



Richard Williams <richard.williams@lacity.org>

E&N meeting input

Bob Gelfand <issuesbob@sbcglobal.net>

Thu, Sep 27, 2012 at 7:40 PM

To: Richard.Williams@lacity.org

Dear Mr Williams, and Councilpersons Parks, Perry, and Zine:

Re: Waste Hauler Franchise Question:

The Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Coalition met at the beginning of September, 2012, and voted unanimously to support the establishment of non-exclusive franchises rather than exclusive franchises for waste haulers. The Lancc referred to the arguments in an editorial by the Los Angeles Times that makes the point clearly.

Re: Request from E&N Members Regarding Neighborhood Council Activities:

In addition, members of the E&N committee have asked neighborhood councils questions regarding the way we do outreach on matters of importance to the community, as well as our level of knowledge on significant matters. The Lancc considered the request and adopted a resolution which responds in some detail to the questions.

Please see the text of that resolution:

WHEREAS COUNCIL MEMBER PARKS HAS MADE A MOTION , SECONDED BY COUNCIL MEMBER PERRY, REQUIRING NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS TO REPORT BACK TO E & N ON HOW NC'S PERFORM OUTREACH WITH REGARDS TO CITY ISSUES.

Be it resolved that the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Coalition (LANCC), in its regular meeting dated 6/2/2012, moves to approve the following response to the motion:

Neighborhood Councils, by charter and ordinance, are mandated to be the link between the City government and the citizens of Los Angeles. Neighborhood councils recognize their responsibility in this matter. In an effort to do so, many NC's have created newsletters, blast e-mails, events, town halls and other forms of outreach.

BUT, the City of Los Angeles has not, for the most part, established any kind of procedures that would allow Neighborhood Councils to fulfill this duty. In fact, many of the current procedures are set up to work against any input from stakeholders and their elected Neighborhood Councils. What follows are only a few examples:

A) Neighborhood Councils are NOT advised in advance of issues. In many cases, Neighborhood Councils are never apprised of issues, thereby making it impossible for the NC's to get the word out, get feedback, and deliver said feedback to the elected officials. Many issues only come to the attention of the NC's within 72 hours of the issue being heard by the City Council. As the elected officials must realize, NC's are bound by the Brown Act and do not have the ability to respond officially within such a short period of time. There isn't even enough time to file a Community Impact Statement.

B) The current DONE contact list is several years out of date. It is virtually impossible to get any kind of timely notice to the entire Neighborhood Council system. The present policy only allows each individual board member to update their personal information. The Secretary of each NC should be given a password and allowed to provide this information for their entire Board. Failure to do so should result in DONE hiring temp staff to do it for them with the salaries being deducted from the NC's yearly funding assessment.

C) When Neighborhood Council members, many of whom have to take time from their work, appear before a Committee or the whole Council, they are routinely given two minutes to report or give public comment on an issue. It is extremely difficult to give any kind of reasoned response in this short time allotment. If the City Council really wanted input from official NC representatives they would allow a reasonable time period for official input. Only last year, a Committee Chair combined four agenda items into one public comment period. Speakers were given two minutes to speak on four very different items. Not only did this negate any kind of meaningful input, but it was disrespectful of the NC representatives who took the time to travel downtown with the hope of real participation.

D) The relationship between Neighborhood Councils and their respective Council offices is a mixed bag. Some Council offices work closely with their NC's and actually request their input on certain issues. There are other Council offices that could not care less about NC's and would actually like them to go away. Some don't even have the courtesy to return phone calls. If the goal of your motion is to explore ways for better citizen input, it has to start at the top.

E) There has been a systemic demolition of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment caused by the City's inability to generate revenue and cut expenses in a more prudent way, but there has been no reduction in the amount of services that it is required to provide. There is no question that this lack of proper staffing has caused the Department and the NC system to falter in their ability to stay fully informed. The staff at DONE has been reduced from a 2008 level of 49 employees with 18 field reps, to the current level of 15 employees with 7 field reps. During the same time period, the number of Neighborhood Councils has risen from 89 to 95. DONE is the NC's direct conduit to the City government and is in the best position to notify the Neighborhood Councils about upcoming legislation. Someone should be assigned to keep track of upcoming hearings and meetings, but each current staff person is already trying to handle the work load of three previous workers.

F) City Council members are busy people, but if they really wanted Neighborhood Council input they would show up at meetings to hear it. Public testimony at full Council meetings is a farce. The members are talking on cell phones, meeting with constituents, or leaving the chamber for large periods of time. How can Neighborhood Councils take their role seriously if the decision makers don't or if, as in some cases, they have already decided how to vote and could not care less about what we have to say or the amount of time it took us to formulate our recommendations.

THEREFORE, we request that Council member Parks submit a motion to the full City Council mandating the following:

1- All "important" issues should be sent to the Neighborhood Councils 60 days prior to their first hearing so that they may have time to reach out to their stakeholders and take a position. A good example of this is the weekly notice from the Planning Department which alerts NC's to the permits pulled for their district. Each City Department head should be responsible to work with the NC system as a partner, not an adversary.

2- The Department Of Neighborhood Empowerment shall compile and regularly update a contact list of all Neighborhood Council Board members.

3- The City Council and all of its committees shall allow a five minute public comment period to all speakers that are officially representing their Neighborhood Councils.

4- All Council District offices shall meet regularly with their Neighborhood Councils and work with them to develop plans allowing for greater NC input in the decision making process.

5- The Education and Neighborhoods Committee shall look into the funding of the Department Of Neighborhood Empowerment pertaining to its capacity to fulfill its mission. An additional staff position shall be funded with part of the job description being to track all impending legislation and department hearings and to notify the Neighborhood Council system in a timely manner.

6- Neighborhood Councils should be allowed to request a postponement of all upcoming legislation so that they may properly notify their stakeholders and have time to meet and take a position.

This body asks the Chairman to consider the above information when reviewing how NC's interact with their stakeholders and the City government.

Note: This was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously at the June, 2012 meeting.

Respectfully submitted, Robert Gelfand, chair of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Council Coalition