

November 19, 2013

Education and Neighborhoods Committee
Tuesday 11-19-13

Regarding Today's Agenda CF#11-1017-S1

Date: 11-19-13
Submitted in Bin Committee
Council File No: 11-1017-S1
Item No.: 1
Deputy: PUBLIC

I am sending this letter in absentia and would like to present it as part of this council file. I am one of the 6 who resigned from the NHWNC due to the bullying, harassment, and sexist behavior exhibited by several board members and the parliamentarian.

It is unconscionable that even with the plethora of documents provided to DONE/EmpowerLA, The City Attorney's office, etc. we have yet to see them placed on probation, funds frozen and no new board members appointed as we requested.

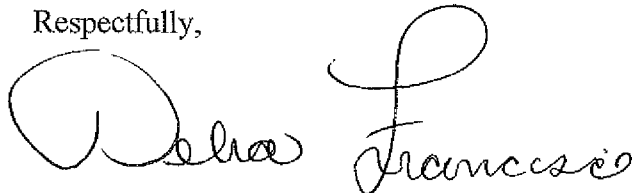
I, as well as the other women who resigned, have been waiting for the report from Grayce Liu as to what their investigation revealed. I am hoping that the presentation of this report at today's meeting will be one that holds anyone on an NC responsible for their actions.

While I support Nury Martinez's motion, 100%; I still feel that board members should be held accountable. The motion should also include that after training for bullying, harassment, and/or sexist behavior, that everyone sign a document indicating they took the training classes and that they understand if a board member files a complaint with DONE regarding these issues, that the person is put on probation immediately until the matter is resolved. In addition, if DONE finds that this behavior has been exhibited by the board, that they are removed immediately. If there are no repercussions to their behavior they will continue to do it and know they can "get away with it."

I have been the subject of bullying, harassment and sexist behavior as I stated and no one, absolutely no one should have to experience what I did. It should be a wonderful experience to work for your community and one that you should enjoy; instead for me it turned into one of the worst experiences.

Thank you for allowing me to present this letter to the committee and, once again, I would like to thank Nury Martinez for listening to us and presenting this motion, it is most appreciated.

Respectfully,



Debra Francisco
North Hills West Stakeholder
Former NHWNC Board Secretary

November 18, 2013

Board of Neighborhood Commissioners
Los Angeles, California

Re: Harassment, Sexism, and Bullying Education

Honorable Commissioners,

I cannot be in attendance at your meeting today.

I do want to voice my support for the approval and authorization for all Neighborhood Council Board Members to have knowledge and awareness of the matters concerning Harassment, Sexism, Bullying and such issues in an authorized training session.

Why should these topics not be part of the mandate as are Ethics and Financial instruction as a board member? It is a specious argument that it will take another hour of instruction and those community members would not want to serve. If you plan to be a member of a Neighborhood Council you are making a commitment to make a contribution to your community and to take a potential one hour class out of an entire year (8,760 hours) to hear, learn, and be aware of the way we act and should not act as representative of the City of Los Angeles is not too much to ask. All Los Angeles city employees are directed to take such training, why not the members of Neighborhood Council who are closer to the people they serve?

So, please do not see this requirement as a burden but as an opportunity to have members of Neighborhood Council aware of the basic rules of civility, respect, politeness and good manners towards each other and the people in the community they have chosen to serve.

Thank you,

Anita Goldbaum
North Hills West Stakeholder
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Robin Tyler, 5 Other Women Resign From 'Sexist' Neighborhood Council

Posted on 9/24/2013 9:36:00 AM by Karen Ocomb



Among the changes Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti hopes to bring to the city is a rethinking of neighborhood councils. "The Neighborhood Councils need to write their second chapter," Garcetti told me for a *Frontiers* cover story coming out next week. The time for that change might be now, with the resignations of five senior women from North Hills West Neighborhood Councilmembers (NHWNC) and a Charter Stakeholder last Thursday, Sept. 19, alleging sexism, harassment and "gross infractions of Bylaws and Code of Ethics and Civility." Their resignations were only made public on Monday. One of those NHWNC members is longtime LGBT civil rights activist Robin Tyler, pictured above with her wife Diane Olson at the Prop. 8 victory celebration in West Hollywood.

In a joint statement issued by Robin Tyler/Former Vice President, Debra Francisco/Former Secretary, Mary Armenteros/Former Treasurer, Anita Goldbaum/Former Outreach Chair, Patricia Harrison/Former Outreach Committee Member and Peggy Burgess/Charter Stakeholder/Former Planning & Land Use/Rules & Elections Committee Member, the women said:

We are all senior, professional women who became involved with NHWNC to be of service to our community and make a difference. We had high hopes and goals for this council, much of which we were able to accomplish.

At the June 4, 2013 Special Board Meeting, there was an unethical and probably illegal election of a new president. Since then, there have been flagrant and continuous violations of the Bylaws, the Brown Act, Code of Ethics and Civility and the City Charter Plan for Neighborhood Councils. There have been many overt displays of discrimination against the senior female board and committee members as well as blatant sexism, harassment, unprofessional and disrespectful written and verbal communications. All were reported to DONE [Department of Neighborhood Empowerment] and the City Attorney. In addition, the negative influence, improper instructions and interference from the council parliamentarian, caused a major division among the board members.

It is truly tragic that a board which began with such potential has been taken over by a faction of what can only be described as bullies and sexists. They have completely disregarded their oath of office and have betrayed the trust of the stakeholders. There was a total lack of honesty, openness, transparency and a blatant disregard of the advice and instructions from DONE.

Therefore, we can no longer support and be a part of this council. All issues and verifying documentation,

with regard to the current board, have been presented to DONE who should take the necessary actions against those responsible for these infractions.

The idea for neighborhood councils in Los Angeles was originated in the early 1970s by then-closeted City Councilmember Joel Wachs, a moderate Republican populist who was a pot-hole fixing, DWP-watching, civil rights and government-transparency advocate. The neighborhood councils finally got off the ground in 1999 with great expectations for citizen participation in city government.

LGBT Angelenos, emerging from the worst of the AIDS crisis and with a new Democratically led state government, were also excited at the prospect of working closely with neighbors to improve the city. But there was legitimate dread, too, that homophobia would rear its ugly head. And sometimes it did. One prime example occurred in 2005 when Studio City Neighborhood Council rejected the request by member Paul Waters, Executive Director of Los Angeles/Valley Pride, for SCNC to participate in the Pride event. The rejection was based on the totally untrue allegation that NAMBLA was a Pride festival exhibitor. "It's unfortunate in this day and age that something is different when the issue is sexual orientation, but it obviously is," Waters told *IN Los Angeles* magazine at the time. "(It's) terribly disappointing to me that it's true in a place like Studio City with such a large and visible gay population."

Tyler says she was surprised by the unchecked incivility:

Although I knew when I was elected to the North Hills Neighborhood Council, it was an extremely conservative part of the city, even I was surprised at the sexism and bullying from the men on the council, toward the women (all seniors). I expected to encounter homophobia, (and did) but did not expect the extreme misogyny that we faced. The women I worked with (and who resigned) ranged from a Tea Party person, to a Republican and a Democrat, and we all worked well together.

What did surprise me, however, was how the Department of Neighborhood Councils (DONE) knew about it for months and did nothing about the discrimination nor the numerous violations of the Brown Act. They did not take our complaints seriously until we finally met with City Attorney Vivianne Brannigan a few weeks ago. I have heard from the Mayor's office about a meeting with members of his staff. Although we were non-paid, we were still elected officials and received absolutely no respect from DONE. There needs to be a series of sensitivity training for all elected officials (paid or unpaid) so that this hopefully, never happens again. Or, if it does, the parties who are exhibiting bullying, harassment, and disrespect, are recalled from their offices.

This email dated Sept. 17, 2013, from the NHWNC board president is an example of what the women say they endured:

Subject: RE: ILLEGAL RULES AND ELECTIONS MEETING AT THE LIBRARY ON MONDAY, SEPT. 16

Dear GOD; please send me 250 young conservative open minded students from Monroe High School that have not been contaminated by the Liberals that have destroyed our great city and our Nation . A few misogynists and misogynists are OK if you really want to stir the pot .

It's OK I don't mind - I can handle whatever YOU want me to.

Your Humblest Servant,

John

Here's Tyler's resignation letter:

I wish the record to reflect that I am handing this letter to the minute taker and that it is to be totally included, as is, in the minutes of this meeting.

I am resigning due to the many grievances expressed in the letters by the 4 other women Board members who are also resigning tonight. I concur with all of them, including Peggy Burgess, Stakeholder who has worked with NHWNC since its inception and who was the knowledge and brains of the PLUC.

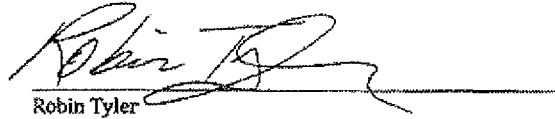
But more than the sexism, misogyny, bullying, harassment, lack of ethics, numerous violations of the Brown Act, the loss of honesty and transparency, & the paranoia that led to the division of this council, I am resigning because of the lack of respect or help by and from L.A.'s Department of Neighborhood Empowerment. (DONE)

We have been contacting DONE and Grayce Liu for months regarding the problems within this council, both by detailed emails, telephone calls, and in person.

Had this been a corporation, I believed the executives would have dealt with the Brown Act and By Laws violations, let alone the civil rights violations, because corporations no longer get away with ignoring Civil Rights violations such as blatant sexism toward the majority of older women on the NHWNC, who had done the majority of the work since being elected.

Until this week, even the City Attorney's office did not deal with the numerous problems, claiming that they wish they would have known sooner. Yet, we did contact them months ago, and these 'issues' should immediately have been turned over to the correct attorney, who finally met with us this week and took us seriously.

Even though I (and we) am not paid, we are still elected officials working for and under the laws of the City of Los Angeles. The emotional distress that some of us suffered was at many times, overwhelming. I did not expect this from the City of Los Angeles, who clearly understands workplace protections.


Robin Tyler

Tags: homophobia , robin tyler , Eric Garcetti , Los Angeles Neighborhood Councils , Paul Waters , Joel Wachs , North Hills West Neighborhood City Council , anti-gay harassment , sexism

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Thomas J. Coleman posted on 09/24/2013 02:06 PM

I have no doubt that Robin and the others have a good case here, that they'll be persistent and in the end the truth will come out. In that spirit, and despite the apparent irresistible impulse to "print the legend" here, I must once again remind that "then-closeted City Councilmember Joel Wachs" was hardly a "civil rights advocate" when the Los Angeles Police Commission finally got the guts to suspend our infamous, racist, hyper-homophobic career criminal police chief Daryl Gates after the Rodney King beating (see link below). Wachs led the overnight crusade - after Gates threatened to