

**Grass Roots Venice Neighborhood Council
Bylaws Committee February 9, 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, Joe Murphy, Steve Freedman, Stewart Oscars, Susan Rennie. Absent – Jodi Gusek, Lisa M. Ezell, Thomas O'Meara. Also attending – Dante Cacace, DeDe Audet, Dennis Hathaway, Naomi Nightingale, Richard Myers, Yolanda Gonzalez.
- 3. MINUTES:** The minutes from 02-02-06 meeting were not reviewed.
- 4. REPORT TO BOARD/SPECIAL BOARD MEETING/PRESENTATION**
 - a. Discuss multiple plans vs. single plan to present to board**
 - b. Decide breadth of presentation**
 - c. Form presentation team**

Since the committee lacks a quorum, the chair suggests that we proceed with hearing the report and discussion only. Members present at this time are **LJ Carusone, David Moring, Joe Murphy, Stewart Oscars,** and **Susan Rennie.**

(Committee Discussion Begins)

Stewart Oscars: He reported that he and **Jodi Gusek, Dennis Hathaway,** and **David Buchanan** met and discussed the four different plans:

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

And they worked with two forms and listed the pros and cons of all four plans. **Jodi Gusek** is compiling the results and they plan to meet next week to complete the review.

LJ Carusone: Reports that he has received feedback suggesting that the presentation make the case for only one plan. He got at least 3 calls about this. Since the 14 at-large plan got the most votes at the last meeting, he suggest that we recommend that plan but tell the board how we arrived at that as a way to educate the board.

Stewart Oscars: He talked about the history and the timeline and feels that it all fits with what **LJ Carusone** is suggesting.

Susan Rennie: She gets clarification from **LJ Carusone** as to what he is suggesting and indicates that, if we get a consensus that favors one plan, we can present that plan but point to the history with the rationales for converging on that one plan. This is better than simply presenting four plans.

Dennis Hathaway: **David Buchanan** suggested we start with the first plan and build from there to the preferred plan.

LJ Carusone: Expresses concern that it would take a long time to do that and that the board may not have enough familiarity with the issues to handle it that way.

DeDe Audet: As the chair conducting the meeting, why not put the alternatives to the stakeholders to decide?

LJ Carusone: We did consider the idea of having a public meeting to get broader familiarity with the alternatives.

Joe Murphy: The reason we rejected that idea was because, under the Bylaws, the board would have to approve each alternative by a 2/3 vote and that would mean that the stakeholders would have four options to vote on – and they could pass more than one of the alternatives, which would be pretty confusing at best.

LJ Carusone: Agrees.

DeDe Audet: She's concerned about time.

LJ Carusone: We'll be focused.

David Moring: Ultimately, we need 2/3 approval by the board → we have to come up with something.

DeDe Audet: Is this to be a presentation meeting to educate and not to vote?

LJ Carusone: Yes.

Dante Cacace: Really, we're going to pick one and bring others in to explain the one we picked.

Stewart Oscars: He clarifies history.

(**Colette Bailey** arrives → still 2 shy of a quorum of 8)

Joe Murphy: He likes the idea of presenting one plan with the others woven in.

Dante Cacace: Seeks clarification as to who is meeting this weekend.

LJ Carusone: The LUPC Task Force is meeting Sunday at 8AM. Returns focus to **Stewart Oscars** and the Presentation Task Force.

Dennis Hathaway: Suggests that **David Buchanan** present.

LJ Carusone: Thinks we should get 2 or 3 to present and suggests **Susan Rennie** as one of them.

Stewart Oscars: **Jodi Gusek** would be good also.

(**Ivan Spiegel** arrives → still 1 shy of a quorum of 8)

LJ Carusone: David Buchanan knows how to use Power Point. Anyone else? **Colette Bailey?**

Colette Bailey: I'd do it, but others are OK.

Dennis Hathaway: Power Point and a one-page handout.

DeDe Audet: One page is great!

Ivan Spiegel: Whatever gets handed out, it needs to be posted. You want the community to know what is happening in advance.

(**Yolanda Gonzalez** arrives)

LJ Carusone: The purpose is education.

Ivan Spiegel: I thought we were requesting guidance, getting public input.

LJ Carusone: Summarizes:

- Special Meeting
- Educational Forum
- History and timeline to arrive at a preferred plan
- Rationales

Ivan Spiegel: It goes against the motion we passed.

Stewart Oscars: We want to present all four plans.

DeDe Audet: It sounds like a Town Hall meeting that **LJ Carusone** will chair.

Susan Rennie: It was discussed at the very end of the last meeting. Her understanding was that the Presentation Task Force was going to do a pro & con analysis. She did not realize we were voting to dump it in the laps of the board. She sees it as a way to describe what we've done, which is that we've been sitting around working on this.

Ivan Spiegel: We need to reconsider the prior motion.

Stewart Oscars: There was a majority but not a consensus for the 14 at-large option. We were tasked with reviewing it and coming up with a presentation.

(**Naomi Nightingale** arrives)

Dante Cacace: It's a process.

Ivan Spiegel: It seems that every meeting comes up with something entirely different. The understanding at the last meeting has not changed.

Susan Rennie: You're right, but this is a dialectical process and that can be circular. It is a creative process and she feels good about it. The idea is to come up with something good.

Ivan Spiegel: Decisions have been made.

Stewart Oscars: We're still open to new ideas.

Joe Murphy: Expresses preference for the process the way it is unfolding, thinks it is natural and productive even though (or perhaps because) it is circular. This is the way that discussions of this sort happen naturally, and it's healthy and productive.

Dennis Hathaway: At the time of discussion of the 14 '1-rep' districts plan, there was a lot of discussion and it's appropriate to respond to it.

Dante Cacace: We're trying to make the right decision.

Ivan Spiegel: Last remark - **David Buchanan** proposed it and we should give the board a choice. We need input from the board.

LJ Carusone: Disagrees and states why.

Ivan Spiegel: If the board doesn't like the one plan, then we're back at ground zero.

LJ Carusone: We're presenting all of the options.

Yolanda Gonzalez: Her impression is that we're doing a great job. She respects Ivan's efforts to protect the GRVNC.

(**Eileen Pollack Erickson** arrives → quorum of 8 is present and the committee can now act)

David Moring: One other issue. Is there anything else we should present? I.e., stakeholder definition?

Ivan Spiegel: Agrees, and suggests including everything that might be controversial.

LJ Carusone: Agrees.

David Moring: So what is to be presented? Contributions:
Stakeholder definition
District Rep
Officer roles

LJ Carusone: Maybe LUPC also – it should be done by then.

David Moring: Summarizes the consensus.

Ivan Spiegel: When would the meeting occur?

DeDe Audet: Mentions the regular meeting.

Ivan Spiegel: It has to be a special meeting.

DeDe Audet: If there's a public hearing ... does there need to be another public hearing?

Ivan Spiegel: If we structure it so that it's just a presentation asking only for a sense of the board, it may not require public comment.

(**Richard Myers** arrives)

LJ Carusone: The presentation would probably take 2 hours – perhaps start at 5PM.

Naomi Nightingale: Can the board have a retreat?

Ivan Spiegel: No.

Colette Bailey: Mentions Brown Act seminar meeting. Could we use that as a model?

LJ Carusone: He thinks it is a separate meeting. The question is whether the board wants public comment.

David Moring: Are we getting bogged down in process?

Ivan Spiegel: Yes, but it's inescapable.

Eileen Pollack Erickson: Asks to know what we're doing – is it 2 hours for a presentation and public comment?

Richard Myers: Why not have public comment?

Ivan Spiegel: Suggests that we have a special meeting. The alternative is too slippery.

LJ Carusone: We've come to a decision to hold a special meeting.

Ivan Spiegel: When?

(Discussion on timing – schedule meeting for 28th – an educational meeting with public comment)

DeDe Audet: The Bylaws Committee reports directly to Board, not to the Rules & Elections Committee?

LJ Carusone: Yes.

DeDe Audet: She could ask board to state preferences on time to dedicate to specific agenda items.

(**DeDe Audet, Yolanda Gonzalez** and **Naomi Nightingale** leave the meeting)

LJ Carusone: Requests the Task Force to indicate that we do have a preference.

Dennis Hathaway: Several different goals were used to evaluate the plans.

Stewart Oscars: David Moring's suggestions should not be part of the Task Force task.

LJ Carusone: No problem. We'll fold that in. He then recaps what has been accomplished.

(Committee Discussion Ends)

LJ Carusone: He suggests that we skip Agenda item 3 and skip to Agenda item 4.

5. Article VI – ELECTIONS: PROCEDURES

a. Review procedures

b. Discuss

i. "ACTION: Adopt Procedures

(Committee Discussion Begins)

Richard Myers: He has some comments.

LJ Carusone: Welcomes feedback.

Richard Myers: The first time around, there was no DONE approved template and now there is → mention the template in the Bylaws – it's in the Election Procedures of the city.

Ivan Spiegel: What are the specifics?

Joe Murphy: Perhaps we should let the Rules & Elections Committee come back with suggestions after reviewing the updated Bylaws.

Richard Myers: Article VI §§ D (Registration), E (Qualification) and F (Credentials) are most likely to be contentious → put them into the Bylaws.

LJ Carusone: Turns our attention to **ARTICLE VI §F Credentials.**

Richard Myers: The business card was problematic. It's not a legal document.

David Moring: Questions whether we want to wrestle with it now.

Susan Rennie: The issue is to avoid changes that cause problems → codify them in the Bylaws to provide stability rather than leaving it up to the Rules and Elections Committee because they could then vary from year to year.

Ivan Spiegel: Agrees. Rules and Elections Committee can be manipulated.

David Moring: Disagrees. Credentials can be flexible. Putting details into the Bylaws invites opposition to the Bylaws.

Richard Myers: Part of the problem is specific but contradictory credentials. We could specify the need for valid credentials such as government issued credentials.

David Moring: Agrees with **Richard Myers:** and suggests using US Constitution as model. The characteristics of credentials are:

- a. Identifiable to person claiming to qualify
- b. Verifiable by person registering the claim

In a town with a wide range of people and with DONE and BONC, they will argue for more inclusivity. Transients have a right to vote → how do we deal with that?

(**Steve Freedman** and **David Buchanan** arrive)

LJ Carusone: Summarizes the issue.

David Buchanan: Favors leaving it to Rules and Elections Committee, using Bylaws as a guide.

Dennis Hathaway: Another reason to not have specificity in Bylaws is that the situation could change over time.

David Buchanan: Doesn't favor self-affirmation.

(Consensus → self-affirmation is out)

Richard Myers: If general terms, make it clear in some way. That much specificity is desirable.

Dante Cacace: Question to clarify – Rules and Elections Committee could do that.

Richard Myers: Gives example of the boardwalk and states that he wants the Bylaws to say what 'certifiable' and 'identifiable' mean.

David Moring: There are people who don't have an identity.

David Buchanan: With or without credentials, every stakeholder is entitled to vote. It may be provisional and it may not be counted. The right to have the vote counted requires that the voter be identifiable and that the voter's identity be verifiable.

Richard Myers: Suggests that this may be semantics and he suggested a solution that was acceptable to **David Buchanan**.

Eileen Pollack Erickson: What about just knowing who the person is?

David Moring: That's not acceptable.

David Buchanan: We can't draw a line that prevents transients from voting. We can't limit it.

Richard Myers: Disagrees. Election procedures that imposed limits were approved by DONE.

LJ Carusone: DONE said we could put limits on it as long as we adhere to the definition.

Richard Myers: We're dealing with an edge issue.

LJ Carusone: We need to focus on Bylaws.

David Buchanan: Asks for DONE version.

Ivan Spiegel: If we don't get it done in time, we do need to get the Board to deal with it.

David Buchanan: Reads DONE language of **ARTICLE VI §F Credentials**.

Susan Rennie: We still need to include identification.

David Buchanan: Reads the section from DONE again and modifies it so that it is acceptable to the Committee.

Ivan Spiegel: Moves that **ARTICLE VI §F Credentials** be amended to read as follows:

ARTICLE VI – E. Credentials. A valid credential is required at the time of registration to prove Community Stakeholder status before a new Voting Member may cast a ballot. In addition, on the day of the election, valid identification will be required of any previously registered existing Voting Member before they may cast a ballot.

If a new or existing member is unable to provide proof of stakeholder status on the day of the election, they may cast a Provisional Ballot which will be held as provisional until such time as the Election Committee receives proof of stakeholder status from that Voting Member.

Proof of Community Stakeholder status will be accepted per the standards adopted by the Rules and Elections Committee which will include, at a minimum, proof of identity and verifiable proof of stakeholder status.

Joe Murphy: Seconds the motion.

(**Greg Fitchitt** arrives – further discussion occurs)

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

11 For
0 Opposed
0 Abstain
Motion Passes

LJ Carusone: Turns our attention to **ARTICLE VI §E Qualifications**.

David Moring: Comments on his notes.

David Buchanan: The vote on the Feist initiative was that 70% favored 18 as the voting age and that is not contradicted by the Board amendments.

Dennis Hathaway: Disagrees. It's a great opportunity to get young people involved in the political process and it's a golden opportunity for outreach.

Greg Fitchitt: The genesis was to reach out to high school students, and **Levi Meir Clancy** ran for 2nd VP in the last election.

Dante Cacace: Favors 16 or junior or senior in high school.

Stewart Oscars: Can't imagine children being given authority.

Eileen Pollack Erickson: Based on personal experience with her four children, she wouldn't trust 16 year old children – she was pretty emphatic about this.*

Richard Myers: Go with the least controversial. There are not many children involved anyway.

Colette Bailey: **Levi Meir Clancy** was a graduate student and was 15 years old.

David Buchanan: (Quietly – would you believe it) Developers can organize high school kids and take over GRVNC.

Joe Murphy: (who clearly heard David Buchanan's remark, commented dryly and quietly) Don't you perhaps think you may have gone a bit over the top with that one, David?

David Buchanan: (quietly) [clarification requested]

LJ Carusone: The Feist proposal did have a lot of votes, but there could be opposition if we made it 18. Adults often underestimate youth → prevents involvement.

Richard Myers: Age wasn't the issue.

Dante Cacace: Having it 16 is great for outreach.

Stewart Oscars: Supports **Richard Myers**. We can bend over backwards, but we're hurting ourselves.

David Moring: Moves that we adopt the following, as amended from 18 to 16, as **ARTICLE VI §E Qualifications:**

ARTICLE VI – D. Qualifications. Any Community Stakeholder who is 16 years or older, or a junior or senior in high school, may vote.

Greg Fitchitt: Seconds the motion.

The question on the motion was called for. **David Buchanan**, not wishing to be perceived as opposing minors, announced that he was going to vote for the motion. By show of hands, the vote was:

7 For

3 Opposed
1 Abstain
Motion Passes

* The scribe later encountered Bylaws Committee member **Eileen Pollack Erickson** with 2 of her 4 children about to indulge in lunch on the sidewalk outside an Abbot Kinney restaurant and duly impressed said children with his impression of their mother's wisdom as reflected in this vote. The daughter, now 25, with tongue firmly in cheek, thanked the scribe for the 'conversation starter'. The scribe had to leave at that point.

David Moring: Except for Eileen's kids – they can't vote unless they're 18. (This exception surfaced to late to be considered and to become part of the motion; query whether it would have passed).

LJ Carusone: A lot of other neighborhood councils allow kids to vote.

LJ Carusone: Turns our attention to **ARTICLE VI §H Election Procedures.**

David Buchanan: Reads the uncertified DONE draft version which incorporates the 2002 Board and Stakeholder additions. He feels that requiring a 2/3 vote of the Board is OK but that requiring a majority vote of stakeholders at a special Election Meeting is onerous.

Ivan Spiegel: Does DONE need to approve it?

Richard Myers: Yes.

Ivan Spiegel: Then it needs to be approved by the Board.

The question was called for on the motion amending **ARTICLE VI §H Election Procedures.** The motion as modified and passed by consensus reads:

ARTICLE VI – G. Election Procedures. The Rules and Elections Committee has discretion to create additional rules and procedures as necessary to hold GRVNC Officer elections or special Election Meetings. The Rules and Elections Committee shall be guided by the principles of fairness and democracy in creating such rules. All new rules and changes must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the full GRVNC Board and be in conformance with citywide election procedures.

Motion Passes

Ivan Spiegel: Do we want to put anything about absentee ballots in the Bylaws?

Richard Myers: It can be a problem, but don't put it in the Bylaws.

David Buchanan: No one was against absentee balloting. The problem arose when a person other than the stakeholder requesting the absentee ballot would come to pick up the ballot. He suggests

that we handle absentee ballots by sending them certified mail, return receipt requested.

Richard Myers: Leave it up to the Rules and Elections Committee to decide absentee balloting matters.

Dennis Hathaway: Switches to the presentation to the Board and suggests that the 'non-staggered' issue be raised.

(Committee Discussion Ends)

6. **NEXT MEETING AND AGENDA:** Committee decides to meet next on Thursday, February 16, 2006 at 7PM at a location to be announced. The agenda for the next meeting is to be announced.

Scribe Note: the meeting date was subsequently changed to Monday, Feb 20, 2006.

7. **ADJOURNMENT:** 10pm motion by chair to adjourn is passed by consensus.