

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA

BOARD OF NEIGHBORHOOD
COMMISSIONERS

ALBERT ABRAMS
PRESIDENT

DANIEL GATICA
VICE PRESIDENT

ESTHER CEPEDA-HATCH
CARLENE DAVIS
JOHN KIM
LINDA LUCKS
KAREN MACK

JANET LINDO
Executive Administrative Assistant
TELEPHONE: (213) 485-1360



ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF
NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT

334-B EAST SECOND STREET
LOS ANGELES, CA 90012

TELEPHONE: (213) 485-1360
TOLL-FREE: 3-1-1
FAX: (213) 485-4608
E-MAIL: done@lacity.org

BONGHWAN (BH) KIM, MPA
GENERAL MANAGER

www.EmpowerLA.org

December 8, 2010

Honorable Member of the
Education and Neighborhoods Committee
c/o Office of the City Clerk, Room 395
City Hall, 200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Date: 12-8-10
Submitted in ENC Committee
Council File No: 09-1115-54
Item No.: 1
Deputy: Michael B. Spinoso

Attention: Erika Pulst – Legislative Assistant

Subject: DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT'S
RECOMMENDATIONS RELATIVE TO THE CITY CLERK'S AFTER ACTION REPORT
FOR THE 2010 NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL ELECTIONS.

Honorable Members:

On November 10, 2010 the Education and Neighborhoods Committee (ENC) heard and discussed the report submitted by the Office of the City Clerk titled "After-Action Report for the 2010 Neighborhood Council Board Elections." The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (Department) submitted a report for your consideration which addressed the City Clerk's report and provided a brief summary of the conduct of elections; the models used under the Department's purview, and presented a series of general recommendations.

This report is a follow up to our previous report and addresses the concerns raised at the meeting by the members of the ENC regarding outreach assistance to Neighborhood Councils during the election cycle. This report will focus specifically on the issue of election outreach and increasing civic participation in the system as a whole, and what is needed to accomplish this very important and critical goal of the NC system.

Background

When the City Clerk conducted the administration of the Neighborhood Council elections in 2008 and 2010, the Department was charged with conducting outreach for the elections. The Department conducted voter mobilization in 2008, which yielded positive results. However, in

2010, the move to merge the Department with the Community Development Department resulted in severe cuts in personnel, which made it impossible to provide NC election outreach services. The remaining Field Staff did its best to conduct some level of outreach, bringing some new participants to the system, but not nearly enough to impede the conduct of NC elections with no or insufficient candidates. The Field Staff was shifted to work on the funding program and were limited to interacting with NCs via our Department Help Line, which provides technical assistance with issues and questions raised by NCs.

The Field Staff Division is responsible for the day to day work with NCs, providing them with direct assistance. It is currently comprised of two Senior Project Coordinators and eight Neighborhood Empowerment Analysts (NEAs), having been reduced from a total of seventeen (17). The remaining ten staff covers all ninety-three (93) NCs along with the remaining areas to organize, keep the funding program functioning, and do the policies for the Department. However, one of the eight NEA's was shifted to handle the day-to-day operations of the funding program and another NEA has been, and remains out due to health issues.

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment's Proposed Outreach Plan

The Department enthusiastically embraces the notion of being able to assist the NCs with election outreach needs. It is a role of the Department and one that it has carried out from the onset of the system. However, it is a role that cannot be accomplished without additional resources that will allow staff to focus on civic engagement, public participation and outreach. In order to grow the system and experience a successful cycle of elections in 2012 City-wide and at the Neighborhood level, outreach must be given priority. And it is important that NCs understand that outreach is a shared responsibility, one which requires a commitment of resources and people power at the individual NC level to ensure that elections are successful.

If granted additional resources, the Department is committed to implementing an outreach strategy to increase and public participation for the 2012 elections, which would address the following:

Goals for the 2012 NC Election Outreach Plan

- Increase participation in the NC system by identifying and recruiting new participants
- Raise awareness & increase participation in the NC Elections via various campaigns
- Aim to double the number of candidates running for board seats in 2012 from the number in 2010
- Aim to increase the number of voters participating in each election
- Develop and assist NCs with the use and implementation of Outreach Tools
- Focus efforts in areas of Low Civic Participation
- Mobilize Candidate and Voter participation through the use of: a) Media Campaign, b) Education Campaign & c) Outreach Campaign
- Evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the plan and adjust accordingly

Proposal to Meet Outreach Goals for 2012

- Use of a twofold outreach campaign approach to address outreach needs: a) Citywide/Regional Approach & b) Neighborhood Council level approach
- Create a Citywide Task Force comprised of NC's, City government leaders, members of the media as well as experts in marketing campaigns to strategize on how to improve visibility and increase participation in the NC System

- Develop and implement a media campaign to ensure that awareness about the system and elections is raised.
- Launch an information & education campaign whereby the general public would be engaged in this process (e.g. focus groups, learning sessions, stakeholder orientations, subject matter trainings, etc.)
- Identify, develop and implement outreach toolkits to assist the NC's with outreach at the local levels

Necessary Components to Garner Participation in NC Elections

- Establish and/or strengthen our partnership with Neighborhood Councils
- Establish and/or strengthen our partnership with the Office of the City Clerk
- Establish and/or strengthen a partnership with the Mayor's office & City Council
- Establish and/or strengthen a partnership with City Departments
- Pre-election Timeline (at least 6 months needed to mobilize and educate the public regarding the NC system as well as the 2012 Elections)
- Inform and mobilize voters and candidates with respect to key deadlines, such as Outreach Events, Candidate Preparation Sessions, filing deadlines, Candidate Forums & Election Dates

Execution of Twofold Outreach Approach

Citywide/Regional Level Outreach Strategy

- Creation of a Citywide Task Force is needed to undertake the challenge of finding strategic approaches to civically engage Angelinos and help them understand the impact that Neighborhood Councils have in City government.
- Delivering a media campaign whereby the Department partners with key media outlets such as Channel 7, LA Times, La Opinion and other local newspapers to garner not only awareness but excitement about the NC system and NC elections.
- Partnerships with our City family become imperative to this process as it is important that increasing participation in the NC elections and NC system is priority for everyone.
- Working with NC coalitions and alliances at the regional level is also strategic and yields results. The NCs know their communities and regions better than anyone and know how to reach candidates and voters.
- Develop and implement outreach toolkits to assist the NCs at the regional levels to conduct outreach and foster inter-NC and inter-regional collaborations.
- Strategic partnerships with City Government, NCs, Non-profit Organizations, Unions, Faith Based Organizations, Schools, Community Based Organizations, Media Outlets, etc.
- Development of an information and education campaign across the City targeting areas of Low Civic Participation to reach out to populations that may find themselves currently disengaged from the NC system.
- Coordination of Citywide and/or regional focus groups to discuss policies, information, tools and best practices as it relates to NC elections and public participation.

Neighborhood Council Level Outreach Strategy

- NCs should designate a desired amount of funds to invest in election outreach efforts at each individual level or by partnering with other NCs regionally; a process where the Department has been helpful by guiding cluster outreach efforts

- NCs must mobilize their constituency with respect to key deadlines and events before the elections. (For example, Candidate Information Sessions, Filing deadlines and Candidate Forums.
- NCs should conduct informational sessions during their NC meetings and other related town-hall meetings to raise awareness and should actively seek new participants
- Department staff would work closely with individual NCs to conduct outreach education and training to aid the NCs to execute this task.
- Staff would facilitate and coordinate direct assistance to NCs by their peers via the upcoming Peer Mentor Program and NC Volunteer Program.
- Create, share, implement, and/or improve upon tools that will the NC with the challenging task of outreach.
- NCs should work with the Department to assist in identifying barriers to reach out to various communities and seek assistance to mitigate barriers.
- Provide advice and technical assistance to NCs regarding election outreach, and the use of tools to accomplish their goals.

Department Resource Needs & Proposed Budget

The Department, in conjunction with and approval from the Mayor's Office and the City Clerk, is proposing to add four (4) new positions to their 2011-2012 Budget Proposal to handle the Outreach Program for the Elections. The four positions consist of two (2) NEA and two (2) Management Analyst II's (MA II) with a total salary cost of approximately \$291,000 (at the Step 3 level). The Department is proposing this staffing requirement for several reasons: 1) The two (2) new MA II's will allow the Department to shift all of the funding issues required of the NEA's to do back to the MA II's. This equates to a 25% reduction of the NEA's current duties. Hence, it will allow the existing NEA's to concentrate their efforts on the wants and needs of the NC's, which includes Outreach and, 2) the two (2) new NEA positions will be solely responsible for outreach for the elections and work with the existing NEA's to achieve this goal.

The Department will also be requesting that \$290,000 be approved and allocated into the following expense accounts:

- Account 2120 – Printing and Binding for \$140,000 – This money will be used to print inserts, post cards and/or flyers as part of the Department's mass mailing and house-to-house distribution as part of the City-wide Outreach Plan.
- Account 3040 – Contractual Services for \$150,000 – This money will be used to hire a company to perform the house-to-house distribution of flyers as part of the City-wide Outreach Plan. The Department anticipates that each mass distribution campaign will cost approximately \$75,000 each.

Conclusion

The future of the NC system heavily depends on how effective we are as a City and as a System to engage the stakeholders in Los Angeles to care about having an impact in their communities and their neighborhoods. This process lays the foundation for a more civically engaged and committed population. NC elections are, at the grass roots level, the ideal tool to foster and nurture the civic engagement process. The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment will champion the good will of the honorable members of the Education and Neighborhoods committee as well as City Council and Mayor of Los Angeles, and affirms that if provided with

the adequate resources the 2012 cycle of NC elections will see a more robust effort as it pertains to outreach for NC elections and a commitment to increase public participation across our great City.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B/K' with a stylized flourish at the end.

BONGHWAN (BH) KIM
General Manager

BHK:LC