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CF #12-1681

1 message

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To: Eric Villanueva <Eric.Villanueva@lacity.org>

Tue, Nov 17, 2015 at 10:07 AM

Dear Mr. Villanueva,

Please add the attached document to the above-referenced council file as a "Communication(s) from Public."

Thank you.

-- Mark

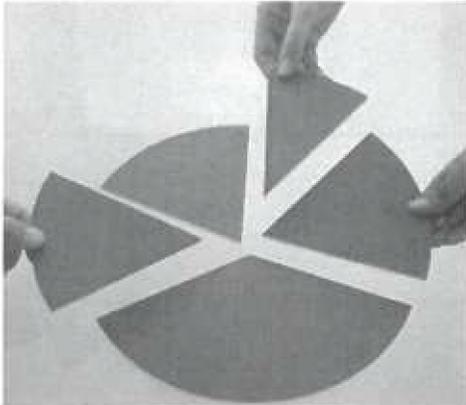
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 **Neighborhood Council Subdivision Scheme Sure Looks Half-Baked.pdf**
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Neighborhood Council Subdivision Scheme Sure Looks Half-Baked

17 Nov 2015 Written by Mark F. Mauceri



GUEST COMMENTARY--Here's a poem to consider:

*Remember, remember! ... This Eighteenth November ... When NCs get tied
in a knot ... Where some sure half-baked schemes ...*

*Guaranteed to bring screams ... Get passed with nary a shot! ... Huizy with
his committee ... Missed one little snag ... That leaves us and our colleagues
... Holding the bag.*

On October 16, at the Rules, Elections, Intergovernmental Relations and Neighborhoods Committee, I said, "The plan [that is] before you attempts to place a black and white template over a very gray area. And it could use some more thought before being approved." Thinking that this was a very succinct way of summing up the "Neighborhood Council Subdivision Policy," I anticipated some eyebrow raising interest. There was none.

Note to Self: Bring an angry mob to public comment or you're wasting your time.

I pointed out that I support the plan's intent, but only in a "looks good on paper" kind of way. How it gets executed makes me nervous. And it will be overseen by DONE. We could stop here, but wait, there's more...

I enumerated how the numbers don't add up, inviting a bit of a "gold rush" mentality that begs new neighborhood councils to be cloned off of old ones, as in: "You mean we can get double, maybe triple the money if we subdivide? Let's do it!"

I asked, "Where will the new money come from? Have we run these numbers out?" I got blank stares. When my one-minute egg(head) timer went off, José Huizar looked up from whatever he was reading and Herb Wesson politely thanked me.

Moment of Clarity: This decision was a *fait accompli* coalesced by an appointed commission (BONC), in the offices of a few city councilmembers (Huizar and Wesson), and probably with e-mails and calls from DONE. The actual data or a ground-level understanding of the NC system was not part of the conversation.

For the Record: Do I think Hermon, an area nestled within the Arroyo Seco NC's boundaries, should have its own neighborhood council? Probably. But as you can surmise, Arroyo Seco does not.

Should Downtown's Skid Row get its own NC? I really don't know. But if you polled the average Angeleno, the answer would be "no." And this assumes that "You're kidding, right?" isn't an option.

Do I think some neighborhood councils amount to little more than tax-funded banana republic-esque juntas, petty homeowners' association oligarchies or even benevolent monarchies? You betcha. So, I'm sure there are folks who would like to see these ruling factions overthrown. And, yes, I've heard tales of woe from across the NC franchise system, as has BONC during nearly all their meetings.

Neighborhood Council electoral regime change is an all-out war right now -- trust me, I know. But secession? Maybe not so much. If your group ticks all the right boxes, or your round pegs fit neatly in this policy's round holes, you'll be headed for a *special election*, albeit an untested, electronic one tallied online.

As we know, the Internet is impervious to gaming, hacks and other data-bending hijinks -- even though polling twice on

DONE surveys (one from your laptop, one from your smartphone) works just swell. For a hat trick you would have to find a Starbucks with free Wi-Fi using a different IP address. It's funny how BONC's position on the subdivision policy was actually based primarily on just such a survey: 62 percent for, 38 percent against. It's a safe bet that out of 388 respondents, most had some vested interest in this particular plan, one way or another.

What's interesting, yet apparently carried zero weight, is that nearly all of the 119 folks who voted "against" the plan said they believed the main problem is the policy's implementation and unknown costs.



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In a Nutshell: A minimum of 20,000 is the magic population number for creating a new NC. I know, some Neighborhood Councils have as little as 7,000 constituents while others have over 95,000 -- but consistent application of rules isn't exactly DONE's strong suit. Admittedly, I wasn't in the room when the under-20,000 "unique situation applies here" arguments were made.

What happens if an NC has nearly 75,000 residents (e.g., Pacoima) and decides subdivision will bring government even closer to its people (and with it, way more money)? Will BONC say: "Whoa, it seems you're being a little opportunistic? Sorry it's a no-go." Now, if I am Pacoima in this *hypothetical example*, I might say: "Then why are there three Northridge NCs? Five Hollywoods? And three North Hollywoods? And none of them have anywhere near the population we have here in Pacoima? Do you folks understand the concept of a 'previously set precedent?'"

What happens if an NC subdivides, leaving its previous incarnation with well *under* the 20,000 population number? The electronic voters will overwhelmingly approve it because, "Hey, it's more money!"

The Pico Union-Wilshire Center-Koreatown Neighborhood Council with its 95,000 residents, sure looks three NC's waiting to happen. Hey, take the money, fix some potholes and help fund a new traffic light! Who's going to effectively argue that K-Town shouldn't have its very own NC or, for that matter, Chinatown, Jake?

I don't see any of these operational quandaries discussed anywhere in this civic adventure, though. I do see that DONE gets some *new bodies* to facilitate a policy for something they're saying "won't be a regular occurrence" but requires two full-timers anyway. Very clever, they are at DONE. But I don't see the NC funding pie getting any bigger to accommodate this inevitable expansion. Read: our overall funding is one dumbfounded realization away from being cut.

Fair warning: All the derision, faction-forming, and general chaos that's part and parcel of our neighborhood council system is about to be exacerbated on **November 18 at City Hall**. I'd tell you to send an "e-mail public comment," but that would be useless.

If some of these points ring true to you, though, then let your Councilmember know that a closer look at this idea is warranted. They are the ones who will vote on it, but we are the ones who'll be paying the freight.

Oh well, perhaps, we can still have a bit of fun, fun, fun until City Council takes the money away.