

# CITY WATCH

*An Insider Look At City Hall*

May 3, 2004 Volume 2 Issue 9

CITY WATCH  
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## CITY WATCH

We publish City Watch to promote grassroots civic engagement through information and ideas.

City Watch is distributed to Los Angeles' Neighborhood Councils representing more than 3,000,000 stakeholders.

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City Watch is published electronically on Monday of every other week. Share it with your Neighborhood Council and other activists.

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**We welcome your comments**

## City Wants NC's in the Hot Inclusionary Zoning Debate

By David Lowell

Almost everyone agrees that Los Angeles is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis. What they can't agree on is how to resolve it. Now, Neighborhood Councils have been asked to provide the community voice to the mix and, perhaps, a consensus.

The cost of housing in LA has spiraled out of reach for most low and mid-level income households. The City is running considerably behind on its goal to produce 8,000 new affordable units a year. Left in the crisis wake, according to some experts, are police officers, schoolteachers, nurses, municipal workers and many other working people. A view, contrary to the perception some have that affordable housing is mostly for the homeless.

*What the City wants NC's to do; dates/timelines for public meetings: See Page 6.*

Leading the City's solution list is a controversial concept called inclusionary zoning, which, to simplify, requires developers who are building new apartments, condos and homes to include some affordable units, generally in return for certain incentive benefits like a break on density requirements or expedited permit processing.

Council members Ed Reyes and Eric Garcetti have introduced a motion calling for a mandatory inclusionary zoning ordinance for the City. They are hoping that a liberal list of incentives combined with the big mandatory stick will encourage developers to get with the program.

*Continued on Page 7. See "Inclusionary"*

*Opinions vary on this important but controversial issue. See Page 7 for a sample.*

### Perspective

## On NC Budget Cuts: Watch Your Back

By Ken Draper

At the Citywide Alliance Budget Summit in January, the Mayor's Deputy, Doane Liu, assured Neighborhood Councils that their annual \$50,000 funding was safe. And, sure enough, on April 20, when the Mayor made his 2004-2005 budget public, the \$4 million for 81 certified councils was intact.

It's a deceptive figure, however, and a premise based on the proverbial smoke and mirrors. The reason is because there is much more to Neighborhood Council funding than the bucks the City plunks down in NC accounts and debit cards.

For example, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment budget is due for some severe trimming. At this moment, the department is left with two clericals and no Commission secretary. Everyone left at DONE is doing double duty. GM Greg Nelson will present a department reorganization to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners Tuesday evening.

*Continued on Page 8. See "Perspective"*

Notes on an Agenda

## Mayor Delivers Desperate Budget

By Jim McQuiston

*(The Mayor delivered his 2004-2005-budget proposal to the City Council on April 20. This past week, the Budget and Finance Committee began hearings on that budget. Jim McQuiston was on hand and these are his observations.)*

Mayor Hahn's budget is a desperate one. Even without the pending State money-grab, the City's receipts will not let the present delivery of services continue.

As a result, the Mayor has appropriated funds out of almost every special account to avoid falling under the required Reserve Account level ... whether advisable or authorized or not.

Hahn's budget is based on the premise that when strapped for funds, only the life-important bills are going to get paid. This budget is reduced to establishing what is life-important.

Departments are upset about the Mayor's definition of what is life-important. The Neighborhood Council budget priorities were cited by the Mayor as his guideline. **It is vital that NC's monitor these budget choices because their reputations are involved.**

*Continued on Page 9. See "Mayor's Budget"*

## DWP Rate Increase & Audit Bills Go to Full City Council Tuesday

By Ken Draper

Both the DWP water rate increase ordinance and the Smith-Greuel motion requiring an independent financial analysis come before the City Council Tuesday (5/4/04).

After a lengthy journey over rocky Neighborhood Council terrain, the Department of Water and Power finally gets its day in Council "court" with support from most of the players. Having had an earlier proposal rejected as the result of NC protestations, DWP will offer up an 11% rate increase over one year. Most of the Neighborhood Council contingent and most City Council members appear prepared to this proposal, revised down from the original 18% over two years.

The Smith-Greuel motion, requiring that an independent financial review and analysis precede any future rate increase request, and that NC's be given "ample opportunity to review these reports ... before the matter comes before the Council" is also on the Tuesday agenda. In the present climate, no one is anticipating any substantial opposition to this proposal.

Look for some NC leaders to head for the Public Comment mike in any case, attempting to put one last exclamation point on the rate increase experience by reminding the DWP of the need for transparency and straight talk.

In light of the LA Daily News stories about the millions of dollars ill-spent or wasted as the result of management overtime and security decisions, there may also be a word or two of advice offered the DWP on the difficulties of trying to hide when you work in a glass house. ■

*(LA City Council Meeting: Tuesday May 4 at 10 a.m. in Council Chambers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, City Hall. Items are #'s 9 and 14 on the Council agenda. Review the two motions by visiting [www.lacity.org](http://www.lacity.org) and clicking on Council Index. Motion Index Numbers are: Increase #03-2784 and Analysis #04-0547.)*

## Quotables

***"We collaborated with Neighborhood Councils. We gave them a voice for the first time in the budget process."***

**-Mayor James Hahn  
to Budget & Finance Committee**

***"Mayor Hahn's budget is a desperate one."***

**Jim McQuiston  
Management Consultant &  
budget observer**

***"It's not a pretty picture."***

**-Councilman Bernard Parks  
Re: State taking even more  
from local budgets.**

***"Given the threat of terrorism, it makes more sense than ever to have a unified police department at LAX."***

**-Councilmember Jack Weiss**



## City Watch Issues DayPlanner

### Monday May 3

#### **Budget & Finance**

Meetings will continue through the week on the City's 2004-2005 budget. Meeting times: M & Th (9a-5p); Tue, Wed, Fri (2-5p)  
Meetings are televised on City Channel 35.)

### Tuesday May 4

#### **Arts, Parks, Health, Aging (8:30a)**

- Public education re: Recent sighting of mountain lion
- Clean needle and syringe exchange

#### **City Council (10a)**

- DWP 11% rate increase
- Regulation of engaging in distracting activities while driving
- American flags on Hyperion Bridge

#### **Education & Neighborhoods (2p)**

- Status of grievance procedure for NC issues
- Status Report: NC Election Procedure

#### **BONC (6:30p)**

- NC that have not held elections eight months or more following certification
- Discussion of PLUM instructions to DONE to inform NC's of the inclusionary zoning ordinance
- DONE reorganization

### Wednesday May 5

#### **Audits & Efficiency (8:35a)**

- Federal audit of Housing Authority

#### **PLUM – Canceled**

(For meeting locations and complete agendas:  
[www.lacity.org](http://www.lacity.org))

## We've Got Mail

### **Lying Shame: Duped. Tricked Hoodwinked. Bamboozled. Betrayed.**

The only reason the truth about the operations of one of the City of Los Angeles' revenue-producing departments, the Department of Water and Power (DWP), is starting to be seen and scrutinized has very little to do with Councilman Tony Cardenas. For the past several months, a group of volunteers - the neighborhood councils - appealed to water and power representatives and City Council members for the truth about the DWP's requested rate increase. It is now obvious that the NCs were asking for the unimaginable from local government: full disclosure.

The neighborhood councils are well meaning, hard working, elected volunteers who have goals and are conduits for their communities. The NC's are committed to making local government work and serve its people. The showdown is not *coming*; the showdown is now.

-Louise Clarke Stone

Sunland-Tujunga NC

(Send letters to Editor at [LACityWatch@aol.com](mailto:LACityWatch@aol.com). Some letters are edited for brevity and/or clarity.)

### Tracking the Issues (I-Trac)

## **Code of Civility, Other Issues to Watch**

**04-0002** Support for State bill to regulate engaging in distracting activities while driving. Substitute for #04-2003 regulating using cell phone while driving.

**04-0800** "Code of Civility" to govern behavior of members at NC board meetings.

**02-0918** Installation of 25 American flags along Hyperion Bridge from May 20-July 20.

**04-0637** Proposal for mandatory Inclusionary Zoning police for LA.

■■■

## City Watch On-Line Address Book

- 📖 Read City Watch- [www.allncs.org](http://www.allncs.org)
- 📖 City Watch Editor- [sirken323@aol.com](mailto:sirken323@aol.com)
- 📖 DONE Website/links- [www.lacityneighborhoods.com](http://www.lacityneighborhoods.com)
- 📖 LA City Website- [www.lacity.org](http://www.lacity.org)

# NC WATCH

*An Insider Look at Neighborhood Councils*

## New Stuff at May NC Congress

### **Citywide Issues, Gay & Lesbian Caucus, Other New Categories Highlight Congress**

By Ken Draper

The folks at DONE have rolled out a Congress menu with some new flavors, a couple of twists and a slightly new format. Set for May 22, the Spring 2004 Congress of Neighborhoods will uncork the long awaited Citywide Issues subject, will introduce a Gay and Lesbian caucus and will offer a specific networking center, just part of a program that appears to head the Congress in a fresh and different direction.

#### **"We're Taking It to the Next Level"**

"There will be no classroom presentations," according to Department of Neighborhood Empowerment General Manager, Greg Nelson, "because we're doing the classroom instruction now year-round through the Empowerment Academy. So, this Congress is going to take us to the next level with Neighborhood Councils helping themselves."

Since the first Congress of Neighborhoods, Councils and advocates have been pushing for an opportunity to discuss, and perhaps take a stand on, citywide issues. This congress will open the door on that subject with a "Building a Network to Influence Citywide Issues" roundtable and, at the least, will address the system, format and best ways for NC's to take positions at the Congress.

*Continued on Page 7. See "Congress"*

Spring 2004  
Congress  
of  
Neighborhoods  
May 22, 2004  
Los Angeles Convention  
Center

### Schedule

7:30 am – Registration  
8:30 am –Morning Sessions  
10 am –Mayor's Welcome/  
NC Roll Call  
11 am –City Departments Exhibits  
11:45 am – Afternoon Sessions  
1:30 pm – 2 pm –Closing Session  
(Prize Drawings)



## **Welcome!!**

### **Citywide Alliance Networking Center at the Congress**

The Citywide Alliance of Neighborhood Councils will host a special Networking Center at the upcoming NC Congress. It will be an opportunity to meet, greet and chat with your Neighborhood Council peers and a number of key political and celebrity guests.

And there's more: Look for your Council's accomplishments on the giant Wall of Empowerment, get an update on the work of the NC/DWP Partnership Taskforce, pick up a copy of the "Good Ideas and How to Do Them" handbook and the Special Congress Edition of City Watch.

#### **"They Come for the Networking"**

"One of the biggest reasons people come to the Congress is for networking," says Alliance co-founder Noah Modisett. "Instead of running from place to place looking for a networking opportunity, the Alliance Networking Center will provide a focal point for meeting and exchanging ideas ... along with a few celebrity surprises."

The Alliance Networking Center will be open from 11:30 in the morning to 1:30 in the afternoon. Bring along your good ideas. See you there.

*(For more information: [www.allncs.org](http://www.allncs.org))*

## CITY WATCH Publishing Dates

May 17, 2004  
May 22, 2004  
*(Congress Special Issue)*  
June 1, 2004  
June 14, 2004  
June 28, 2004

Neighborhood Councils**“The Experiment is Over!”**

by Ron Stone

Merriam-Webster defines an “experiment” as a “test or trial; a procedure or policy; an operation carried out under controlled conditions in order to discover an unknown effect or law, to test or establish a hypothesis, or to illustrate a known law.”

Nearly two and one-half years ago, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners approved Wilmington and Coastal San Pedro as the first Los Angeles City certified Neighborhood Councils. The buzzwords on that day in December 2001 and during the several months to follow were that an “experiment in government” was taking place in Los Angeles. Neighborhood Councils were indeed an experiment – no one quite knew what to make of them, how they would operate and whether they would truly make City government more responsive to local needs.

**Past Experimental Stage**

Based on the above definition, Los Angeles’ Neighborhood Councils have finally moved past the experimental stage. Free from the “controlled conditions” which existed prior to certification, our Councils are now advising City leaders on important issues, continuing their outreach to stakeholders and are directly affecting local projects. Even the tough challenges facing some Neighborhood Councils, including election difficulties and grievances, are in large part tied to the fact that Councils are now outside the laboratory and in the somewhat uncontrollable real world – replete with real people, real personalities, etc.

Is more proof necessary that our Neighborhood Councils have finally taken a major step toward maturity? If so, search no further than the 71-page “Neighborhood Council Budget Summary” – an integral component of Mayor Jim Hahn’s 2004-05 proposed budget.

**NC’s Represent Local Views**

With a new, priority-based budget process in place, who better than the Neighborhood Councils to help City officials assess City services and assemble them by priority? Because Neighborhood Councils represent the local views of residents, businesses and workers, it’s not surprising that they have been tapped early in the budgetary process. Out of the 60 Neighborhood Councils with elected boards in place by September 30, 2003, more than three-quarters have provided the Mayor with extremely valuable local information. Neighborhood Councils should be proud of their efforts as their top priorities – namely public safety and street repair – have become the cornerstone priorities of the Mayor’s budget. As the City Council begins its work on the budget, it will continue to look to the Neighborhood Councils for their input on important funding decisions.

**Will NC’s Play a Key Role?**

Will this be a one-time occurrence or will Neighborhood Councils show their maturity and play a key role in City budgeting for years to come? With a Mayor and City Council that strongly embrace the Neighborhood Council movement, it is safe to say that stakeholders from West L.A. to Watts, from Glassell Park to Granada Hills, from Hollywood to Highland Park, and from Studio City to San Pedro – will be integrally involved in priority setting for the foreseeable future. Thanks to our Neighborhood Councils’ valuable budgetary service, the City of Los Angeles will truly be a better place in which to live and work. ■

*(Ron Stone is the President of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners. This is one of a series of occasional City Watch perspective pieces by the BONC President.)*

**NC Watch  
DayPlanner****Wednesday May 5**

**Wilshire Center-Koreatown NC  
General Meeting (6pm)**  
Pio Pico Koreatown Library  
7<sup>th</sup> & Oxford  
*Election Planning*

**Saturday May 22**

**Congress of Neighborhoods  
8:30am-2pm**  
**LA Convention Center**

**Citywide Alliance of NC’s  
At NC Congress  
11:30am – 1:30pm**  
**LA Convention Center**  
*(Networking center/special guests)*

**June 2004**

**NC/DWP Partnership Task Force  
(Time/Location TBA)**  
*Discussion of Partnership of  
Inclusion agreement between  
DWP and NC’s*

**NC Board Meetings**

**Mar Vista NC**  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday each mo. 7p*

**Greater Echo Park Elysian NC**  
*4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday each mo. 7p*

**Atwater Village NC**  
*3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday each mo. 7p*

**Mid City WEST CC**  
*2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday ea mo. 7p*

**Greater Griffith Park NC**  
*3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday ea mo. 7p*

**Silver Lake NC**  
*1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday ea mo. 7p*

•••

## ViewPoints

### Inclusionary Zoning Debate

## What's Expected of NC's & When?

### Re: Inclusionary Zoning

*(Opinions are varied and numerous on Inclusionary zoning. Here are some of those points of view, excerpted from letters, reports and statements submitted on the subject.)*

#### No "Tale of Two Cities" Policy Please

It historically has been inner city council representatives that provide the lion share of low income, affordable and special needs housing in our districts. I have gone on record in the past and will continue to strongly advocate for housing strategies that were truly fair. That is, one based on everyone accepting their fair share of the responsibility. Not a policy that perpetuates the "Tale of Two cities."

Inner city communities ... bear the burden of the most overcrowded schools, lack of open space for recreation and access to an overall quality of life because historically this city has not done the work needed to incorporate affordable housing in all areas of our city. Incentives like increased density bonus are needed for developers to build affordable housing in low-density areas of the city.

Inner city council districts need the opposite. Incentives for the creation of more market rate housing. I have seen the results in downtown.

What will not work is an opt-out clause that will do nothing to create incentives for development of affordable housing in areas of this city that historically have not been receptive to having low income families, seniors and persons with disabilities living in their communities.

We should take advantage of the opportunity to create high density housing in major traffic corridors throughout the City.

I ask that you not develop an ordinance that confines low income families and individuals to what have historically been the "poor areas" of our city and prevents the creation of dynamic economically well-integrated communities throughout the City of Los Angeles.

-Congresswoman Jan Perry  
Ninth District

To: Joint Committees on April 14  
.....

#### Mandating IZ Housing will Create Shortage

Studies show that the Inclusionary Housing mandate, adopted by 107 communities throughout California, did not increase the housing supply, but rather limited growth and increased the cost of housing.

Professor Edward Stringham, San Jose State University, studied 50 communities that adopted mandatory inclusionary zoning since 1973. His report found that these communities combined, created less than 7,000 housing units over 27 year, when the region needed 24,000 per year. Inclusionary zoning drove up the cost of housing because developers had to pass on the loss of revenue on the lower income units to the other units in the building. On the construction of new homes, inclusionary zoning increased the cost \$22,000 per house.

Then there is the issue of lost tax revenue for government. Since the property is not allowed to appreciate, tax revenue is capped, causing loss of revenue to pay for Police, Fire, Schools, and other vital city services. Remember, Los Angeles City is facing a \$240 million deficit this coming year.

The solution to the housing shortage problem is to create more supply. Rather than mandating affordable housing that may create a small amount of houses, the city needs to reduce regulations and costs and create major incentives.

**Continued next column**

- 1) The committees would like you to study the proposal (online at: [www.lacity.org/lahd](http://www.lacity.org/lahd)). After you have reviewed and discussed the proposal, the committees would like you to express your views.
- 2) Hearing and public comment opportunities:
  - a- HCED Committee (Wednesday, May 12 at 4 p.m.). City Hall, Council Chambers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor.
  - b- PLUM Committee (Wednesday, May 19 at 2 p.m.) City Hall, Council Chambers
  - c- PLUM/HCED Joint Committee (Wednesday, May 26 at 2 p.m.) City Hall, Council Chambers.
- 3) You may also submit Community Impact Statements. Follow steps/instructions on DONE website ([lacityneighborhoods.com](http://lacityneighborhoods.com)).
- 4) You may also send comments and questions to the Office of the City Clerk:
 

Office of the City Clerk  
C/O Barbara Greaves  
200 N. Spring Street, Room 395  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
or fax: 213.978.1040
- 5) Locate the motion:
 

[www.lacity.org/lahd](http://www.lacity.org/lahd)  
[www.lacity.org](http://www.lacity.org) (Council Index #04.0637)

#### Continued from previous column

The City should allow apartment buildings to be converted to condominiums so there will be a homeownership market in the \$300,000 and below market. This way the lower income residents could afford to buy a home and gain equity.

The current mandatory inclusionary zoning is a nice sounding policy that will not accomplish the goal of housing the majority of Los Angeles's low-income residents.

-Kevin Singer  
Government Affairs Director  
The Apartment Assn of Greater Los Angeles  
.....

#### Experts Give Support

On October 22, 2003, the Council's Planning and Land Use Management and Housing, Community and Economic Development Committees jointly considered a report by David Paul Rosen and Associates. The joint Committee received testimony from experts representing nonprofit affordable housing and for-profit housing developers, academia, and the fields of urban planning and architecture. At that time qualified support for an Inclusionary zoning policy was articulated, provided that an appropriate package of incentives and offsets were provided.

-Reyes-Garcetti Motion #04-0637  
.....

#### Mixed-Income Housing Citywide

We support "Incentive-Based Mixed-Income Housing" Citywide, which would incentivize developers to allocate a percentage of residentially developed units to affordable housing either in each project or within some acceptable radius of each project, by providing "real-time" subsidies to build affordable units. CCA does not support "Inclusionary Zoning," which mandates that developers provide affordable units in their projects with no financial subsidy. We believe that, without subsidies for development incentives to offset costs of providing affordable housing, Inclusionary zoning is merely a tax on market rate units and will actually deter housing development by making it more expensive.

-Central City Association  
Housing Production White Paper

**Inclusionary-Continued from Page 1**

The IZ subject pushes a lot of hot buttons. Some see it as an excellent tool for creating and preserving mixed-income communities, for affordable housing near jobs and as a major effort toward relieving LA's crisis. Others see it as a misguided idea certain to reduce property values and the quality of their neighborhood life. Some are for inclusionary zoning, just not in their neighborhood. They oppose the citywide and mandatory aspects of the proposed ordinance.

The first hearing on the Reyes-Garcetti proposal was at a joint session of the Planning and Land Use and Housing Development committees on April 14. The division between the low-income crowd members, who want some control of all developments over five units, and the builders present was sizable and passionate. In the end, the committees decided to go to Neighborhood Councils for advice and directed the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment to provide information and instructions to the City's NC's.

**Lots of Players**

There are a lot of players in this debate, all with philosophies and interests to protect. Neighborhood Councils, required by Charter to represent all of the diverse interests in the community, would seem an ideal forum for taking the community's pulse and providing consensus.

The question, as one observer put it, is whether the entire city is ready for inclusionary zoning or, if the idea is still unworkable, does the city need to assess all types of uses and arrive at a heterogeneous city, possibly more amenable to the quality of life goals of Angelinos.

There is another question too, of course. Are LA's NC's ready for yet another test of their ability to conduct a responsible analysis, reach out to their stakeholders and provide the city with serious advice on a serious issue. The clock is ticking. ■

*(Jim McQuiston contributed to this story.)*

**Congress-Continued from Page 4**

The Congress will offer a couple of other relatively hot-button opportunities with the "How Can DONE and the BONC Commissioners Better Help NC's?" and the session on "Filming in Los Angeles".

The DONE/BONC session should be one of those opportunities to take your advice, complaints ... and your best shot ... directly to the source. "Are we enforcement officers? Are we advisors?" asks Nelson, "How do violations of bylaws get dealt with? How do you deal with councils that refuse to hold elections? Or, with councils that have simply gone bad?"

**Filming in LA Neighborhoods**

For a number of Neighborhood Councils, the abundance of film crew visitations and the system that controls and permits them, is at the top of their issues list. The new President of the Entertainment Industry Development Corporation (EIDC), Steve MacDonald, will be on hand to field questions, listen to advice and keep the temperature under control.

The "Neighborhood Improvements Projects" roundtable is also on the recommended list. It promises to be a real hands-on, step by step primer, facilitated by DONE's Parker Anderson, who was once the GM of the Community Development Department, on how to actually get projects done in the community. "Even if you think you know this stuff," on organizer said, "you will find some new twists and some new ideas in this session."

**Caucus Format Popular**

The new taught and streamlined format, says Nelson, is the result of the exceptional response last Congress to the caucuses vs. the classrooms. As for the inability of congress-goers to attend enough of the good and important

*Continued next column*

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[www.allncs.org](http://www.allncs.org)

[www.lacityneighborhoods.com](http://www.lacityneighborhoods.com)

[www.park2parkla.com](http://www.park2parkla.com)

[www.laissuesaction.org](http://www.laissuesaction.org)

**Cont. from previous column**

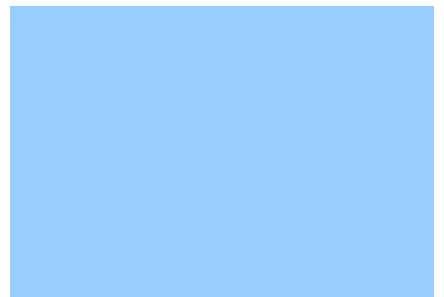
sessions, Nelson notes, "That shows the need to insure that there are enough people from each Neighborhood Council present to cover everything."

This Spring 2004 Congress could be one of those with enough compelling program options to make choosing between them a serious dilemma. ■

*Congress doors open at 7:30 Saturday morning with the first caucuses and roundtables will get underway at 8:30. The program ends at 2 p.m. Parking is free. The Congress is being held at the LA Convention Center.*

*For complete program and the latest Congress information, visit:*  
[www.lacityneighborhoods.com](http://www.lacityneighborhoods.com).

*Registration for sessions ends May 15. NC members and stakeholders can register online at:*  
[www.lacityneighborhoods.com](http://www.lacityneighborhoods.com). ■



**Perspectives-Continued from Page 1.**

Indirectly, the DONE budget is the NC budget, in that it also pays for the printing and distribution of Neighborhood Council flyers and newsletters, for NC organizational support, for assistance with NC elections, for facilitating bylaws approval, for producing the Congress of Neighborhoods, for empowerment training and more.

When NC's have to begin using their \$50,000 stipend to pay for these costs, the actual news that NC funding will not go uncut, will finally show up on the local neighborhood radar.

**Cuts In City Attorney Budget Affect NC's**

The cuts to the City Attorney's budget will be reflected in the number of staff assigned to assist Neighborhood Councils. Indirectly, their budget is the NC budget.

The City Council Budget Committee was debating with the Department of Public Works last week, the need for a Neighborhood Council liaison. DPW was a leader in this effort to provide NC's with a contact ... literate in both the workings of the department and Neighborhood Councils ...to help NC's negotiate the maze that is city government. Other city departments have made similar appointments to help ensure that NC's get the information they need and have to help resolve the issues their stakeholders have with the City. In effect, cuts to these NC liaison positions are cuts to the NC budget.

**Could Cost NC's Third of City Funding**

Think of it another way. It could cost Neighborhood Councils a third of their city funding to pay for these kinds of support services. So, as the budget scalpels begin dissecting this mass of budget numbers, watch you back. It's not what's happening to the \$50,000 NC kitty bag in front of you, it's what's happening behind the budget curtain that could have irreparable impact on the support needs of your Council.

**Memo to City Council: Time to Walk the Walk**

Once again, cloaked in what appears to be the inclusion of LA's NC's in the government process, a City Council Committee has asked for input on an important citywide issue.

On April 14, the Planning and Land Use and Housing Committees, in joint session, instructed DONE to forward a motion and support paperwork to Neighborhood Councils for review and advice. This time the issue is Inclusionary Zoning, a subject that provokes passionate responses from every sector and every neighborhood in the City.

**Real Issue Gets Obscured**

Yet, once again, the real subject issues will be obscured in a debate about NC's not being consulted in a timely manner.

At the April 14 joint session, NC's were given 45 days to review and respond. The materials and request to Councils went out on April 28. The deadline opportunities for Neighborhood Councils to respond are May 12 (HCED meeting), May 19 (PLUM meeting) and May 26 (next joint session).

**Misses the Spirit of the Charter**

Only someone with a minimal understanding of the Brown Act, and other, requirements placed on the all volunteer Neighborhood Councils, could actually believe that this time frame meets the spirit of the City Charter that requires "notice to neighborhood councils as soon as practical, and a reasonable opportunity to provide input before decisions are made."

Do the math. Is it any wonder that Neighborhood Councils remain skeptical of the intentions of City agencies? Or smell the scent of hypocrisy when the Council or a Committee gets on the DWP for short changing NC's? It way past time for City Hall folks to begin walking the walk. The talk-line has a Limited Warranty

**City  
Hall:  
We've  
Gotcha  
Covered !!**

**Make  
Sure  
You're  
on  
the  
City  
Watch  
Network**

***Send your name and  
e-address to:***

**[sirken323@aol.com](mailto:sirken323@aol.com)**



**Mayor's Budget-Continued from Page 2**

- City employees are helping to cut costs. Employees citywide re suggesting savings. Transportation employees, last week, volunteered to replace or repair 185,000 signs, at no labor cost to the City. They volunteered an estimated \$2.8 million worth of labor. Elsewhere, non-sworn staff agreed to give up their Cost of Living Adjustments for this budget year. A substantial impact.

- The City's budget process is overwhelmed by the State's \$14 billion deficit, which will be addressed long after the City's budget is set in stone. Obviously, the State will take a substantial amount of the tax money upon which LA's budget now depends. The County may take from the City also.

The Chief Administrative Officer, Bill Fujioka, said that the City should act as if the State will take nothing, the theory being that to retrench instead might indicate to the State or County that LA could manage with less. Opponents, however, think that this theory would be untenable of the State should find a gross City inefficiency.

An example of gross city inefficiency is that the trash collection charge for City patrons is grossly lower than the actual cost of collection. It is also grossly below the fees of every other comparable California city. If the City collected what trash collection really costs, the City would take in about \$220 million more income and these painful and difficult budget cuts would be unnecessary. The State can see that. **NC's should look closely at whether this substantial budget-buster should continue.**

- The dispersal of the Environmental Affairs Department into several other departments does not seem to be a winner. The Committee is unconvinced that it would benefit. Many speakers opposed it, but curiously, none could show that the dispersal would produce a negative result. The Mayor opined that all departments must be environmentally aware and that the dispersal of EAD helps achieve that goal. EPA said it could stand dispersal but like a one-stop contact. **This issue is ripe for NC input.**

- Two budgetary departments deserve cuts. The City council remains staffed as if it were still the "City Manager." Charter reform stripped that power from the council and gave it to the Mayor. The Mayor cut his office staff by 10%, to 66, while the City Council was not touched, remaining at 108. A reduction to 90 seems better suited to the Council's mandate. **Politically, this is an issue that can only be settled by NC leadership.**

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- The second department for cutting is Neighborhood Councils themselves. Every city department has been cut to the bone in this budget. Vital functions are in jeopardy. Yet, every NC is still slated to receive its share of the \$4 million, even if it has no use for it. The committee suggests that perhaps NC's should donate part of their funding to help departments in dollar trouble. **NC's would be well advised to order their allocations cut by 10%, demonstrating some leadership and that they have a grasp of the depth of the budget crisis.**

- Several small departments voiced anger or despair over the cuts. The Mayor said he wanted administrative costs cut, not programs. He considered merging the social service departments and the committee seems to agree, however these departments are substantially unequal, have no common interest and have unequal value to the City in a time of financial crisis. None of these departments offered new funding sources that would help sustain their current level of operation.

- The Committee was cool to using one-time windfalls as a means of budget balancing. However, they did ask for a list of surplus city properties, the presumption being that they could be sold to continue ongoing programs, even if doing so contradicts current policy.

**Neighborhood Council input, to be effective, needs to be transmitted to the Budget Committee before May 11 and needs to be specific and fact-based. ■**

*(Jim McQuiston is a Management Consultant and longtime political activist both on the local and national political scene.)*