

Communication from Public

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LA's Corrupt City Council: Silence is Deafening

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LA WATCHDOG--There are sins of commission where politicians and their bagmen get caught with their hands in the cookie jar. And then there are sins of omission where our politicians ignore corruption, fail to call out or investigate a fellow member of the Council for corruption, or refuse to place a measure on the ballot that would “limit opportunities for corruption.”

In March, former Councilman Mitch Englander agreed to plead guilty to obstruction of justice. Subsequently, bagmen Justin Kim was nailed for federal bribery charges and George Chiang and George Esparza, a former aide to Jose Huizar, agreed to plead guilty to racketeering charges.

Councilman Jose Huizar has also been identified as the leader of a “corrupt enterprise” and former Deputy Mayor Ray Chan has been implicated as member of the conspiracy.

And then we have the complicit real estate developers, including two Chinese billionaires who are alleged to have bribed Huizar.

But throughout this corrupt pay-to-play scandal that has been enveloping City Hall since November of 2018 when the FBI raid the offices and home of Jose Huizar, the Mayor and the City Council have treated Huizar related corruption as an isolated incident of which they had no knowledge.

But that is crock of you know what. How could they not know?

The Councilmembers and the Mayor have been feasting on the real estate developers' dime for years, whether it is through campaign contributions and the control of community benefit slush funds. They have recommended consultants and lawyers that developers must hire to expedite their projects worth tens of billions through the City's byzantine planning process. They also earned the loyalty of the building trades by forcing developers to enter into project labor agreements that require the payment of the prevailing wage. They also recommended their favorite contractors, subcontractors, and small and minority business enterprises. All for their own benefit and often times not in the best interests of Angelenos.

On May 19, David Ryu introduced a motion, **Limiting Unilateral Influence in Development Decisions** ([Council File 20-0609](#)), to place a measure on the November ballot to amend the City Charter that would remove Section 245(e) [see below] from the City Charter and to “eliminate the ability of the City Council to overwrite the actions of the planning commissions and instead align the City Council’s oversight of planning commission decisions with the authority and process in place with all other City commissions.”

But this effort to “limit opportunities for corruption and reduce the discretionary land use powers exercised by the City Council for individual site-specific development projects” has gone nowhere. There have been no committee meetings, even though the first deadline for placing the measure on the ballot is June 25, less than two weeks from today.

Some might say that the failure of Nury Martinez and the rest of the City Council to follow up on Ryu’s motion to limit corruption is a sin of omission. But no, it is a conscious decision, a sin of commission by all of the members of the City Council.

City Charter

Sec. 245. City Council Veto of Board Actions.

Actions of boards of commissioners shall become final at the expiration of the next five meeting days of the Council during which the Council has convened in regular session, unless the Council acts within that time by two-thirds vote to bring the action before it or to waive review of the action, except that as to any action of the Board of Police Commissioners regarding the removal of the Chief of Police, the time period within which the Council may act before the action of the Board shall become final shall be ten meeting days during which the Council has convened in regular session.

(a) **Action by Council.** If the Council timely asserts jurisdiction over the action, the Council may, by two-thirds vote, veto the action of the board within 21 calendar days of voting to bring the matter before it, or the action of the board shall become final. Except as provided in subsection (e), the Council may not amend, or take any other action with respect to the board's action.

(b) **Waiver.** The Council may, by ordinance, waive review of classes or categories of actions, or, by resolution, waive review of an individual anticipated action of a board. The Council may also, by resolution, waive review of a board action after the board has acted. Actions for which review has been waived are final upon the waiver, or action of the board, as applicable.

(c) **Effect of Veto.** An action vetoed by the Council shall be remanded to the originating board, which board shall have the authority it originally held to take action on the matter.

(d) **Exempt Actions.** The following actions are exempt from Council review under this section:

1. actions of the Ethics Commission;
2. actions of the Board of Fire and Police Pension Commissioners;
3. actions of the Board of Administration for Los Angeles City Employees Retirement System;
4. actions of the Board of Administration of Water and Power Employees Retirement Plan;
5. quasi-judicial personnel decisions of the Board of Civil Service Commissioners;
6. actions of a board organized under authority of the Meyers-Milias Brown Act for administration of employer-employee relations;

7. individual personnel decisions of boards of commissioners other than the Board of Police Commissioners; and
8. actions which are subject to appeal or review by the Council pursuant to other provisions of the Charter, ordinance or other applicable law.

(e) Exceptions for Actions of City Planning Commission and Area Planning Commissions. The Council shall not be limited to veto of actions of the City Planning Commission or Area Planning Commissions, but, subject to the time limits and other limitations of this section, after voting to bring the matter before it, shall have the same authority to act on a matter as that originally held by the City Planning Commission or Area Planning Commission.

<https://www.citywatchla.com/index.php/la-watchdog-hidden/19913-la-s-corrupt-city-council-silence-is-deafening>