

December 8, 2010

To: Education and Neighborhoods Committee
From: Robert Gelfand / Issuesbob@sbcglobal.net
Douglas Epperhart / epperhart@cox.net

Re: Neighborhood Council Elections

Honorable Members of the Education and Neighborhoods Committee:

Earlier this year, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners and DONE invited neighborhood council participants to form our own deliberative body in order to consider problems with neighborhood council bylaws. The Bylaws Task Force was created and met eight times.

The process included extensive discussions which included DONE, the BONC, and several dozen neighborhood council stakeholders and board members. Out of that process, a carefully developed consensus emerged: Neighborhood councils agree to reorganize and reorder their bylaws to fit a template that was requested by the City Attorney and the other governmental participants.

In exchange, neighborhood councils will not be forced to accept an imposed set of bylaws. The task force developed a process of implementation that was expanded by the BONC, and the process of rewriting our bylaws is now underway all over the city. We created a Bylaws Task Force staffed by volunteer stakeholders which is working directly with DONE to finish the job.

We suggest a similar approach would be useful in terms of deciding on our neighborhood council election system. We believe this suggestion is consistent with the report furnished by DONE, which likewise suggests that a group that includes all governmental and stakeholder interests be formed in order to finish the plan.

Much of the ultimate consensus seems to be developing; for example, nobody seems to want to spend \$2 million on our next round of elections, and everyone wants some system that can deal with election challenges rapidly and with finality.

At the same time, we have some details that need to be worked out. For example, any system which involves DONE, independent election administrators, or even the City Clerk needs to be evaluated carefully as to the details. That's what a task force can do.

We offer our services to convene a task force that will consider and report out a complete plan for neighborhood council elections.

Robert Gelfand, chair of the Bylaws Task Force
Doug Epperhart, co-chair of the Bylaws Resource Team