

Your Community Impact Statement has been successfully submitted to City Council and Committees.

If you have questions and/or concerns, please contact the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment at NCsupport@lacity.org.

This is an automated response, please do not reply to this email.

Contact Information

Neighborhood Council: Woodland Hills-Warner Center

Name: Heath Kline

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The Board approved this CIS by a vote of: Yea(8) Nay(1) Abstain(2) Ineligible(1) Recusal(0)

Date of NC Board Action: 11/09/2022

Type of NC Board Action: For if Amended

Impact Information

Date: 11/16/2022

Update to a Previous Input: No

Directed To: City Council and Committees

Council File Number: 22-1232

Agenda Date:

Item Number:

Summary: The Woodland Hills – Warner Center Neighborhood Council supports the recommended changes to the charter from the Ethics Commission only if amended. Therefore, we ask for the following amending actions: • Genuine Independent Appointments √ • More Restrictive Eligibility Requirements √ • Raise the vote threshold for removal of a commissioner √ • Increased maximum penalty √ • Increase the minimum commission budget √ • Independent outside counsel for the Commission These reforms would ensure the Commission is sufficiently independent enough to be entrusted with the expanded power offered. Please see our attached CIS that provides in greater details the reforms needed to have an independent and effective Ethics Commission Charter Reform proposal to be put to the voters of the City Los Angeles.

WHWCNC Board Members

President Dena Weiss
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Aaron Williams, Area 7 Residential
Houtan Hormozian, Area 7 C.B.O.
Christine K. Robinson, Area 7 Alternate

August Steurer, At-Large
Bobbie Wasserman, At-Large Alternate

Talia Isaacs, Youth

Board Passed on 11/09/2022

Members Present: 12
Voting Quorum: 12

Members voting
Aye: 8, Nay: 1, Abstaining: 2
Ineligible for Voting: 1

Board Authorized Submittal by:
Heath Kline for
Dena Weiss, President
d.weiss@whcouncil.org

Contact Person: Heath Kline
818-312-5601
h.kline@whcouncil.org

November 16, 2022

Via Email

Dear City Officials and Staff:

RE CF 22-1232: Charter Reform / Ethics Commission / Powers and Responsibilities / Ballot Measure

The Woodland Hills – Warner Center Neighborhood Council supports the recommended changes to the charter from the Ethics Commission only **if amended**. Therefore, we ask for the following amending actions.

- **Genuine Independent Appointments**
- **More Restrictive Eligibility Requirements**
- **Raise the vote threshold for removal of a commissioner**
- **Increased maximum penalty**
- **Increase the minimum commission budget**
- **Independent outside counsel for the Commission**

These reforms would ensure the Commission is sufficiently independent enough to be entrusted with the expanded power offered.

Please see our attached CIS that provides in greater details the reforms needed to have an independent and effective Ethics Commission Charter Reform proposal to be put to the voters of the City Los Angeles.

We ask you to respond to undersigned with the actions you have or will take to implement the specific ethics charter reforms outlined in this letter and attached Community Impact Statement.

Sincerely,


Dena Weiss
President
d.weiss@whcouncil.org


Heath Kline
Chair, WHIP Committee
h.kline@whcouncil.org

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d.weiss@whcouncil.org*

*Contact Person: Heath Kline
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h.kline@whcouncil.org*

RE [CF 22-1232](#): Charter Reform / Ethics Commission / Powers and Responsibilities / Ballot Measure

WHWCNC Position: Support If Amended

The Woodland Hills – Warner Center Neighborhood Council supports the recommended changes to the charter from the Ethics Commission only **if amended**. Therefore, we give the following amending actions required below.

The City of Los Angeles' Ethics Commission was once a model for the nation over three decades ago. An update is long overdue, given the scandalous and criminal activities involving elected and high-ranking City officials of the last decade. The City must immediately start the work necessary to put a Charter Reform proposal on a near-future ballot.

However, you must take your time with this work and **not** waive it out of committee as a convenient answer to the ever-continuing scandals at City Hall. It deserves a full and fair hearing in committee with robust public involvement and discussion, including Neighborhood Councils.

The Ethics Commission's recommendations broadly reflect input it received regarding the empowerment of the body to enforce the law, meaningfully change policy, and change the power dynamics at City Hall.

However, we believe they fail to enhance the Commission's independence sufficiently. We still see the opportunity for elected officials to strong-arm commissioners and meddle with the enforcement actions and policy proposals of the Ethics Commission in the same way elected officials manipulated the Redistricting Commission when those officials were not getting what they wanted.

We recommend the following specific amendments:

- **Independent Appointment:** The City of LA cannot have a genuinely independent Ethics Commission until there is no involvement of elected officials in the member appointment process. The incumbent commissioners should be responsible for accepting and vetting applications through a public process.
- **Eligibility Requirements:** The Commission proposes adding restrictions excluding any bidder, contractor, developer, or someone with a direct financial interest in the city's work from serving on the Commission. These restrictions are warranted but incomplete. We also recommend excluding anyone affiliated with the management of an employee union, a recent candidate for the City of LA, former elected

Resolution/Community Impact Statement

officials in the City of LA, and anyone who has donated or raised above a certain threshold for local candidates.

- **Raise the vote threshold for removal of a commissioner:** The Commission recommends increasing the number of elected officials who may initiate removal and reducing the threshold to a majority vote. Due to the presence of “tribal” factions in the City Council, removal should require action by a supermajority of the City Council, so we recommend requiring a 2/3rds vote for all proceedings removing Ethics Commissioners.
- **Increased maximum penalty:** The Commission recommends increasing the administrative penalty to \$10k per violation. We recommend adopting Chicago’s maximum fine of \$20k indexed to inflation per violation.
- **Raise minimum budget:** The Commission recommends their budget be set at \$4.5 million and tied to CPI. While this would protect against retaliation or defunding during a financial crunch, this essentially freezes the status quo into the charter. If the City Council expands, ethics will require more money. The budgeted minimum must be indexed for growth in the number of elected officials and separately indexed for the number of employees. \$4.5 million is only a few hundred thousand above the Commission’s current budget.
- **Independent outside counsel:** Realistically the City Attorney cannot serve multiple masters in these matters. The Commission’s recommendations include new expenditures, like **having independent outside counsel, which is essential for good governance.** These new additions will require even more money. A minimum budget of \$7-10 million to be indexed for inflation would start the Commission with the resources needed to fulfill its broad mandate.

These reforms would ensure the Ethics Commission is sufficiently independent enough to be entrusted with the expanded power offered.

We appreciate your immediate attention to this topic.

So Voted November 9, 2022, by the WHWCNC [8 Aye, 1 Nay, 2 Abstain, 1 Ineligible]

Email Distribution List

To:

Los Angeles City Council; Ad Hoc Committee on City Governance Reform [AHCOCGR]:

Councilmember Paul Krekorian, Chair AHCOCGR
Councilmember Nithya Raman, Vice Chair AHCOCGR
Councilmember Heather Hutt, Member AHCOCGR
Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Member AHCOCGR
Councilmember Bob Blumenfield, Member AHCOCGR
Legislative Assistant (acting to be assigned) **Erica Pulst** AHCOCGR

Los Angeles City Council; Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee [REIRC]

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Legislative Director Jeff Jacobberger, Councilmember Bob Blumenfield
Los Angeles Ethics Commission Chair Jeffrey Daar
Los Angeles Ethics Commission
Los Angeles City Attorney Mike Feuer
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Cc:

Terrence Gomes, Chair LANCC
Glenn Bailey Executive Committee, VANC
Heath Kline, Chair, WHIP Committee, WHWCNC