

Harbor Gateway North Neighborhood Council July 23, 2013, General Membership Meeting

Present: Delores Allmond (Chair), Pamela Thornton (Vice Chair), Rosalie Preston (Recording Secretary), Neodros Bridgeforth (Corresponding Secretary), Joan Jacobs (Treasurer), Ramon Montoya (District 1), Adrian Valenzuela (District 2), Betty Hawkins (District 4), Llewyn Fowlkes (District 5), Marvin Bell (District 6), Rosario Rico (District 7), Deborah Lee (Community Organization Representative), Richard Lee (Youth Representative), Donald Cook (Outreach Representative), and Gloria Christmas (At-Large-Representative).

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Delores Allmond at 7:10 p.m. After the salute to the flag and a moment of silence, Delores reviewed the HGNNC Code of Civility.

1)Public Comment: Alexander Gurfinkel, Field Representative for Assemblyman Isadore Hall III (64th Assembly District), introduced himself and said that their office can handle any issue which stakeholders may have with the State of California, such as Caltrans, the Employment Development Department, etc. He complimented the HGNNC on the amount of people present which he said reflects the HGNNC ability to outreach to stakeholders.

Emma Lemus, District 7 stakeholder, said that she had recently moved into the neighborhood and was concerned about all of the illegal 4th of July fireworks and also the very loud parties that are being held.

Betty Hawkins, District 4 Representative, asked that the Board reconsider the amount of money allocated to support the District 4 Police Officer Appreciation Luncheon which will be held on Mon. August 19. Rather than the \$250 that was voted on July 9, she asks that the amount be re-voted at \$350.

Art Cramer, District 1 stakeholder, commented that the 18 wheelers are still parking along Figueroa Street south of Gardena Blvd. and next to his home. He also remarked on the amount of illegal fireworks set off on July 4 and the loud parties. He would like to see a focus on making our neighborhoods cleaner and more improved. He noted that Senior Lead Officer Hugo Valdez has not been returning telephone calls.

Isabel Campos, District 6 stakeholder, noted that the Health Investment Group has opened an apparent drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility at 725-727 W. 115th Street near two licensed child care centers in an R1 neighborhood and she wondered if that is a legal use.

Miguel Mandojano, District 8 stakeholder, said that there is a very large tree at 851 E. 115th Street which needs trimming or removal as the roots have lifted the street and made it impossible to repair. He also noted that his street is not cleaned.

2) L.A. Police Department Report: Senior Lead Officer Robert Martinez said that Senior Lead Officer Hugo Valdez is on vacation and so he reported on crimes in the 18A97 area (Districts 1 through 6). Martinez himself is the Senior Lead for Districts 7 and 8. Crime is up, with five homicides since early in the year. There have been 3 rapes since February, 23 robberies, 17 aggravated assaults, 68 burglaries and 86 grand theft autos. There is now a roving fingerprint car for the area. There was a complaint that Officer Valdez does not return telephone calls or attend Neighborhood Watch meetings and Officer Martinez responded that the previous Senior Lead Officer Martinez had gone way beyond the call of duty to answer calls on his days off and that such a level of response could not be expected. A District 4 stakeholder asked that since crime is up so much in Districts 3 through 5, have officers been requested to patrol more frequently in those areas? Officer Martinez said that the LAPD utilizes crime statistics maps which reflect where crimes have been reported in deciding where to deploy officers, so it is important to call in every occurrence. Other stakeholders reported that there are a lot of suspicious bike riders in the neighborhood. Officer Martinez advised jotting down the license plate numbers for suspicious-looking cars. District 4 has noted suspicious bike riders and walkers in pairs. Officer Martinez also noted that there have been thefts from gardeners in District 8, with the thieves being aware when the gardeners are being paid. Others commented on the inadequate amount of police presence in the neighborhood and lack of regular patrols. On a positive note, Officer Martinez said that with some recent District 3 burglars, many neighbors had called in the suspicious activity and therefore all were caught. A suggestion was made that the Neighborhood Council or Neighborhood Watch groups purchase cameras as had been done recently in one area of San Pedro.

3) Council District 15 Report: Daisy Ybarra, Field Deputy for Councilman Joe Buscaino, encouraged stakeholders to attend the Sat. July 27 swearing in of Councilman Buscaino at the Watts Towers at 1 p.m. A bus for HGNNC stakeholders will be leaving from the 135th Street School at 12 noon and returning at 4:30 p.m. The PACE program (Pro-Active Code Enforcement) which was tried out in the Watts area in April has been delayed in starting in the Harbor Gateway due to various staff transitions caused by the recent Mayoral election. The PACE program will notify residents about illegal home businesses, cars parked on lawns, and unkempt front yards, then warn them a second time, and fine them \$250 on a third visit. The program will also target illegal street vendors. Council District 15 will pay for the inspectors to work overtime on the weekends. As for the recycling center on the southwest corner of 120th Street and Figueroa Street, it had been operating illegally without a permit but now the center has obtained a permit to operate. A District 1 stakeholder complained about the El Antojito taco truck which operates from the lot at 168th Street and Figueroa.

(A break was taken so that stakeholders could get refreshments.)

Fred Quintana, Policy Director for Board of Education member Dr. Richard Vladovic, announced that he would be leaving his position at the end of July to accept a fellowship in Sacramento.

4) All you need to know about bike lanes-how to drive and bike safely: Michelle Mowery, Senior Bicycle Coordinator for the Dept. of Transportation, and Alek Bartosouf, Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition, introduced themselves. The City's Bicycle Plan was created in 2010, unanimously approved by the City Council in March 2011, but is just being implemented now. Stakeholders can go to www.bicyclela.org to see all of the documents, including the map of the three types of lanes: the green bicycle paths, the red major street bike lanes, and the blue bicycle friendly streets in neighborhoods.

(Richard Lee entered the meeting at 8:14 p.m.)

Many meetings were held around the City with the goal of having a bike lane within a mile of every resident to encourage this alternate means of transportation. No general fund money was used for the new lanes; rather Measure R funds and Federal grants were obtained. The implementation of the new bike lanes is actually ahead of schedule, with 100 miles of bike lanes implemented last year.

A question was raised about the controversial bike lane in San Pedro at Westmont Drive and Western Avenue. Michelle said that Dept. of Transportation engineers study streets to assess the level of traffic and it was determined that taking out one lane along that street for a bike lane would not cause automobile traffic to back up because that area had excess capacity.

What about riding on sidewalks? That is not usually allowed and it is a matter of educating cyclists, as would be riding against traffic instead of in the same direction as automobiles. The L.A. County Bicycle Coalition has produced a pocket guide for bicyclists which emphasizes that the California Vehicle Code applies to bicyclists as well as motorists. Those under 18 must wear a helmet at all time, including infants. It is the LAPD that enforces the bike rules.

A District 2 stakeholder pointed out that the bike path between 182nd Street and Figueroa Street and south of the Home Depot is not well-maintained and has broken glass and a lot of homeless people living along that route. Michelle said it is not within the jurisdiction of the City of Los Angeles.

A District 5 stakeholder asked if a bike lane can be removed because in Athens on the Hill, two of the new lanes end at cul de sacs, which seem to bewilder cyclists and bring in some undesirable people. Michelle said that the lanes were put within Athens on the Hill to provide a cut-through path for cyclists from Vermont to 120th Street. For a reconsideration, the community would have to ask Councilman Buscaino to introduce a motion to revisit the issue and then it would be heard before the City Council's Transportation Committee.

A District 4 stakeholder suggested removing curbside parking along Vermont Avenue from Rosecrans to 138th Street to make biking up Vermont Avenue easier. But Michelle said that eliminating parking from major streets is very difficult to accomplish.

The LAPD is looking at bike collisions, which normally are about 22 per year but last year totaled 33. Statistically having a bike lane makes riding safer for bicyclists and pedestrians. State law requires a motorist to look before opening their car door. Los Angeles is hoping that one day bike lanes could all be physically separated from the road, as in Europe.

The ///// symbol on the road indicates a bicycle lane with a buffer area between the lane and roadway, which is another way to protect cyclists.

What about using public service announcements to educate the public about bicycle safety? The Dept. of Transportation does not have a budget for that but is looking to partnering with METRO for that purpose.

What type of vehicle is allowed to use a bike lane? The Vehicle Code definition of a bicycle is one that is “chain driven,” so an electric bike would be ok as would an adult tricycle or three-wheeled bike. But motorized bikes would not be allowed. And electric bikes cannot be used on the bicycle paths.

Pedestrians always have the right of way. Cyclists do not always have the right of way. Bikes should act like vehicles and follow all relevant laws. They are not allowed on freeways. Bikes should be walked across a crosswalk and should not “willfully or wantonly” use the sidewalks.

Michelle defined a bike “path” as one which is physically separated from the roadway. A bike “lane” is designated by a striped lane on the road. A bicycle “route” utilizes signs plus the sharrows symbol on the road.

(Ramon Montoya left the meeting at 8:40 p.m.)

5) Approval of a letter to the City Planning Department requesting 90-day review and public comment period for the draft EIRs for the South L.A. (District 6) and Southeast L.A. (Districts 7 and 8), at least two Public Hearings on the draft of each plan before the staff report, and that the Public Hearings be held in the evenings in a location within each Plan area: A draft letter with the above wording was presented. Marvin Bell made the motion to approve sending such a letter, Donald Cook seconded the motion, and it was passed 11-0-1.

6) Approval of the April 23 Membership meeting minutes: It was moved by Llewyn Fowlkes, seconded by Donald Cook, and passed 12-0 to approve the minutes as presented.

(Joan Jacobs stepped out of the meeting at 8:50 p.m.)

7) Treasurer’s report: In the absence of Joan Jacobs, Rosalie Preston presented the report which consisted of the approved budget for the 2013-2014 fiscal year, with the HGNNC Strategic Budget Plan printed on the back. To date, the HGNNC has spent nearly \$5,000 of its allocated \$37,000. It was moved by Gloria Christmas, seconded by Llewyn Fowlkes, and passed 11-0 to approve the treasurer’s report.

8) Request for volunteers to be the HGNNC official Budget Representatives: Rosalie Preston explained the role of the two HGNNC Budget Representatives in the Neighborhood Council budget process and asked that stakeholders consider volunteering for this position.

(Joan Jacobs returned to the meeting at 8:50 p.m.)

9) Report on HGNNC activities (National Night Out on August 6, Movie in the Park Fri. August 30? Congress of Neighborhoods on Sept. 28, a Board Retreat in October, and planning issues updates): A sign up sheet is being circulated for those wishing to help out at the HGNNC booth for National Night Out on Tues. August 6 at the Southeast Station. The proposed “Movie in the Park” event may have to be cancelled because the renovation of the Rosecrans Recreation Center will not be completed until the end of October. Stakeholders are encouraged to attend workshops at the Sat. Sept. 28 Congress of Neighborhoods. A HGNNC Board Retreat is being planned for Saturday morning in October and stakeholders are encouraged to participate to help set goals.

10) Announcements: South Bay Family Health Care will be holding a free Health Fair on Wed. August 14 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 742 W. Gardena Blvd. Information on the Affordable Care Act will be provided along with screenings for body mass index, blood pressure, and diabetes.

The Dept. of Public Works has produced a report on South Los Angeles. Copies are available on the back table for stakeholders.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Minutes taken by Rosalie Preston