

Minutes of the Special General Board Meeting of the

Reseda Neighborhood Council

Thursday, September 6, 2018

Reseda Neighborhood Council Community Space, 18118 Sherman Way, Reseda, CA 91335

- I. **Meeting called to order** by Board President C.R. Cochrane at 7:17 PM.
- II. **Pledge of Allegiance** was led by C.R. Cochrane.
- III. **Roll Call – In attendance**, making a quorum: CR Cochrane, Gilbert Juarez, Anna Measles, Sharon Brewer, Joe Phillips, Maggi Espada-Hernandez, Priscilla Anchondo, Yassmin Flores, Jeff Girten, Anthony Contreras and Jeffrey Minter. **Not in attendance:** J. Benjamin Johnson, Cameron Lambert, Martin Buonora, Narguess Noohi and Sarah Williams.

IV. Introduction of City Employees and other visitors:

- A. **Raffy Astvasadoorian**, Deputy City Attorney from City Attorney Mike Feuer's office, addressed the meeting with two items/issues:
 - a. An update on LAMC 85.02, which regulates where people can sleep and live in their vehicles in the city. The City Council extended the ordinance for another six months prior to July 1, because it was going to expire on June 30. It will be revisited before January of 2019.
 - b. He also spoke about the new bail law, how bail is going to be used in criminal cases going forward. An individual charged with a crime is either in or out of custody. Non-violent, low level misdemeanors mean release to return for trial. Violent felonies, however mean custody. This means the system will change quite a bit – bail companies are out of business. If the judge decides someone is a flight risk, they have the power to remand for custody. October 19 is the date this will take effect, however, a coalition of bail bonds companies looking to collect enough signatures to add to the ballot for 2020 to let voters decide.
- B. **Vanessa Serrano**, Neighborhood Council Advocate, addressed the meeting, covering multiple items/issues:
 - a. The RNC's monthly profile was received earlier in the week. Regarding community outreach events, the RNC should make sure to allow 60-90 days to plan and execute an event, allowing enough time to discuss, approve funds, assign responsibilities, get permits, etc. This is key to having a successful event.
 - b. Please make sure neighborhood council receipts are uploaded into the City's system 7-10 days within completing a purchase.
 - c. Community Impact Statements for proposed reforms to the neighborhood council system: The deadline to submit these to the City Council has been extended to October 7, so the RNC still has another meeting to get one in, maybe two meetings, please make sure to agendaize for discussion.
 - d. The Congress of Neighborhoods is September 22, please RSVP, etc. If anyone doesn't have a link, let her know, she can email it.

- e. The deadline for applicants for IgniteLA is September 17, the program is for young women aged 16-24 that would like to participate, please have them submit. The program focuses on teaching young women how to run for office, how to identify what the assets in the community are and how to develop messaging, so please encourage applicants.

V. Public Comment and Announcements:

- A. LA-HOP.org online portal is now in activation and all government officials, community members, stakeholders and related parties are encouraged to use the services. LA-HOP.org is sponsored through LAHSA and allows individuals to anonymously report any homeless individuals/families in need of services. There are guidelines and restrictions. Please refer to the website: www.LA-HOP.org. Once the report is processed an outreach team will be sent to offer aid, resources, housing and/or shelter referrals to the person/families.
- B. **Glenn Bailey** addressed the meeting with several items/issues:
 - a. The RNC has 5 registrants to the Congress of neighborhoods as of yesterday and is second in the Valley with registrants, he encouraged others to register and handed out bookmarks with site info.
 - b. The Valley Disaster Prep Fair folks received the check today, he expressed their appreciation. They want to confirm that the RNC will have a table/booth there, please let them know. They're going to press on their programs, The Fair is Saturday, September 29.

VI. Presentation and Announcements:

- A. 2018-2019 Funding Training – Office of the City Clerk
Andrew Choi, a Funding Analyst with the City Clerk's office, performed a training session. He began with a summary of the letter sent to the RNC from his office. Through their review, there was a potential violation of guidelines and he's here to make sure the financial integrity is maintained.

He distributed hard copies to all of the Funding Program training manual. He also showed online sites/resources for more information. An additional session will be available at the upcoming Congress of Neighborhoods, see their site for more information.

Neighborhood Councils have to follow the same rules as other city organizations. This information can be found online by visiting www.clerk.lacity.org, then clicking on Neighborhood Council funding program. He explained how the funding system is broken down and how funds are to be allocated and spent. He recommended all financial records be kept by the financial officer, or if there's a system where the Secretary keeps records, obey those. He noted that there isn't enough supporting documentation on any expenditure, hold off before spending money until there is the correct supporting documentation. If there are questions, call the City Clerk's office, the phone number and email addresses are located at the Contact Us on their site page via the link above.

He noted that the Clerk's office goal is to ensure that the funding policies are followed, not how the councils function internally. As he progressed through the training manual, specific items and procedures were discussed and clarified, referring to the manual. Alternate Signer role and responsibilities were discussed. Standard practice is the

Financial Officer and Second Signer should be the primary options, then the Alternate Signer if neither of the other two are available. He noted most answers to questions about how the Clerk's office wants to receive documentation can be found in the training manual and after going through the manual, there could be discussion about items and issues specific to the RNC and how to move forward from the letter sent to the RNC this week.

In terms of accessing the checking account, he felt Treasurer Gilbert Juarez and the RNC were comfortable with the system of sending requests in and credit card receipts. The RNC Administrative Packet was received, there were no major concerns in the initial review, but if anything comes up, they will contact the RNC. He noted that documentation needs to be specific, but not granularly so. For example 'materials' is too vague; 'office supplies' is acceptable and doesn't need to be itemized as a list of all of the pens and pencils. The documentation just needs to be specific enough so that someone from the Clerk's office or a member of the public can read the documentation and understand how the money was spent.

Choi noted that meeting refreshments and snacks should now go under office operational expenditures, this is a change. Website hosting, professional services and similar monthly expenses regarding expenses that require an ongoing contract was discussed, his office is working on a template for ongoing services that neighborhood councils and other city organizations can use. Docu-Sign was discussed, he suggested that the council please contact his office and Vanessa Serrano to determine which is the best version to use. There was discussion that Outreach expenses have to be approved individually at the Board level, as well as the committee level, and there are ongoing RNC discussions about how to make that process work best. For the City, the Boards must approve all expenses, Committees advise the Boards. In some cases, the RNC bylaws for the Financial Officer processes are ambiguous, and board members are interpreting the bylaws differently.

Choi says the City Clerk's office won't dictate RNC bylaws, but only approves funding if approved by the council. He defers to Vanessa in this matter, but for his office, approval by the Finance Committee isn't enough, funding needs to be approved by the Board itself. This has been the cause of some back-and-forth discussions between his office and the RNC, and C.R. Cochrane said this needs to be clarified in the RNC's Standing Rules, and would be discussed at the next meeting.

He noted that as far as neighborhood council events go, the RNC has been pretty good with these, but as a reminder, event applications need to be submitted at least 30 days in advance, so that the Clerk's office can review. He reiterated that in cases of ambiguity or confusion call them, they're happy to advise. He also reiterated that the Clerk's office won't tell a neighborhood council what they can or cannot do, only the processes to get these things done, and to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Moving on to Community Improvement Projects, which should not be confused with Community Impact Statements. The issue of murals was discussed. This can be a very complicated issue, as there are many layers of the city governments involved, Cultural Affairs and other various City departments can get involved as well as the City Attorney

since there are contracts involved. In terms of in-house artwork needs (RNC logos, etc.), contact the Clerk's Office, they can help navigate the process and identify potential problems.

He noted that here are city service departments that can be used for certain services – printing for example, and other general services. He said these should be used more for business related expenses (such as business cards), but not so much for promotional because of the turnaround time. They print for all city departments.

He noted that for Office Depot purchases, a city discount is built in, as Office Depot has all the credit card numbers of the city organizations in their system and it should automatically give a discount. If a discount doesn't appear on the receipt, let his office know. While he wasn't sure of the exact discount, he said it's a good discount, toner can be 40% off, 2-cent copies, etc.

Contracts/Leases – Neighborhood Councils cannot enter into contracts unless they've been approved by the Clerk's Office as councils are not signing bodies. Submit the request to them, they'll craft a contract for the vendor. It's daunting and takes a little while, but it goes through three different departments/reviews. He wanted to differentiate between services and general goods. Again, they're not here to say no, just saying how to navigate the process. Inventory – the City Clerk's office does not yet handle this, but will as responsibilities are transferred over and a process is being created, they'll let Neighborhood Councils know how this works when the process has been finalized.

Next, Monthly Expenditure Reports were discussed. Choi explained that on the projected website main page, the dashboard gives a general summary, go into MERs (there you can find a drop-down menu for the RNC). These are summaries of financial expenditures. An MER should show not only a general accounting but supporting documentation. In terms of viewing these documents online, a sizing issue with scanned files was discussed, the issue is being worked on by the Clerk's Office. Board members noted that they've seen MERs for other Neighborhood Councils and they seem to be able to do it right, but Choi said it's a systemic issue, not something the RNC is doing wrong. Each Neighborhood Council keeps the originals, if there's a problem with the online viewing the originals are available. The Clerk's Office accounting will evaluate the MERs and receipts and will contact Neighborhood Councils if there are any problems. Original documents should be kept for two years, that's the requirement, and the original will always have more authority than a scan. All receipts need to be detailed and clear, the standard used by the city is 'If the controller audits, will it pass muster?'

If there are concerns about clarity of images, figure out ways to get them better, the board should have that discussion. Don't cover invoices with receipts, etc. Sometimes receipts aren't clear, try to communicate in any way what was paid for and how much and what it was for. More detail is better. Vendors can verify hard to read receipts, but the most preferred practice is to have clear receipts.

Potential conflicts of Interest were discussed (a YMCA example was cited, where a personal relationship was significant enough to invalidate the expenditure), so if there's

any potential conflict of interest, contact and consult with his office to make sure. If a vendor is invalidated, the entire board must be replaced before that vendor will be valid again. Vanessa Serrano or the City Attorney should be the first call before making any mistakes. He called this a Taint issue, as in the council can be tainted, although he was not sure if voters on a council who vote nay or abstain from voting would also be tainted, he'll have to check.

Unacceptable Purchases were discussed. Gifts to non-profits have guidelines, for example, a Neighborhood Council can't give directly to a religious institution. Partnering with religious institutions is one thing, but not donating or giving money – discuss with Vanessa or his office if there are any questions or concerns. Some churches are 501c-3 designations, it's something new that's happening, more info to come.

Capital Improvements were discussed and what it means to be adding value to property, especially since each contract or lease can have unique provisions, including maintenance provisions for maintenance issues. Contact his office for further advice on specific matters, as individual lease details factor into this.

Having gone through the funding training manual, Choi now came to concerns about a specific payment; the reason for the letter that was sent and why he's here giving this training session. The RNC had approved an invoice, but the order wasn't executed, which is against the guidelines. The vendor in question refused a cash refund, but there'll be a credit that can be used in this fiscal year. This is not how the procedures should work. The letter of admonishment is a first step, but more could come. The Board voted on this, so it's not the responsibility of any one individual. If concerns are voiced when discussing an expenditure, hear those concerns and, if there is still concern, contact the City Clerk and/or Vanessa Serrano before making the expenditure. Any individual can contact their office. He noted that the Board takes responsibility, not one person, unless it's a case of fraud. He noted that the RNC has been usually strong with financial responsibility until this particular case. Transitions are often rocky, but their main goal is to make sure Neighborhood Councils are protected. The goal is to ensure documents are up to standard. Overall the letter of admonishment is not a punishment, it's a signal to move forward. There was discussion about old outstanding items and Choi stated that if an agreement has been made for services and the services happened, they have to be paid for. He reiterated that the responsibility is to the Board, not an individual. In situations where old records aren't available, call his office. Ultimately if a vendor provided something, pay for it.

It was pointed out that there have been situations where, due to uncertainty, expenditures have been re-voted upon to cover outstanding invoices, Choi said that this is acceptable.

Cardholder Yassmin Flores noted that she has been surprised by some purchases or services obtained, as invoices come in, and it's the first she's heard of it and she has to question them or investigate, as there are communication breakdowns. Choi recommended talking to Serrano about operational change to get past these kinds of issues. Additional instances of communication breakdowns or procedural misunderstandings were brought up, and Choi noted that while the cardholder policies

need to be followed, each Neighborhood Councils independence is important, so each council's internal processes are their own responsibility. When there is uncertainty, call the funding representative first (in the RNC's case, Janet Hernandez).

When asked who should keep the hard copies of receipts, the Treasurer or Secretary, as the bylaws could be interpreted as conflicting, Choi noted that it's an internal bylaws or Standing Rules issue, which, as noted earlier, is in the process of being worked on. How the board makes decisions and communicated about expenditures and operations are to be determined by the board. Don't swipe the card if you're not comfortable swiping the card. Don't expense public funds on maybes or half-truths.

Newsletters were briefly discussed – the board determines the material going out to the public, so it must be approved by the board. There was concern about the board having to vet each newsletter, and Choi recommended any questions about this should be brought to Vanessa Serrano or the legal liaison. For questions regarding newsletter advertising for-profit businesses, again he recommended contacting the legal liaison.

Choi finished his training and discussion by saying that, because the council had completed this session, an email will be sent thanking the RNC and lifting the admonishment. He recommended the absent board members attend September 25 training at City Hall. He was thanked and applauded by the board.

VII. Reseda Neighborhood Council Administrative Matters:

- A. Approval of Minutes – August 20, 2018 and any prior board meetings.

This item was tabled until the next General meeting on Monday, September 17.

- B. Discussion and possible action regarding the Finance Committee's recommendation to:
 - i. Approve to pay over-due invoice from AtoZ Printing Center \$226.72, dated 4/2/18.

After discussion about the invoice, a roll call vote was taken and the recommendation from the Finance Committee was approved.

Vote count: Yes 7, No 2 (Brewer, Flores), Abstain 2 (Girten, Minter) and 5 Absent.

At 9:05 pm Gilbert Juarez left the meeting.

- C. Discussion and possible action regarding the Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Committee's recommendation to:

- 1. Approve the addition of Jeffrey Minter to the Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Committee.

After a show of hands vote of the 10 council members present, the Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Committee's recommendation was approved by unanimous vote (10 Yes, 6 Absent).

- 2. Approve the addition of Joe Phillips to the Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Committee.

After a show of hands vote of the 10 council members present, the Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Committee's recommendation was approved by unanimous vote (10 Yes, 6 Absent).

- D. Discussion and possible action regarding the creation of an Ad Hoc Community Safety Committee.

This item was tabled until the next General meeting on Monday, September 17.

- E. Discussion and possible action regarding the appointment of a Chair and/or Co-Chair of the:

- 1. Community Space Committee.

After discussion, Yassmin Flores moved to approve the appointment of Robert Vogel to be the Chair of the Community Space Committee, Anna Measles seconded. After a show of hands vote, Robert Vogel was approved as Chair of the Community Space Committee.

Vote count: Yes 9, No 0, Abstain 1 (Girten) and 6 Absent.

- 2. Youth and Senior Advocacy Committee.

This item was tabled until the next General meeting on Monday, September 17.

- 3. Ad Hoc Community Safety if created.

This item was tabled until the next General meeting on Monday, September 17.

Garth Carlson noted at this time that he has stopped by the Community Space several times and found the doors locked and no one present, but the lights were on. Getting a timer for the lights was suggested and noted for discussion at a future committee meeting.

VIII. **Upcoming Agenda Items:** Possible future agenda items that Board Members would like to include on upcoming agendas should be directed to the Reseda NC President, CR Cochrane or Vice President, Anna Measles.

IX. **Tentative -Next Meeting:** 7:00pm, Mon. September 17, 2018 . Reseda NC Community Space 18118 Sherman Way, Reseda, CA 91335 (front half of Bank of America building).

Note: Dates of Future Meetings: Tentative APPROVED General Board meeting dates are the first and third Monday of each month.

X. **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 PM.