

February 13, 2017

Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council
c/o City Clerk's Office
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: DONE Report CF 15-1022-S2

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2017 FEB 15 PM 3:47
CITY CLERK
BY _____ DEPUTY

Honorable Members:

For reference, responses in this letter follow the DONE report format.

SUMMARY

The City Clerk was responsible for most of the online processes so must be required to prepare a report as well. The DONE report does not go into the fundamental flaws that only the City Clerk was responsible for, such as: candidate registration and verification, voter registration and verification and the actual counting of the ballots plus maintaining a record of the ballots cast. Election verification is essential. The online ballots cast in the 2016 election were not verifiable and failed to meet the basic requirements as paper ballots do.

Why should Neighborhood Councils be required to change their election outreach, board structures and voting requirements to accommodate online voting? To mandate such changes would inhibit the individuality and needs of each Neighborhood Council (NC). The old adage comes to mind "it's the tail wagging the dog."

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council rejects all of DONE's recommendations:

1. An arbitrary deadline to accommodate two NC subdivision elections in April 2017, must not be the driving motivation for action on this report. Specifically, of the two NCs identified for subdivision, one did not even have online voting during the 2016 election.
2. To dictate self-affirmation only interferes with the ability of the NCs to self-govern. Many NCs responding to the needs of their own communities require more categories than the four listed. NCs must be able to determine their own voter age. To force NCs to allow 12 – 16 year olds to vote is ludicrous. NCs already struggle with outreach to adults. Can you imagine the burden of outreach to 12 year olds?
3. The Los Angeles City Charter promises NCs autonomy. In order to serve the specific needs of their communities, NC's board structures and eligible board seats cannot be fulfilled by many NCs with only three ballot types. This flies in the face of NC individuality.

4. NCs should be able to allocate 10% of their yearly funding for election costs, allowing a rollover to the election year.
5. Why should online elections cost more than standard elections at the polling place? This is a misuse of taxpayer dollars. How much did DONE spend with Everyone Counts and QuickBase Case Management System for the 2016 elections? NC budget allocations have been cut in recent years from the original \$50,000 per year. As long as NCs have a reduced annual budget and before any additional funds are allocated for NC elections, DONE must be required to release an itemized accounting of all monies spent by DONE on the 2016 election. What was the City Clerk's budget for the 2016 election? This information is crucial in order to determine what is or is not cost effective.

Neighborhood Councils are deliberately complex by design to be inclusive of all stakeholders, as their mission is stated in the City Charter. Comparisons to federal, state, county or municipal elections which require only proof of residency, is not relevant. Any comparison is fundamentally flawed. The goal always is to increase participation, but to suggest online voting is the panacea does not address the real issues. If anything is mandated to increase voter turnout, it should be to require that NCs allocate a set percentage of their annual budget for meaningful outreach, separate from the 10% annually for the elections. Outreach should not simply be defined as emails to the Neighborhood Council database or postings on the website.

California Elections Code Section 19217 prohibits casting a ballot over the Internet with the primary purpose of safeguarding elections in the digital age. Until paperless electronic voting can guarantee the integrity of elections, it is imperative that Neighborhood Councils be afforded the same protection under California law.

Respectfully,

Lisa Sarkin, Studio City
Stu Miller, Studio City
Judy Price, Valley Glen



cc: Andrew Westall, Areen Ibranossian, Matt Hale, Jackie Keene, Geoffrey Yazzetta, Jill Banks Barad, Glenn Bailey, Richard Williams, Holly Wolcott, Shannon Hoppes, Terrence Gomes, David Uebersax, Grayce Liu, Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, Studio City Residents Association