

**Grass Roots Venice Neighborhood Council
Bylaws Committee February 2, 2006 Meeting Minutes**

- 1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:10 PM.**
- 2. ATTENDANCE:** Bylaws Committee Members present – LJ Carusone (Committee Chair) presiding, Colette Bailey, David Buchanan, David Moring, Eileen Pollack Erickson, Greg Fitchitt, Ivan Spiegel, Jodi Gusek, Joe Murphy, Lisa M. Ezell, Marta Evry, Steve Freedman, Stewart Oscars, Susan Rennie. Absent – Thomas O’Meara. Also attending – Dante Cacace, Dennis Hathaway, Sylviane Dungan.
- 3. MINUTES:** The minutes from 01-23-06 meeting were not reviewed.
- 4. REPORT OF EXECUTIVE OFFICERS TASK FORCE REGARDING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (ARTICLE IV):**
 - a. Discuss the Following:**
 - ii. Seven At Large Seats: Composition, Roles and Responsibilities**
 - 1. Executive Committee Composition, Roles, Responsibilities**

The Chair advises the Committee that we are considering whether to adopt and/or amend recommendations from the Task Force. He then calls upon **David Moring** to report on the recommendations of the Task Force.

David Moring: The Task Force consisted of 6 members: **David Moring, Lisa M. Ezell, Ivan Spiegel, Sylviane Dungan, David Buchanan,** and **Naomi Nightingale.** The recommendation of the Task Force has been distributed to the members of the Bylaws Committee and to those present. I would be glad to answer any questions.

(Committee Discussion Begins)

Steve Freedman: Requests that **David Moring** indicate where the proposed roles and responsibilities vary from the original.

David Moring: The function of the President is the same except that it includes the responsibility to appoint the chairs of the Ad Hoc Committees, subject to review by Executive Committee.

Ivan Spiegel: Currently, the Bylaws cover the designation of the chairs of the Standing Committees and do not deal with how the chairs of the Ad Hoc Committees are to be selected.

David Moring: As before, the Vice President functions as President when the President is unavailable. Instead of Event Planning, the Vice President chairs the Government Relations Committee and is the chief liaison with LA City and other government agencies for delivery of Community Impact Statements and other correspondence. The Secretary continues to be responsible for maintaining the public records of the GRVNC and for recording the

minutes of General, Board of Officer and Executive Committee meetings. To clarify the relation between the Secretary and the Communication Officer, the Secretary is required to deliver minutes to the Communications Officer for posting within 7 days of the meeting. In addition, the Secretary is specifically made responsible for receiving and logging and distributing all submissions and correspondence to the appropriate GRVNC destinations.

Ivan Spiegel: Someone must legally be responsible for GRVNC records and that person is the Secretary.

Steve Freedman: There is potential conflict between the functions of the Secretary and the Communications Officer.

David Moring: The Secretary is the official recipient of submissions and correspondence directed to the GRVNC. If you would, hold your comments on the Communications Officer until we get to that.

Stewart Oscars: Clarification requested regarding taking minutes of meetings.

Ivan Spiegel: Mentions that we had a hired note-taker who was taking the minutes of the LUPC meeting. The speaker cards and other such meeting organizing materials should go to the Secretary to manage. The Secretary is responsible for making sure that the completed minutes and other submissions are distributed to the appropriate GRVNC destinations.

David Moring: The minutes go to the Communications Officer for posting.

LJ Carusone: What about minutes of Committee meetings?

David Moring: That's not clear.

David Buchanan: There's no reason for the minutes of Committee meetings to go to the Secretary.

Ivan Spiegel: Minutes need to be approved before being posted.

After further discussion, it was accepted as friendly amendment by consensus that the Communications Officer responsibility to post minutes will include minutes received from Committee Chairs and now reads as follows:

- **Responsible for posting of the minutes of meetings received from the Secretary or Committee Chairs within 3 days.**

David Moring: The role of the Treasurer is essentially unchanged. The role of the Communications Officer, aside from being made more specific, is also essentially unchanged except that the Outreach function is shifted to the new Executive Officer position of Community Outreach Officer. The role of the new Community Outreach position includes chairing the Community Outreach and

Events Planning Committee, arranging for the quarterly Town Hall meetings, and working with Board and Committees to promote participation on GRVNC activities. Except for chairing the LUPC, the role of the new LUPC Chair position is not fully resolved and it is anticipated that another Task Force will consider this further; ideas that were considered, however, include orientation of new LUPC members, liaison about land use matters with the GRVNC board and the community, and preparing and distributing Community Impact Reports.

Dennis Hathaway: There was discussion at the last meeting about designating an officer to perform a coordinating function.

Ivan Spiegel: Where should that responsibility reside?

Dennis Hathaway: He doesn't know.

LJ Carusone: It's a very complicated task.

David Moring: He thought something had been done about this.

David Buchanan: We could create a new Committee of Committees standing committee.

LJ Carusone: That seems cumbersome and he suggested that it might be handled in some way with standing rules.

Marta Evry: It could be the role of the President who has already been given the responsibility for appointing the Ad Hoc Committee chairs.

Greg Fitchitt: It could be complicated.

Steve Freedman: The President has a lot to do. He suggests that the Vice President might perform that role.

Ivan Spiegel: Asks **LJ Carusone** whether he could perform that Committee Coordinator role.

LJ Carusone: Yes. For him, there is not much time required by the Government Relations role.

David Buchanan: Observes that, in reality, the President performs the Government Relations role. We could assign the role of Oversight of Standing and Ad Hoc Committees to the Vice President.

After further discussion, it was accepted as friendly amendment by consensus that the Vice President responsibilities will include:

- Oversight of Standing and Ad Hoc Committees

Dennis Hathaway: The role should be made specific, but that can be handled by standing rules.

David Buchanan: Moves:

That we accept the descriptions as amended by consensus subject to further amendment of section G [LUPC Chair]

Susan Rennie: Seconds the motion.

The question on the motion was called for and by show of hands the vote was:

11 For
0 Opposed
1 Abstain

Motion Passes

Ivan Spiegel: Expresses concern that adoption of motions creates immediate reactions and suggests that we consider how to handle the political process.

David Moring: What's wrong with creating reactions?

Ivan Spiegel: Refers to recent reactions by **CJ Cole** and **Naomi Nightingale**.

David Moring: That's OK.

Ivan Spiegel: But couldn't we do a better job communicating these matters?

Steve Freedman: Not sure we can control their reactions.

LJ Carusone: We should be transparent and we have to let others know what we're doing.

David Buchanan: Refers to the vignette he heard from **Marta Evry** about the process of making a movie. She makes a cut, the next person makes a cut, etc etc etc. We're simply experiencing these cuts.

???: Getting input is good, but we can't let that affect our work.

LJ Carusone: We need to engage the board. Maybe we need a better method for presenting what we're coming up with.

Ivan Spiegel: Agrees.

(Committee Discussion Ends)

5. GRVNC BOARD COMPOSITION/DISTRICT MAKE UP/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (ARTICLES IV, XI)

- a. Discuss the Following Alternative Options to Current Bylaws:
- i. 14 District Plan, 7 Officers
 - ii. 7 District Plan with 2 District Reps, 7 Officers
 - iii. All At-Large Plan with 3 Liaisons per District, 7 Officers

The Chair calls upon **Marta Evry** to report on the work of the Task Force regarding district boundary lines.

Marta Evry: The task force meeting didn't work out. She then refers to the suggestion **Dennis Hathaway** suggestion that we come up with a method to get input from stakeholders. She mentioned three alternatives:

1. Survey of Sample of Voters: Out of the 1200 voter list, select 10 voters at random from each district and send out a survey.
2. Informal Survey: She conducted an informal survey which she indicates is clearly biased, but she did get feedback and plans to consider it at the next Tuesday's meeting.
3. Meeting with Stakeholders: She met with Naomi for about 2 hours and heard Naomi's concerns about the Oakwood stakeholders, and Naomi suggested a meeting with them. The meeting occurred and lasted 4 hours. Several people were there including Pam Anderson & Stan Muhammed. There was agreement that they don't like slate politics and that they were generally happier with how things are going now. Marta mentioned the alternatives. Regarding the 7 Districts with 2 reps per district, Stan asked why there were 2 reps per district and he probed as to what that would actually do; there was strong emotional opposition to dividing Oakwood. Her overall impression was that there was a lack of trust which led to questions about the reasons behind the proposed changes.

(Committee Discussion Begins)

Sylviane Dungan: Was the resistance primarily from Stan Muhammed?

Marta Evry: No. Everyone was asking tough questions. Marta's impression was that the resistance was rooted in a lot of history in Oakwood. She heard them say: "We're all Venice." They didn't want to be carved up and separated. The feelings were strong and deep. Most of the concerns were local.

Ivan Spiegel: What is your judgment?

Marta Evry: She mentioned the option to make it 13 districts with Oakwood alone getting 2 representatives, but that creates problems with making distinctions between districts.

Steve Freedman: He sees no reason for some of their concerns. It seems to be based on historic antipathies.

Marta Evry: Naomi got the most critical outspoken people to come. It might be possible to force it through, but the feelings were very strong.

Sylviane Dungan: Is there any reason to divide it?

Marta Evry: It would be so out of proportion from the rest of the districts that it wouldn't work.

David Moring: We had a Task Force to look into this.

LJ Carusone: We just received a good report from it.

(**Lisa M. Ezell** arrives)

Dennis Hathaway: The Committee should be careful about how these ideas are presented to the community. On this Committee, you have differences of opinion.

(**Marta Every** leaves the meeting at this point.)

(Discussion ensues, **LJ Carusone** alludes to history as a factor)

Lisa M. Ezell: She ran in Oakwood and would have liked to attend the meeting.

Ivan Spiegel: What should be done about the Task Force?

David Buchanan: It should be held in abeyance. We may take 4 options to the Board to get its reaction, and so no outreach is needed at present.

Ivan Spiegel: Why are we going back over plans?

LJ Carusone: The reason is that there was a lot of feedback that generated a lot of creative thinking. We have agreed on one, but we can benefit from considering other options.

Ivan Spiegel: Concerned about meeting deadline.

LJ Carusone: Indicates that there are 3 options being talked about, 4 if you include the status quo Bylaws. He says we have an opportunity to achieve a consensus and to bring the Board into that.

Steve Freedman: I have concerns similar to **Ivan Spiegel** – we voted on something and he's concerned about discarding it. Why only these particular plans? Why not others that we've considered and rejected?

Eileen Pollack Erickson: She likes the idea of discussing input from the community. She doesn't like the idea of presenting several plans to the Board.

David Buchanan: I co-authored the 14-district plan and discussed it with Marta Evry. We decided on that plan shortly before the meeting at which it was adopted. There was no time to evaluate

unintended consequences or get feedback. I could care less about Robert's Rules of Order and want open discussion. We're not looking for a victory – we should come up with something that works and I don't want to come up with something that doesn't work with the Board. I want something that works for Venice.

Lisa M. Ezell: She likes some aspects of the 14 district plan. She's been in sales and understands feeling good about what we're coming up with. What if we give them a couple of options and get their feedback?

LJ Carusone: We have assumed all along that we would involve the Board. We need to get a sense from the Board as to how they will respond to what we recommend.

Greg Fitchitt: Points out that, after intense study and work over an extended period of time involving many stakeholders, the Voting Methods Committee presented their recommendation to the Board and it failed to get the requisite 2/3 majority by one vote.

Sylviane Dungan: Looking at reactions is very important.

Steve Freedman: If we can't come up with a recommendation, I believe we will have failed.

Dennis Hathaway: Overwhelming concern is to develop something that works for Venice.

David Moring: We've got new ideas and we should look at it.

Lisa M. Ezell: Perhaps we could present it by saying that we feel that 14 districts is the best way to go. She then mentions other ways to present it and suggests that who presents is also an important decision.

Colette Bailey: She was at the meeting and Marta presented it very professionally and was thanked for doing so. Most of the concern was about dividing Oakwood.

Stewart Oscars: We should go for one solid plan. Board members are here and provide feedback. He is not opposed to looking at alternative plans.

LJ Carusone: Clarifies the 4 plans, all including 7 officers elected at large → 7 votes/voter:

1. 14 '1-rep' districts → 1 vote for 1 position → 8 votes/voter
2. 7 '2-rep' districts → 1 vote for 1 of 2 positions → 8 votes/voter
3. 14 at-large → 1 vote for 1 of 14 positions → 8 votes/voter
4. Status quo → 7 at-large & 1 district positions → 15 votes/voter

Jodi Gusek: Asks for clarification of the all-at-large.

LJ Carusone: Of the 3 non-status quo options, I think we all understand the 14 '1-rep' districts option. The 7 '2-rep' districts

option assumes that stakeholders in the district would be able to vote for only one of the 2 positions in that district.

Sylviane Dungan: Asks **Colette Bailey** if there was opposition to the 7 '2-rep' districts plan at the meeting?

Colette Bailey: Not really. By the end of the meeting, they seemed OK with it.

David Buchanan: Regarding districts, long term problem is that the districts will have to be redone when the new census is completed. Regarding how the 14 at-large option came up, we started with a reaction to slate politics and the fear of a super majority. Marta didn't like the 7 '2-rep' districts plan because of risk of slate and super-majority problems. Marta asked me what I thought about the 14 at-large option. Reflecting on a hypothetical 2000 vote election with 20 candidates for the 14 at-large positions, he reasoned that 5 candidates with Venice-wide support would likely account for 1000 of those votes at about 500 votes per candidate, the bottom 6 would likely account for 200 of those votes at about 32 votes per candidate, and the remaining 9 would likely account for the remaining 800 votes at about 90 votes per candidate. The same applies to interest groups; even if a slate gets all officer positions plus 1 at-large position, it's neither a majority nor a super-majority. He mentioned a conversation with **Tom O'Meara** and related that he supports this 14 at-large option.

LJ Carusone: He mentions that 21 Board members lends itself to an arrangement in which committees have responsibilities to liaison with specific district → more representation for each district than now.

Lisa M. Ezell: It's very interesting and exciting. Thinking of past elections, some people got elected by just one vote. This is a reverse of getting people in a district knowing their representatives.

Stewart Oscars: This seems like a return to slate politics.

David Buchanan: It's only one vote for 14 at-large positions.

Steve Freedman: He's been reflecting on the Bylaws for some time. The current system of Districts has been virtually meaningless in the way they work. Very few people know their representative, and systematic outreach hasn't happened. But this takes us even further away from district representation. If we just say that there will be 3 districts, then this plan could wind up electing everyone from only 1 district. 3 reps per district is much better. This is not a step forward.

David Moring: Concern regarding districts is that we have mostly homeowners and homogeneity, not diversity → idea has merit in that it would tend to create diversity, and we wouldn't change the voting very much. He likes thinking creatively.

Jodi Gusek: It is an intriguing plan. She still likes the 14 '1-rep' districts plan, but the feedback has influenced her. It is a very interesting idea.

Lisa M. Ezell: If we do this, can we do it in a cumulative voting style so that everyone can cast 14 votes?

(Several responses raised the concern that this tend to favor slates)

Steve Freedman: Responds to **David Moring** comment that current system produces homogeneity, but the system comes up with those who are most interested and willing to serve.

David Moring: Renters constitute about 70% of the residents of Venice.

Sylviane Dungan: An at-large system doesn't necessarily mean diversity.

David Buchanan: There is no guarantee in this. It's an opportunity.

Susan Rennie: Points out that surfers wanted to get representation.

Ivan Spiegel: Problem with this is that district plan allowed outreach in neighborhoods. If I'm running as an independent, I can't compete with slates. At the last election, the slates had 450 votes: (i) Slates can organize people to vote for specific candidates → slate politics; (ii) Let's say I'm a developer. The system is set up to favor moneyed interests. Question therefore becomes who will represent specific neighborhoods? He would prefer to have neighborhood representation rather than special interests.

Dennis Hathaway: This has the potential to generate much more interest and diversity. He went out and got 32 votes, the other candidate got 200 votes. From City Council perspective, should they take the community seriously? If we have the diversity, it will give the community a greater voice with the City Council.

Colette Bailey: Her first reaction was negative, but she's warming to the idea. If you have an interest, you can get people to vote for you. She likes neighborhoods, and it needs focus. But she is intrigued.

David Buchanan: He would like to see candidates believing that they need 200 votes to win → this could generate a turnaround in interest. Question re: neighborhoods – alludes to NORO claim to be a 'neighborhood' when it's not. Responding to Eileen's concern about a developer coming in and taking over the GRVNC – money can buy anything; but the vulnerability is in the current system where a slate can influence 14 out of 21 positions (7 at-large and 7 officer) – the status quo is, therefore, a highly 'slate-vulnerable' system. The 14 at-large system reduces that vulnerability to a maximum of 8 positions; it is, therefore, a low 'slate-vulnerable' system.

Eileen Pollack Erickson: Asks **Susan Rennie** to comment on this since she has expertise in this area.

Susan Rennie: Limiting voters to one vote for only one of the 14 at-large candidates under the 14 at-large system minimizes slate influence. In order for a slate to function, it would have to be extremely well organized and, if that were to happen, the result would be deserved.

Joe Murphy: What about cumulative voting.

Susan Rennie: It allows a broader representation of interests.

Dante Cacace: Doubling the number of districts is more than we would want to take on.

Sylviane Dungan: Slate is an easy way to dominate. We have a problem of outreach. Question is how to organize election to meet this need. She prefers districts. She believes that the only way to get around the slate problem is to hold lots of meetings → argues for budgeting for outreach.

Susan Rennie: Outreach is a problem with any system.

David Buchanan: I'll give you 6 months of meetings if you will give me \$5000; the result would be that I would win. The only thing that will stop a slate is a structure.

Steve Freedman: Points out that the concept of allowing only 1 vote for only 1 of 14 candidates was considered, in a prior meeting, to be a disincentive to turnout.

Eileen Pollack Erickson: I'm surprising myself, but I find myself liking this plan.

Susan Rennie: Someone mentioned that, if you have a structure, this increases rather than decreases interest. Interest groups can be good, and this 14 at-large option potentiates this; it meets the 2 criteria of (i) decreasing slate influence; and (ii) increasing diversity.

David Moring: Melanie Berry [attended prior meeting to support at-large positions because that would enable her interest group – surfers and boarders etc – to field a candidate] is an intelligent person, and having her involved could be good. Concern is that the 14 at-large option would wipe out the districts. But communities will coalesce to deal with district issues.

Dennis Hathaway: Responding to the fear of narrow interests getting elected with a handful of votes, this option would force them to broaden their interests in order to get elected.

Sylviane Dungan: Asks for the passions of each person. What are real interests. Homeless?

Jodi Gusek: Sylviane, you're a realtor, but your passion is different.

David Buchanan: It takes \$400 to print a postcard. The slates spent more than that. In the 14 at-large system, a slate could only get 8 seats.

LJ Carusone: This took time for me to digest. He likes the plan. Redrawing the districts is very problematic and it raises suspicions, whether or not justified. Alludes to **Joe Murphy's** early position favoring more rather than fewer at-large positions ...

Joe Murphy: Seeking to avoid the spotlight and to conceal a Cheshire Cat sort of grin, merely states: "I've been right all along", hoping that no one asks him for his then reasons which were not nearly as subtle or as cogent as the reasons expressed by others above, reasons with which he, in retrospect, fully agrees and wishes he had thought of. But perhaps if he remains silent, shielded by the excuse of needing to focus on taking notes, he will be nonetheless perceived as smarter than he is.

LJ Carusone: He likes the fact that disparate members of the Committee have been able to have a great discussion.

Dante Cacace: And it's not a big departure from what we have now.

Susan Rennie: Another factor is that it's really simple. One of the selling points is that it is a really simple structure.

Steve Freedman: Someone commented that reps elected from small districts would have a narrow neighborhood interest rather than Venice-wide concerns. I live on the Venice edge of the Marina. Being elected from a district doesn't mean I don't have broader concerns.

David Buchanan: Mentions Kirk and the thought that if a project came before GRVNC that impacts a neighborhood, then they would have to get a 'community impact report' → outreach. This could be codified in a committee structure or in standing rules.

Ivan Spiegel: How do you define the 'neighborhood'?

LJ Carusone: We keep the district boundaries.

Eileen Pollack Erickson: Points to the map and says that she loves the 'community impact report' idea – suggests that perhaps a radius approach could be used.

Dante Cacace: Why not get members to volunteer to represent districts?

David Moring: Unfortunate part is that we're taking away the districts.

Steve Freedman: The only place districting really affects this nc is by restricting participation on the LUPC which is arguably the most

important committee in the nc at this time. Districting approach does more harm than good to LUPC.

Sylviane Dungan: 14 at-large option makes it easy for interest groups to get 200 people → easy for them to elect several candidates.

David Buchanan: **Susan Rennie's** comment responds to this.

LJ Carusone: It opens up opportunities. He wants a sense of the Committee. He likes the 14 at-large option a lot and asks whether we want to consider this – reopen the discussion to consider this option.

David Buchanan: Wants the sense of the Board before we adopt it.

Eileen Pollack Erickson: Perhaps we could limit the presentation to 2 rather than 3 new options.

Dante Cacace: Asks for a show of hands (including non-members) regarding the 3 options which results in the following:

<u>14 '1-rep' districts</u>	6 favor this
<u>7 '2-rep' districts</u>	0 favor this
<u>14 at-large</u>	9 favor this

Lisa M. Ezell: Needs to think it over.

Greg Fitchitt: The 7 '2-rep' districts option came from the board → don't leave it out of the presentation to the board.

Colette Bailey: The 7 '2-rep' districts option does have support on the board.

LJ Carusone: We could rank them.

Ivan Spiegel: Agrees that it should go before the board, but observes that it's not likely to get resolved at the next board meeting. It will probably require a special board meeting and it must be posted for stakeholder input.

Dante Cacace: Agrees, strongly.

David Buchanan: We can make it a report.

Lisa M. Ezell: We're talking about a radical change. We are shifting from letting people vote for 15 positions to limiting them to voting for only 8 positions. We need to have a report of the voter profile by district.

Ivan Spiegel: Go and sit down with **Richard Myers**. He has the voting records.

Jodi Gusek: Why assume that the future will be like the past?

Lisa M. Ezell: We want people to vote.

Dante Cacace: How many people knew who they voted for in the last election? This change would mean that they would know who they're voting for.

David Moring: We haven't completely disenfranchised people. Reminds us that, before we adjourn, we need to create a task force to look at the LUPC.

David Buchanan: Moves:

That we report to the GRVNC Board on these three options as discussed and request a sense of the Board.

Lisa M. Ezell: Seconds the motion. Says that the pros and cons should also be presented.

The question on the motion was called for. By show of hands, the vote was:

11 For
0 Opposed
1 Abstain

Motion Passes (one vote not accounted for)

The scribe was instructed by unanimous consent to record the creation of a presentation group consisting of **LJ Carusone, Dennis Hathaway, Joe Murphy, David Buchanan, Ivan Spiegel** and **Dante Cacace**.

The scribe was instructed by unanimous consent to record the creation of a LUPC Task Force to include **LJ Carusone, Ivan Spiegel, Joe Murphy, Steve Freedman, Dante Cacace** and **Jodi Gusek** with other members to be appointed by the chair.

(Committee Discussion Ends)

6. **NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA:** Committee decides to meet next on Thursday, February 9, 2006 at 7PM at a location to be announced. The agenda for the next meeting is to be announced.
7. **ADJOURNMENT:** 10pm motion by chair to adjourn is passed by consensus.