

COMMUNICATION

TO: LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL

FILE NO. 11-0600-S23

**FROM: COUNCILMEMBER BERNARD C. PARKS, CHAIR
EDUCATION AND NEIGHBORHOODS COMMITTEE**

COMMUNICATION FROM CHAIR, EDUCATION AND NEIGHBORHOODS COMMITTEE relative to alternatives for conducting Neighborhood Council Elections.

Recommendation for Council action:

1. NOTE and FILE the City Clerk Report dated February 10, 2012, entitled Neighborhood Council Election Alternatives Survey, which was prepared in response to the Fiscal Year 2011-12 Adopted Budget Recommendation instructing the City Clerk to review and make recommendations to the Education and Neighborhoods Committee regarding alternatives to conducting Neighborhood Council (NC) elections.
2. INSTRUCT the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE), before the 2012 NC Elections, to:
 - a. Report back to the Education and Neighborhoods Committee relative to:
 - 1) The use of Independent Elections Administrators for the 2012 Neighborhood Council elections.
 - 2) Allowing Neighborhood Councils the ability to use their discretion to determine whether they wish to have a selection process (Town Hall, etc.) rather than a ballot process for the 2012 Neighborhood Council elections.
3. INSTRUCT the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) and the City Administrative Officer (CAO) to report back to the Education and Neighborhoods Committee relative to determination of an appropriate dollar amount for each Neighborhood Council to contribute toward conducting the 2012 NC Elections in order to relieve the cost and burden on the City.
4. INSTRUCT the City Clerk, prior to the 2014 NC Elections, to:
 - a. Prepare a new survey of Neighborhood Councils regarding Neighborhood Council elections to include the same questions as in the previous survey as well as the additional questions stated below, and to present the results of the new survey to the Education and Neighborhoods Committee:
 - 1) Options for pilot programs and vote-by-mail.
 - 2) Concerns regarding the 2012 Neighborhood Council elections that were conducted by DONE.

- b. Report back to the Education and Neighborhoods Committee relative to:
- 1) The use of Independent Elections Administrators for future Neighborhood Council elections.
 - 2) Allowing Neighborhood Councils the ability to use their discretion to determine whether they wish to have a selection process (Town Hall, etc.) rather than a ballot process for future NC elections.

Fiscal Impact Statement: Neither the CAO nor the CLA has completed a financial analysis of this report.

Community Impact Statement: None submitted.

SUMMARY

On April 17, 2012, the Chair of the Education and Neighborhoods Committee considered a City Clerk report dated February 10, 2012, entitled Neighborhood Council Election Alternatives Survey, which was prepared in response to the Fiscal Year 2011-12 Adopted Budget Recommendation instructing the City Clerk to review and make recommendations to the Education and Neighborhoods Committee regarding alternatives to conducting Neighborhood Council elections.

The City Clerk and City Clerk Elections staff appeared before the Committee Chair to provide a brief overview of the report and respond to related questions. The City Clerk reported that no funds were provided in FY 2011-12 Adopted Budget for City Clerk to conduct 2012 Neighborhood Council elections that would take place from March to June of 2012, and as a result, the Council instructed the City Clerk to review and make alternatives for conducting the elections. The City Clerk conducted a survey asking each Neighborhood Council how they wanted the elections to be conducted. Each Neighborhood Council was instructed to make its response to the survey an official action of the board, to vote on that action, and to respond back to the City Clerk.

City Clerk Elections staff reported some of the key findings of the survey as follows:

- Regarding whether elections should be postponed, the results were nearly split with 52 percent responding no and 47 percent responding yes.
- In terms of whether Neighborhood Councils were willing to pay for part or all of the cost of elections for 2012, 76 percent of those Neighborhood Councils that were willing to hold elections in 2012 responded in favor.
- Regarding the question of who the Neighborhood Councils want to administer the elections: 34 percent were in favor of independent election administrators, 25 percent preferred the City Clerk, 16 percent were in favor of an open selection process, and 11 percent preferred DONE.
- Given the choice between elections and a selection process, 85 percent of respondents were in favor of elections by secret ballot and 15 percent were in favor of selection (vote by show of hands or voice vote). Additionally, of those in favor of holding elections, 90 percent were in favor of elections by ballot at polls exclusively or combined with some other method of voting such as vote by mail, while approximately 6 percent preferred Internet voting.

Of the current total of 95 certified Neighborhood Councils, City Clerk Elections staff reported that 63 Neighborhood Councils (roughly two-thirds of the total) participated in the survey. The City Clerk performed significant outreach to ensure maximum participation by all 95 Neighborhood Councils in the survey including reminder e-mails and telephone bank calls to all board presidents and treasurers at two months, one month, two weeks, and one week prior to the deadline for responding, as well as on the day of the deadline. Additionally, City Clerk Elections staff worked with those Neighborhood Councils who needed additional time to complete the survey by extending the deadline to respond.

During additional discussion, the Committee Chair instructed the City Clerk to conduct an additional survey of the Neighborhood Councils relative to Neighborhood Council elections to include the questions from the previous survey, questions regarding pilot programs and vote-by-mail options, and any other questions that may arise after the 2012 elections are conducted. Further, the Chair requested that City Clerk conduct the survey prior to the 2014 Neighborhood Council elections. The City Clerk's Executive Officer noted that in the 2010 Neighborhood Council elections, the vote-by-mail was too expensive to implement and would have cost the City approximately \$500,000. As a result, funding for this was cut in the budget and that option was provided only to those stakeholders who requested it due to religious reasons or medical necessity.

Additionally, the Committee Chair discussed looking at the use of Independent Election Administrators for the 2012 elections to be conducted by DONE, and for future elections conducted by the City Clerk (since a proposed Ordinance transferring responsibility for the elections from City Clerk to DONE would do so for the 2012 cycle only [Council File 11-1912]) and instructed both DONE and City Clerk to report back on this matter. The Committee Chair also instructed both departments to report back on allowing Neighborhood Councils the ability to use their discretion to determine whether they wish to have a selection process (Town Hall, etc.) rather than a ballot process for upcoming and future Neighborhood Council elections.

Lastly, the Committee Chair instructed the CLA and the CAO to report back on an appropriate dollar amount each Neighborhood Council can be asked to contribute toward the cost of 2012 Neighborhood Council elections in order to reduce the cost and burden on the City, particularly since a majority of Neighborhood Council indicated in the City Clerk's survey that they would be willing to pay toward the costs of elections in 2012.

After providing an opportunity for public comment, the Committee recommended that the Council note and file the City Clerk report and approve the various instructions to the City Clerk, DONE, the CLA and the CAO. This matter is now forwarded to the Council for its consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

COUNCILMEMBER BERNARD C. PARKS, CHAIR
EDUCATION AND NEIGHBORHOODS COMMITTEE

<u>MEMBERS</u>	<u>VOTE</u>
PARKS:	YES
PERRY:	ABSENT
ZINE:	ABSENT

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