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November 19, 2018

Honorable David Ryu, Chair
Health, Education, and Neighborhood Councils Committee
Councilmember, Fourth District
Los Angeles City Hall
200 N Spring Street, Room 425
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Commission recommendation on Council File Number 18-0467 regarding the
Neighborhood Council System Reform

Honorable Committee Chair Ryu:

BACKGROUND

The Board of Neighborhood Commissioners has held 6 meetings, 1 town hall, and received over a hundred comments from stakeholders regarding the "Proposed Reforms to the Neighborhood Council System" (Council File #18-0467). In addition, 25 Neighborhood Councils have submitted Community Impact Statements in response to these reforms.

On November 5, 2018, The Board of Neighborhood Commissioners requested the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment to draft and send a letter to Councilmember David Ryu, Chair of the Health, Education, and Neighborhood Council Committee, as well as all members of the Los Angeles City Council and the Mayor to include the Commission's positions on the proposed reforms:

Reform A: Rebranding the Department

BONC POSITION: The Commission agrees that "DONE", "BONC", and "EmpowerLA" are confusing to the public and even to Neighborhood Council leadership. The Commission recognizes that "EmpowerLA" was created as a brand for the NC System without the need to amend the Charter or Administrative Code. The Commission does not support a charter change but would support efforts to make branding changes such as the logo, social media accounts, websites, and other marketing collateral, as long as these changes are phased in over time so as not to incur a major expense that could detract from other budget priorities.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT OF POSITION

AN EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY - AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

Reform B: Community Interest Stakeholder

The Commission considered this issue separately.

Reform C: Removal of Selections

BONC POSITION: The Commission does not support the recommendations to remove the selection process but recommends that the Department come up with formal guidelines for the selection process that are clear and ensure transparency.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT OF POSITION

Reform D: Board Seat Equity

BONC POSITION: The Commission does not support this recommendation for a one-time review of NC bylaws. The Commission does support equitable board seat allocation. The Commission also believes that there is an existing process whereby Neighborhood Councils review their own bylaws, address issues of seat equity, and bring bylaws changes to the Department and the Commission for review and approval/disapproval. Therefore, this reform is not necessary. However, the process could be strengthened with more data on number of businesses, residents, property owners, students, community organizations, etc. The Commission encourages the Department to coordinate with the 2020 Census and the City Controller's Office to identify opportunities to provide NC-level data from the Census, City business tax data, and other available data.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT OF POSITION

Reform E: Uniform Voting Age

BONC POSITION: The Commission supports establishing a uniform voting age of 16, include individuals under the age of 18 on boards (subject to what the law allows), and recommends that the City Council discuss and vote on this.

VOTE: 3 YES; 2 NO; 1 ABSTAIN FOR MOTION TO SUPPORT POSITION

Reform F: Required Training for Planning and Land Use Committee

BONC POSITION: The Commission supports this recommendation and encourages the Department to establish trainings for all chairs and vice-chairs of Neighborhood Council planning and land use committees. The Commission can establish certification requirements and consequences for non-compliance, similar to our ethics and code of conduct policies.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT OF POSITION

Reform G: Roll-over Funding

BONC POSITION: The Commission established an NC Funding Working Group which came up with a series of proposals that we are still evaluating and may act upon. In the meantime, the Commission supports establishing a process for rolling over funds of up to \$10,000, for one year only, at the end of the fiscal year. The Commission recommends that City Council consider a percentage of the total budget rather than a dollar amount as NC budgets can fluctuate year-to-year.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT OF POSITION

Reform H: Removing Expiration of the Ability for Neighborhood Councils to Accept In-Kind or Monetary Donations

BONC POSITION: The Commission does not support this reform recommendation.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT OF POSITION

Reform I: Same Day Elections

BONC POSITION: The Commission agrees with this reform recommendation and believes that same-day elections warrants further study; while uniform citywide advertising and outreach has its benefits, the logistics of qualifying candidates may be too burdensome for the City Clerk's office.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT OF POSITION

Reform J: Allow Neighborhood Councils to Use City Space

BONC POSITION: The Commission supports this reform and recommendations that City Council consider and vote on Council File 16-0298 on Neighborhood Council use of City space.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT OF POSITION

Reform K: Share Best Practices with All Neighborhood Councils

BONC POSITION: The Commission supports this reform and recommends that City Council provide funds to set up a Neighborhood Council "wiki" where these best practices can be shared by NCs themselves, rather than funneled through the Department.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT OF POSITION

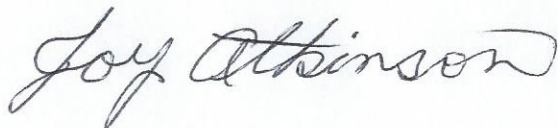
Reform L: Point of Contact Between NCs and City Departments

BONC POSITION: The Commission supports this reform recommendation with the caveat that the President of each NC be the point of contact, unless otherwise appointed.

VOTE: UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT OF POSITION

Thank you for considering the work and recommendation of the Commission.

Sincerely,



Joy Atkinson, President
Board of Neighborhood Commissioners