epstein

The City Council will consider a Public Works pilot program today where the City matches funds with property owners to repair sidewalks. Always near the top of stakeholder request lists, sidewalk repair gets considerably less respect at City budget time.

Some 324 miles of sidewalks have been repaired over the past four years, at a cost of \$64.8 million. But, that still leaves a backlog of 4,276 miles and growing. Besides, the number of miles of sidewalk repair has been spiraling downward. Councilmember Wendy Greuel's motion for a pilot program in her district is an effort to reverse the trend.

How It Works

The way it would work is, half of the dollars allotted to Greuel's district would be devoted to matching property owner money to pay for the repair of sidewalks related to their property. Property owners who voluntarily agree to pay 50% of the cost of fixing their sidewalks will have the other 50% paid for by the City and, in addition, will receive a guarantee that the work will be completed in 30 days. If the pilot program works in District Two, it could be expanded to other districts.

Until 1973, the City required property owners to pay for their own sidewalk repair. From 1973 to 1976, those repairs were paid for with Federal dollars. There was no repair program for almost 25 years.

Arguments Over Responsibility

Folks are still arguing over where the responsibility for sidewalks should be placed, with the City or the owners. Greuel's motion might be a middle ground that could at least help flatten out the downward trend of more sidewalks breaking every year than get repaired.

A better question might be: Will this project help get the attention of the Mayor and the Council at budget time so the priorities of the public become more synchronized with the agendas and priorities of the officials the public elected? With the 2005-2006 city budget process already started, it shouldn't take too long to get an answer. ■

Tracking the Issues (I-Trac)

The City Council is considering meeting every two weeks in the new Van Nuys City Hall. Motion has been forwarded to the Rules and Elections Committee.

(Motion #04-1903) ■

"Crenshaw Revitalization"

Next

Neighborhood Café

Oct 4 on Channel 35

We've Got Mail

Town Hall on Playa Vista Draws 1,200

Would you please include an article on the turnout (over 1,200 people) and the outcry over the Ballona Creek Phase II, held at Venice High School last week. The meeting was organized by the Mar Vista and Grass Roots Venice NC's.

Please note that Antonio Villaraigosa was the only City Councilman to vote against the project. The vote was 10-1 in full City Council with several Council members not present.

My objection is 73,000 more car trips without any real infrastructure improvements, except for traffic light mitigation in Mar Vista.

--Steve Twining, President (Bel Air Beverly Crest NC)

Grass Roots Venice NC 'Re-bonified'

There are some interesting articles in this issue (August 31) of City Watch. Note that after declaring Grassroots Venice NC "non-bonified" and stripping them of their budget and right to file Community Impact Reports, Greg Nelson (DONE General Manager) has now "re-bonified" them. I guess someone figured out that proper process was called "decertification" and that only the Board of Neighborhood commissioners has the power to do that.

--Tom Ponton, Chair (Mar Vista CC)

Start Spreading the News

Just a note to thank you for doing such a great job with City Watch. I forward your emailed information to all members of the North Hills West Neighborhood Council.

--Daniel Villegas, Chair (North Hills West NC)

DONE PC Competent and Dedicated

I just received my copy of the Arroyo Seco NC's election mailer, so there is at least one specific DONE staffer that did a phenomenal job for us - Matthew Fitzgerald on the Election & Policy Dept.

Matthew was pushing through the printing and mailing process for two of our NC's - ours and our neighbors (and friends) Glassell Park. Both of us had been waiting 'a while' for our procedures and mailers to have been officially reviewed, and Matthew kept us verbally in the loop as to what items we were going to be 'advised' to revise. When we got the finished (revised) copy of our mailer to Matthew, he got it to the printer and printed within 3 days. He got both ours and GPNC's mailers back to our local DONE office by driving his own VW bus back and forth. It was a pleasure to have someone so competent and dedicated working with us.

--Pat Griffith, President (Arroyo Seco NC)

(Some letters to City Watch are edited for brevity and/or clarity.

We welcome your views. Send to: Editor at:

acitywatch@aol.com.)

NC Congress-October 9

“Most Important” Congress will Feature Issues & NC Voices

By Ken Draper

Some are calling it “the most important Congress” to date. DONE GM, Greg Nelson says, “The critics will be watching.” After months of complaining the NC Congress was intended for issues as well as networking and training, Neighborhood Councils are getting their wish. Albeit, in an embryonic stage.

The October 9 Congress of Neighborhood Councils will feature issues caucuses, forums and planning sessions. And, an opportunity for stakeholders to weigh in and be heard. The two citywide issues, to be spotlighted, at this are Inclusionary Zoning and the Half Cent Public Safety Sales Tax measure. Tim O’Connell (LA Inclusionary Zoning Coalition), Victor Franco (building and development community), Con Howe (GM, City Planning) and Steven Brady (Housing Department) will make the various sides of the Inclusionary Zoning issue. LAPD Chief, William Bratton will appear on the Half Cent Sales Tax.

Congress Future

In addition, the LANC Issues Group will caucus and Professor Terry Cooper (USC Neighborhood Participation Project) will lead a group of NC reps in search of answers to: Are issues what NC’s really want to do at the Congress? If so, how should future Congresses be organized and formatted?

Despite the emphasis on issues, there will be other events and sessions. The Youth Caucus, Gay and Lesbian Caucus and expert Timothy Kephart on ways to reduce graffiti vandalism are examples.

Critics Watching

DONE, and many others, will be watching the turnout and the participation as an indication of how seriously Neighborhood Councils take to the issues format. And, as Nelson points out, the critics will be watching. As one NC President said, “It’s time for the Neighborhood Councils to step up if they really want to be able to speak as a citywide voice and if they want these Congresses to be more than training sessions for the uninitiated.” ■

City Watch DayPlanner

September 28

- ✓ **BONC (6:30p)**
City Hall
Considering possible action on NC election issues (Old Northridge, Greater Wilshire and others)
- ✓ **City Council (10a)**
City Hall
*Protecting local revenues
 Pilot sidewalk repair program
 Continuation of Rapid Bus project on Wilshire
 Overturning County prohibition on subways
 Free parking meters for hybrids*

September 29

- ✓ **City Council (10 a)**
City Hall
*Playa Vista-2nd vote
 No overnight sleeping in libraries*
- ✓ **Van Nuys Election Meeting (6-8p)** Van Nuys City Hall
- ✓ **LA Police Commission/ Transportation Commission Community Meeting (6:30p)** Tom LaBonge –Autry Museum
- ✓ **PLUM Committee 2p)**
City Hall
*Opposition to Prop 68
 LAX Master Plan*

October 9

- ✓ **Congress of NC’s**
- ✓ **October 12 (5:30p)**
Controller Chick Funding Meet (5:30p) City Hall East
NC Treasurers discuss funding with City staff & Chick

(Confirm locations, times, agendas at: www.lacity.org)



Congress of Neighborhoods

October 9, 2004

<u>Schedule</u>	<u>Session 1</u>	<u>Session 2</u>
7:30-8:30a <i>Registration</i>	Inclusionary Zoning	Inclusionary Zoning
8:30-10:30a <i>Session One</i>	Reduce Graffiti	Visioning Exercise
10:30-11:15a <i>Mayor’s Welcome</i>	Congress Planning	½ Cent Sales Tax
11:15-11:45a <i>NC Roll Call</i>	½ Cent Sales Tax	NC’s: 1 st Responders
11:55-1:30p <i>Dept Exhibits</i>	Youth Caucus	Gay & Lesbian Caucus
1:40-2p <i>Session Two</i>	LANC Issues Group	Ask Done
<i>Close/Drawing</i>		

TO REGISTER, GET PARKING PASS, MORE INFO:
www.lacityneighborhoods.com

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL WATCH

Neighborhood Councils Briefly

BONC Confab Could Provide Sparks if Heat's Turned Up on Problem NCs

By David Lowell

The Board of Neighborhood commissioners will try to ratchet up the heat tonight on a parade of election-delinquent Neighborhood Councils. Five NC's are due before the BONC to provide status reports on their elections, or lack thereof. In addition, DONE will provide a written update on the status of the enigmatic Grass Roots Venice, currently functioning in a kind of netherworld, somewhere between conducting business without portfolio and decertification.

Old Northridge, Greater Cypress Park and Greater Wilshire are expected to attract the most interest and the biggest challenges for the commissioners. The election problems, among this trio, range from a questionable and unapproved election to two years without ever having held a post-certification election.

There is a growing concern among some NC activists that the BONC lacks the will and DONE the people to take the action necessary to resolve these issues. Some councils worry that negative public image left in the wake of perceived failures will soon wash over the entire citywide NC system. Many will be watching tonight to see what kind of solution-strategy the BONC, or DONE, or both come up with.

Councils Opting Out of Mayor's Budget Program

Concerned that the Mayor's Budget priorities are already a done deal and that the stakeholder survey is too restrictive to provide any real input on the budget, some Neighborhood Councils are opting out of the process.

With one board member calling the Mayor's budget effort "manipulative," the Mar Vista Community Council voted not to participate this year.

The Arroyo Seco NC did the same, telling the Mayor, "We are uncomfortable having our priorities trimmed down to the top item on the survey and watching everything else cut."

One South LA Council Vice President said, "This isn't what I understood the Charter to mean when it promised Neighborhood Council participation in the City budget. Filling this form out is just giving the Mayor support for what he has already decided."

The Mayor is also taking some heat for scheduling his Budget meetings with NC reps on the same day as the NC Congress. "It's a matter of respect for the Congress," noted one mid-city budget rep. "It demeans the Congress and ignores my interest in it." ■

Coverage of the 2004 Mayor's Race

Begins

November 9, 2004

CITY WATCH

Issues Watch

(Citywide Top Ten)

Current/Previous

1/1 Inclusionary Zoning

2/2 ½ Cent Public Safety
Sales Tax

3/- King/Drew Closure

4/- Ambassador/School
Design

5/7 Business Tax Reform

6/3 LAX Expansion

7/5 Big Box Retail
Superstores

8/6 Pay for Play Ethics
Issue

9/8 2005-2006 City Budget

10/4 Transparent DWP
Funds Transfer



Issues Watch

(NC Top Ten)

Current/Previous

1/2 NC Election
Procedures

2/1 NC Funding Delays

3/4 NC Congress of Issues

4/- Meetings W/Out
Quorums

5/5 NC/DWP Partnership
Negotiations

6/7 NC Appointments to
Commissions

7/3 Sanctions for
Failing/Dysfunctional
NC's

8/- Reasonable Time for
NC's at City Meetings

9/8 Brown Act
Modification

10/10 Decision-Making
Powers(Public
Works/Land
Use/Budget)



Making NC History**DWP & NC's in Final Phases of Agreement**

By Sara Epstein

Representatives from Neighborhood councils and the Department of Water and Power head into the final stages of their negotiations on an unprecedented partnership agreement. Known as the Partnership of Inclusion, the agreement will bind the DWP and NC signatories to plan that includes a comprehensive notification and communication system, regional NC liaisons, participation in the DWP budget process and other policy planning and systems for monitoring the delivery of the department's services and educating NC's and stakeholders.

Nearly 40 Neighborhood Councils have signed on to the effort with another dozen expected before the negotiations are completed. Expectations are that a final draft of the pact will be ready by mid-December for Neighborhood Councils to agendaize and sign off on.

If this Partnership project succeeds, it could have significant impact on the future relationships between NC's and city departments and agencies. "I don't think most people yet realize," one observer noted, "how significant and important this project is. Here is the City's largest agency and two-thirds of the Councils with elected boards collaborating on an agreement that will insure that guarantee timely notification, involvement in budget and policy planning and the ability to monitor delivery of services. Just like the Charter says."

The next meeting of the two groups is set for October 16. ■

IMPORTANT!

CITY WATCH will provide a special status report on the unprecedented agreement currently being worked out by your Neighborhood Councils Reps and the Department of Water and Power at the October 9 Congress of Neighborhoods MAKE SURE YOU GET YOUR COPY!!

CITY WATCH**Future Assignments**

- ◆ **NC Election Procedures: Simplified analysis for the time impaired**
- ◆ **Inside the Affordable Housing Puzzle: A former Commissioner speaks up.**
- ◆ **Filming in LA: Extortion Secret Exposed.**
- ◆ **In Defense of Downtown: Brady Westwater answers the Daily News.**

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No Quorum-No Meeting Memo

Sent to some NC's on 9/21/04

Brown Act Reminder for All Neighborhood Councils:

When there is no quorum, the meeting is to be adjourned. The Neighborhood Council is not to hold a meeting of any type, including a meeting to "present information." There are Brown Act concerns that are raised when the board, in the absence of a quorum, engages in discussions of items that are within its subject matter jurisdiction.

In order to conduct a public meeting, a quorum must be present. In the absence of the quorum, there are Brown Act concerns because a number of the board members are engaging in discussions outside of a "public meeting." Please remember that the Brown Act applies to "discussions" and not just "official actions."

If the agenda for a regular or special meeting is posted late – no meeting is to be conducted. The meeting should be canceled in advance. The Project Coordinators will assist you in providing a notice to cancel or re-schedule.

.....

Mary Rodriguez Resignation Letter

Mary Rodriguez was the President of GGPNC

It is with great disappointment that I submit my resignation as President and Education Representative of the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council as of today, September 24, 2004.

I can no longer serve on a Neighborhood Council that refuses to adhere to it's own By-Laws, and thus has no accountability.

The harassing and bullying emails that I have received over the past three months as President indicate to me the negative direction of the majority of this board. This disrupted the council's effectiveness.

Article IV (7) of the By-Laws states: "It is the policy of the GGPNC to have fair, open, and transparent procedures for the conduct of the Neighborhood Council business."

I feel the GGPNC no longer represents the needs of the community, regrettably it represents the self-interests of some board members.

Mary Rodriguez

.....

Andrew Jon Westall Letter

Westall is GGPNC Secretary

September 21, 2004

Dear Sir or Madam:

At this evening's monthly Board of Directors meeting of the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC), our DONE representative shut down the GGPNC meeting at approximately 10:05pm due to lack of a quorum. At the direction of the City Attorney's office, DONE will not allow Neighborhood Councils to make reports, take comment, or take up any items on their agendas which do not require action without a quorum. This is unconscionable and against everything that Neighborhood Councils and the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment should stand for ... stakeholder participation.

The notion of quorum and the ability, or inability, to take action have long been established by Robert's Rules of Order (Article XI, Section 64) and the City of Los Angeles Charter (1997). As a former staff member of two City Commissions, participant in my local Neighborhood Council, and avid watcher of City Council meetings, I have never been privy to a more restrictive interpretation of meeting procedure until now. Other decision-making bodies in city government have the ability to continue a meeting ("by adjourning from time to time") and withhold taking action on items until a quorum is established, or re-established. Meetings will continue until completed, postponing action until the next meeting if no quorum is established. Apparently this is not the case for neighborhood participants.

Do we truly want to open up city government to the residents of the City of Los Angeles? The City Attorney's office does not seem to take that position. Our DONE representative could not even present us with a copy of the written opinion tonight. While I understand the difficulties some Neighborhood Councils have had with quorum and board meetings, the GGPNC is not one of those. Do not allow the City Attorney to manufacture a solution for meeting procedures to reel in a few bad apples, when these same decisions affect every segment of city government, including commissions, boards, and the City Council. We are all officials of the City of Los Angeles, and deserve the same first-class treatment.

Sincerely,

Andrew Jon Westall
Secretary, Greater Griffith Park NC*

.....

CITY WATCH

The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

No Quorum-Continued from Page 1

GGPNC Secretary Andrew Jon Westall fired off a missive to the Mayor, and a half dozen other commissions and boards, calling DONE's stand unconscionable. He sights Robert's Rules and Article XI of the LA City Charter and notes that "other decision-making bodies in city government have the ability to continue a meeting ... and withhold taking action on items until a quorum is established."

"Do not allow the City Attorney," Westall warned, "to manufacture a solution for meeting procedures to reel in a few bad apples, when these same decisions affect every segment of city government, including commissions, boards and City Council. We are all officials of the City of Los Angeles, and deserve the same first-class treatment."

Disagreement Not New

According to Rodriguez, the division over procedures didn't surface out of the blue. "We had problems a long time ago regarding quorum," she said. "It seems like a majority of the people on the Council feel that we don't have to have a quorum and that they don't have to follow the bylaws and I'm just not one of those people." Rodriguez sighted the GGPNC bylaws in her resignation letter, "It is the policy of the GGPNC to have fair, open and transparent procedures for the conduct of the Neighborhood Council business."

Some feel that that section of GGPNC's bylaws is open to interpretation, but DONE apparently finds no ambiguity in the City Attorneys interpretation of the Brown Act. A day before the Greater Griffith Park experience, DONE PC's forwarded to at least some Neighborhood Council leaders a "Brown Act Reminder" warning that, "When there is no quorum, the meeting is to be adjourned."

DONE: No Meeting

"The Neighborhood Council," DONE went on, "is not to hold a meeting of any type, including a meeting to 'present information'."

The GGPNC is, of course, not the only Neighborhood Council to experience the frustration of meeting prep, issues at hand and a lack of quorum popping their board meeting plans.

Neither are all NC's convinced that the City Attorney and DONE have it right. Many agree with Westall: 'Show me the decision and show me where the Brown Act specifically deals with this matter.'

Treat All City Agencies the Same

A number also agree that if Rocky Delgadillo's office is going to police Neighborhood Councils, he should, likewise, police the rest of the City's commissions and agencies.

"Even the County Board is being investigated on charges of violating the Brown Act," noted one activist. "Rocky himself is paying a fine for campaign violations. When they get it right, then come to us. We shouldn't be held to a different standard."

And finally, there are those who argue that the Brown Act, Robert's Rules or the City Attorney aren't really the issue. One of the reasons Neighborhood Councils were created was to lobby for and practice transparency. Even if there were no Brown Act, some ask, why would a Neighborhood Council board not feel compelled to conduct all of its business ... the public's business in the open? ■

(For complete transcript of the DONE memo on quorums, Mary Rodriguez and Andrew Westall's letters, turn to Page 7.)

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Spreading
the News ..."*

*Don't be a City Watch
Secret Subscriber ...*

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*80% of our new
subscribers come from
referrals.*

Thank You

*"Start
Spreading
the
News!!"*

City Watch: Another Side of the Story

Continued from Page 1

Influence from Neighborhood Councils has already redirected the course of the Inclusionary Zoning plan proposed by City Councilmembers Garcetti and Reyes. In Sunday's Daily News, columnist Rick Orlov pointed out that the Central City Association "recognized the potential of Neighborhood Councils to influence issues and (they) reached out to them to fight the zoning policy." Mayor Hahn and Councilman Parks that councils have influenced their views. And, Garcetti told Orlov that the Council will have to be willing to bend to some of the demands of NC's. "We do have to work with the Neighborhood Councils," Garcetti told Orlov.

One of the early NC efforts at influence came to a close last week when the City Council finalized the burglar alarm issue. In January 2003 the Police Commission attempted to stop response to alarms because there are so many false alarms. A band of NC voices, along with the burglar alarm companies, convinced the City Council to reject the Commission's plan and a compromise was reached that allowed two false alarms before fines were imposed on residents.

Playa Vista Development

Also last week, Neighborhood Councils spoke up again. This time, on phase two of the Playa Vista development. The City approved the project over the objections of some NC's from the area, but their influence was felt none-the-less. The Mar Vista Council convinced Councilwoman Cindy Miscikowski that the development would seriously impact traffic and now the developer will be required to add traffic signals and upgrade 34 Mar Vista intersections to the tune of \$600,000 each. The local NC's also drew 1,200 people to a town hall meeting on the issue, two days earlier.

And, lest we forget, it was Neighborhood Councils that put the brakes on the DWP's proposed 18% rate increase, fought off a number of City Councilmembers to get the right to appoint the fifth member on all HPOZ boards, stopped Nate Holden from renaming Crenshaw Blvd. after himself, joined the CLEAN coalition to get limits and a unified color put on newsracks.

Democracy is Messy

As has been pointed out, growing a democracy is a messy and awkward business. LA's Neighborhood Councils have matured considerably over the past 18 months. They have not only figured out how to be heard but how to nuance the influence they envisioned when the LA system was born.

There will never be a time when all Councils will be top grade. There will always be a few dysfunctional, non-compliant and defiant groups. This is a people process and mankind being imperfect as it is we cannot expect a perfect NC system. The perfection comes in the clarity and the rightness of the concept.

So, if the answer to how well NC's are doing depends on the expectations of the person being questioned, I suggest asking folks who have a realistic view of the democratic process and the Neighborhood Council concept. Don't let the progress and successes get lost in the more attention-getting pratfalls that result from the struggle or the inability to achieve unrealistic expectations. ■

Quotables

"We do have to work

with

Neighborhood

Councils"

--Councilman Eric Garcetti

"We recognized the

potential

for

Neighborhood

Councils

to

influence issues."

--Central City Assn.

An Insider Look At City Hall



Recovery-

Continued from Page 2.

A growing trend is the “eco-park.” At Urban Ore in Del Norte, California, discards are collected, dismantled, or otherwise processed and resold. Eco-parks prevent waste, create jobs, preserve natural resources and offer refurbished goods at well-below retail prices. San Francisco’s Building Resources recovers high-end building materials, sinks, doors, marble and decorative hardware and resells them to designers or do-it-yourselfers at approximately 1/3 the retail cost.

TheatreMax, in the Bay Area, links live theatres to redistribute sets, props, costumes and technical items like lighting and sound equipment. They’ve had successes of up to six generations of reuse.

Composted in San Francisco

In San Francisco, residential and restaurant food waste is composted. Their technique has created a high quality product, touted by many Napa Valley wineries. Some of San Francisco’s finest restaurants are serving organic produce grown with the compost. A cottage industry of custom-blend designers has emerged. (San Francisco’s food waste processor is conducting a 400-restaurant pilot in Los Angeles.)

These are a few of many examples of creative reuse. These are not crazy, “pie-in-the-sky” schemes, but realistic, innovative practices that produce environmental and economic benefits while reducing our dependence on landfills.

(Nicole Bernson is a founding member of the Mid-City WEST Community Council and a legislative deputy for Councilman Greig Smith.) ■



City Clerk-

Continued from Page 2.

Martinez has worked in several departments over the years and really knows the ins and outs of the City’s bureaucracy. As Assistant City Clerk he was the point person for Neighborhood Councils. The clerk’s office plays a crucial role in the ENS and Martinez was a main cog in the crafting of the NC Election Procedures. He is a skilled facilitator who is always helpful in figuring out the simplest solution to a problem. Martinez would seem more than adequately qualified, from a Neighborhood Council point of view, to assume the City Clerk helm.

One little known fact about Martinez: He is a rock ‘n ‘roller who plays saxophone in a working band. He has paid his dues in the City and is the right man for the job. ■

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