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April 24, 2020

Honorable Members of the Budget and Finance Committee
Office of the City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

SUBJECT: COUNCIL FILE 20-0600 - DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT
FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021 BUDGET REQUEST

Dear Honorable Members:

We would like to begin by expressing our sincere hope that the people in your circles are well. Our Department is proud to support our City leaders in their efforts to manage the novel coronavirus pandemic. You can count on our support.

We appreciate this opportunity to provide further feedback on the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment's (Department) Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget Request. The Department thanks and appreciates the members of the Mayor's Office of Budget & Innovation (MOBI) and our partners in the Office of the City Administrative Officer (CAO) for their efforts to keep the Department staffed and with resources to operate and support the Neighborhood Council System during these challenging and unprecedented times.

The Department has reviewed the Mayor's FY 2020-2021 Proposed Budget and after careful consideration, and with great respect towards the crisis the City is facing, we gratefully support the proposal as stated and without any further requests. We thank the Mayor for maintaining the Department's staffing at the current levels and are committed to operating within our means to provide the highest level of service possible to the Neighborhood Council System and our partners in the City and the community. In the sections that follow, the Department provides clarification on the impact the proposed budget, and related reductions, will have on the Neighborhood Council System (NC).

ANTICIPATED SERVICE DELIVERY LEVELS BY PROGRAM

Although at reduced levels, the Department expects to maintain its four operational goals to strengthen the Department's position as a resource for NCs; strengthen the relationship with and service to the NCs; to improve NC engagement and advocacy approaches; and to improve City Hall's relationship / engagement with Neighborhood Councils. However, recent events have altered the foundational infrastructure of the Department's ability to provide its support and oversight as defined in Article IX, Section 900 of the Los Angeles City Charter.

Since the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department has worked with singular and dedicated purpose to develop and implement an EmpowerLA Virtual Governance (EVG) Plan which provides an opportunity for Neighborhood Councils (NCs) to govern in a uniform and structured virtual environment. *A survey of NC board members revealed that less than 30% of respondents were confident about their ability to administer virtual meetings. Less than 60% rated themselves as digitally proficient.*

Virtual governance in the Neighborhood Council System is about more than simply using teleconferencing technology. It is about creating a consistent, equitable system using a set of customized supporting protocols for holding public Neighborhood Council meetings. The EVG enables Neighborhood Council virtual meetings in many forms. They can happen remotely over channels such as the internet or a telephone, rather than in person. The EVG's Neighborhood Council protocols conform to all local, state, and federal laws that apply to traditional public meetings. It is clear that regardless of the length of time that the City will be observing the Mayor's "Safer at Home" orders, the EVG framework will continue to be relevant and necessary as the world transitions to emphasize digital governance platforms. The Department is therefore modifying our operational services to reflect and support these changes. We have prepared the NC System for a possible extension of this governance model moving into the Fiscal Year. It has, however, generated a different level and type of direct NC support.

Anticipated Challenges for All Direct NC Support Programs:

- Reduced direct neighborhood council support.
- Compromised oversight of NC meetings and activities.
- Limited ability to support citywide initiatives.
- Inadequate security for Department employees at NC meetings (assumes the return to in-person meetings).
- Little to no ability to support new projects in the Innovation Division.

Budget Program 4701 - Neighborhood Council Operations / Direct NC Support

Program Overview:

In addition to providing direct Neighborhood Council support, the Operations team manages department-wide systems for all Neighborhood Council functions. During a recent Listening Tour of 87% of the Neighborhood Councils, a combined 47% of board members identified governance and parliamentary training, and outreach support, as a high priority. The Division

now leads the development and implementation of the EmpowerLA Virtual Governance Plan. This Division supports the 45 NCs in the Valley and West Los Angeles areas.

Performance Metrics:

Prog Code	Performance Measure Name	Unit/Value	Anticipated 2020-21
4701	Staff Attendance at Monthly Board Meeting*	# Meetings	462
4701	Staff Attendance at Committee Meeting*	# Meetings	4
4701	Staff Attendance at Alliance Meeting*	# Meetings	1 per quarter
4701	Staff Attendance at Liaison Meeting*	# Meetings	1 per quarter
4701	Administrative & Management Support of NC Board	# Cases	130
4701	Administrative & Management Support of NC Committee	# Cases	40
4701	Administrative & Management Support of NC Alliance	# Cases	4
4701	Administrative & Management Support of NC Liaisons	# Cases	4
4701	Administrative & Technical Support for NC Virtual Meetings**	Varies	TBD

*assumes in-person meetings

**Currently in development and implementation stage

Budget Program 4703 - Policy & Government Relations / Direct NC Support

Program Overview:

In addition to providing direct Neighborhood Council (NC) support, the Policy and Government Relations Team conducts planning, research, development, and implementation of effective Departmental policies to promote civic participation and effective Neighborhood Council practices including, but not limited to, agenda preparation, conflict resolution, board member training, regional trainings, analysis of grievances, Community Impact Statement support, parliamentary procedure / Brown Act / bylaws interpretation guidance, liaison with elected officials and City departments, and collaboration with community organizations. This Division manages 32 NCs in the Central Los Angeles and East Los Angeles regions.

The Policy and Government Relations Team also supports the Neighborhood Council liaisons, including the Homelessness, Emergency Preparedness, Aging, and Film liaisons, and also collaborates on the implementation of Neighborhood Council system reforms as proposed by

Council. Furthermore, the Policy & Government Relations team monitors and tracks legislation including the development of a Legislative summary report distributed to all Neighborhood Council board members, and also implements policies from the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners.

Performance Metrics:

Prog Code	Performance Measure Name	Unit/Value	Anticipated 2020-21
4703	Staff Attendance at Monthly Board Meeting*	# Meetings	305
4703	Staff Attendance at Committee Meeting*	# Meetings	3
4703	Staff Attendance at Alliance Meeting*	# Meetings	1 per quarter
4703	Staff Attendance at Liaison Meeting*	# Meetings	1 per quarter
4703	Administrative & Management Support of NC Board	# Cases	81
4703	Administrative & Management Support of NC Committee	# Cases	27
4703	Administrative & Management Support of NC Alliance	# Cases	3
4703	Administrative & Management Support of NC Liaisons	# Cases	3
4703	Administrative & Technical Support for NC Virtual Meetings**	Varies	TBD
4703	Number of Community Impact Statements Submitted by NCs	# CIS	550

*assumes in-person meetings

**Currently in development and implementation stage

Budget Program 4704 - Outreach & Communications / Direct NC Support

Program Overview:

In addition to providing direct Neighborhood Council (NC) support, the Outreach and Communications Team provides ongoing Citywide outreach, marketing and communication strategies for the Department and City as well as for Neighborhood Councils to raise the awareness of the Neighborhood Council system in Los Angeles, which feeds into the Neighborhood Council (NC) elections during the spring of every other year. This Division supports the 22 NCs in the South LA and Harbor areas.

Performance Metrics:

Prog Code	Performance Measure Name	Unit/Value	Anticipated 2020-21
4704	Staff Attendance at Monthly Board Meeting*	# Meetings	244
4704	Staff Attendance at Committee Meeting*	# Meetings	3
4704	Staff Attendance at Alliance Meeting*	# Meetings	1 per quarter
4704	Staff Attendance at Liaison Meeting*	# Meetings	1 per quarter
4704	Administrative & Management Support of NC Board	# Cases	65
4704	Administrative & Management Support of NC Committee	# Cases	22
4704	Administrative & Management Support of NC Alliance	# Cases	3
4704	Administrative & Management Support of NC Liaisons	# Cases	3
4703	Administrative & Technical Support for NC Virtual Meetings**	Varies	TBD
4704	Number of Candidates for 2021 Neighborhood Council Elections	# Candidates	500
4704	Number of Voters for 2021 Neighborhood Council Elections	# Voters	5,000

*assumes in-person meetings

**Currently in development and implementation stage

Impact to 2021 NC Election Outreach:

With the lack of NC Election Outreach funds, the Department's ability to support elections outreach will be severely impacted. We will not have access to resources, tools, and election assistants to do a robust citywide campaign, NC information sessions, and tools for our Neighborhood Councils system. If the City Council approves the request from the Office of the City Clerk to provide resources for an all VOTE BY MAIL election, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment is further compromised in its ability to support that work.

Budget Program 4705 - Office of Community Engagement and Innovation

Program Overview:

The Office of Community Engagement (OCE), created within the Department and in partnership with the Office of the Mayor, the Personnel Department, the Information and Technology Agency (ITA), and various other City agencies, proposes the expansion of current efforts to

support and develop a structured way to respond to the engagement needs of the Neighborhood Councils (NCs) and under participating communities in Los Angeles.

Performance Metrics:

Prog Code	Performance Measure Name	Unit/Value	Anticipated 2020-21
4705	Number of Civic University Sessions directed to Neighborhood Council Board Members.& attendance*	#sessions / Attendance	2/150
4705	Number of Training offered to City Staff to better engage with the public & attendance	#sessions / Attendance	0/0
4705	Number of Participants to IgniteLA and Civic Youth*	# participants	90
4705	Number of City Departments running Ideation process through Ideascale	# departments	3
4705	Number of Departments Partnered with Neighborhood Councils	# Partnerships	9

* Assumes ability to conduct in-person meetings

Anticipated Challenges:

- Limited ability to administer the data literacy project.
- Reduced ability to support the envisioned structural changes in community engagement in City government.
- Reduced ability to support implementation of City Council and Commission reforms.
- Discontinue involvement in budget gamification project.
- Discontinue involvement in participatory budgeting project.

Budget Program 4750 - General Administration and Support

Program Overview:

The General Administrative and Support Program (GASP) for the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment is comprised of staff supporting the Executive Office, Board of Neighborhood Commissioners support, Customer Service, Budget, Accounting and Payroll, Human Resources and Investigations, IT/Systems and Marketing, Public Information, Facilities and Records Management including PRA requests, NC Administrative Support Services, and Contract development and implementation.

Anticipated Challenges:

- Staffing levels too low to comply with all City standards.

- Increase in PRA requests.
- Steady rise in harassment and bullying cases that require investigation.
- Additional lawsuits and legal challenges filed against the City.

CONCLUSION

The Department has described some of the operational implications of the Mayor's proposed budget. It is our hope that once an improved economic outlook is realized, that consideration can be given to increasing resources to provide for an increase in direct neighborhood council support thereby minimizing potential City liability, to enable the ability of the Department to implement City Council and Board of Neighborhood Commission reforms; to advance strategies to increase the participation of under participation populations; and to enable the use of technology to create a cultural of data driven decision-making in the Neighborhood Council System.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raquel Beltrán". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Raquel Beltrán
General Manager
Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, City of Los Angeles