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April 20, 2009

Dear Venice Neighborhood Council Board Members:

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment received a "Neighborhood Council Application to Change or Adjust Bylaws" dated December 18, 2008, submitted and signed by Board Members Mike Newhouse, Ira Koslow, and Joe Murphy. The bylaws application was deemed incomplete at that time because it included amendments to bylaws provisions that had been approved by the VNC Board in 2007 but had never been submitted to, nor approved by, the Department. An application for bylaws changes made in 2007 was subsequently submitted by Board President Mike Newhouse on March 17, but the application packet was incomplete. Both the December 18, 2008 application and the March 17, 2009 applications were deemed complete on March 24, 2009 by the Department upon the inclusion of a Neighborhood Council board agenda for the 2007 board meeting during which the Venice Neighborhood Council approved the proposed bylaw amendments.

It appears that the following requested changes in the applications are consistent with applicable guidelines for Neighborhood Councils such as the Los Angeles City Charter, City Ordinances, and the Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils at this time. The Department has further noted that the applications contain all required documentation.

Therefore the following provisions submitted in the "Neighborhood Council Application to Change or Adjust Bylaws" have been **approved**. The current approved VNC certified and amended bylaws shall include the following numbering and language:

Article IV Board of Officers, Section B Executive Officers, Subsection 3 Secretary

Responsible for producing accurate minutes of Stakeholder, Board of Officers and Administrative Committee meetings and for submitting the minutes for public posting no later than seven (7) days after the meeting at which they are approved but not more than 45 days after the meeting at which the minutes were taken.

Article IV Board of Officers, Section G Resignations, Removals and Vacancies, Subsection 4 Membership Oversight

Vacant board seats shall be filled by a majority vote of the remaining elected Officers. Officers selected in this manner shall serve as Board Officers until confirmed or replaced by election by a majority vote of the Voting Members present and voting at a subsequent Election Meeting to be held not less than

thirty (30) days nor more than ninety (90) days following the selection of said Officers.

Article VII Committees, Section D Budget and Finance Committee

The amendment to change the current title of the committee from the Budget, Finance and Fundraising Committee to the Budget and Finance Committee is approved.

Article VII Committees, Section H Ocean Front Walk Committee

Chaired by Community Officer nominated by the Administrative Committee, subject to approval of the Board. The Committee has the general responsibility for addressing the issues, concerns, programs, and services that affect the various stakeholders and interests on the Venice Boardwalk and Venice Beach. These include, but are not limited to: free speech, performance, merchants, tourism, sanitation and recycling, public nuisance, public safety, and interaction with law enforcement and other officials of the City and County of Los Angeles.

Article VII Committees, Section I Arts Committee:

Chaired by Community Officer nominated by the Administrative Committee, subject to approval by the Board. The Committee has the general responsibility to support and encourage the arts in Venice.

Article IX Amendment Section A Amendment by Voting Members, Subsection 1

Requires a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the full board.

The Department has deemed the following portion of the VNC's application to be incomplete as it is not consistent with the principles governing a Certified Neighborhood Council's purpose or operations (Article VI, Certified Neighborhood Council Self-Assessment, Boundary and Bylaw Adjustment, Complaints and De-Certification Section 3 Article II, Desired Characteristics of Neighborhood Councils, Section 3 Transparent Operations.) Specifically, the definitions and processes outlined in Article VII Committees, Section B Neighborhood of the VNC's bylaws are not clearly stated or are contradictory and, as such, would obscure the transparency of the board's or committee's processes and operations that are undertaken to establish and administer this committee.

Article VII Committees, Section B Neighborhood Committee

Neighborhood Committee: Chaired by the Vice President. Using the eight (8) existing neighborhoods defined in the Venice Specific Plan plus the additional neighborhood east of Lincoln Boulevard as a guide, the Committee shall consist of, at a minimum, nine (9) Stakeholders, one (1) from each neighborhood, plus the Chair. Nine (9) Neighborhood Committee members shall be elected by the Board of Officers from a list of candidates who have formally communicated to the Board their desire to serve on the Neighborhood Committee. The Board shall, within thirty (30) days after beginning their term, hold a Board of Officers meeting for the election of Neighborhood Committee members. The candidate with the highest vote totals in each of the nine (9) districts shall be elected. The Neighborhood Committee shall be considered established for all purposes upon election of seven (7) of the nine (9) neighborhood candidates. Other neighborhoods and/or Stakeholders representing other neighborhoods or neighborhood interests may then be

added at the discretion of the Neighborhood Committee. The committee shall promote greater awareness of available City resources and services and act as a conduit between the Board and Venice neighborhoods, assisting in community outreach and bringing neighborhood issues to the attention of the Board.

Recommendation: The Department recommends that the VNC clarify the provisions of this section through an additional bylaws amendment. For instance, though the bylaws state that the committee consists of "at a minimum" nine people--eight from existing neighborhoods defined in the Venice Specific Plan, one from 'the additional neighborhood east of Lincoln Boulevard,' and the chair of the committee--they also indicate that the committee is "established" (or operational) upon election of seven of the nine committee members. In addition, the bylaws indicate that nine (9) Neighborhood Committee members shall be elected by the board of officers, whereas the election/selection process seems to differ for other potential committee members, who can be added "at the discretion of the Neighborhood Committee." *To help clarify issues regarding board representation and the process by which Venice stakeholders are seated on the committee, the board should:* 1) determine the number of persons required to make the committee operational, for example: "The committee will consist of at least seven members"; 2) clarify what the designations "other neighborhoods" and "neighborhood interests" mean (if there are eight neighborhoods specified in the Venice Specific Plan and there is one amorphously defined neighborhood east of Lincoln, are there still other "neighborhoods" that have not been mapped?); 3) attach a map to the VNC bylaws or standing rules that clearly shows specific neighborhood boundaries and/or use word descriptors describing same, and update this attachment if there are additions or deletions to the list by board action at least annually; 4) indicate that there is a consistent process for bringing people onto the committee; e.g., all must formally communicate their interest in serving on the committee to the board and be elected by the board.

It is also noted that based on inclusion, revision, removal, or other such changes, renumbering may have occurred to provide consistency throughout the bylaws document.

It is further noted that while the Department has reviewed the requested changes, there could be additional items within the bylaws that may need to be altered at a later time to be consistent with applicable policies.

The governing structure of the VNC will now be based on these current and amended bylaws and the VNC is advised to begin use and distribution of these current certified and amended bylaws. In addition, the Department will keep a copy of said bylaws on file.

Should you have any questions, please contact your Neighborhood Council Project Coordinator, Deanna Stevenson, who may be reached via email at Deanna.Stevenson@lacity.org, by phone at (213) 485-1360, or toll-free by dialing 3-1-1.

Thank you


Amber Meshack
Senior Project Coordinator


Deanna Stevenson
Project Coordinator

Att: Venice Neighborhood Council Bylaws

By e-mail

cc: Leyla Campos, Field Director, Department of Neighborhood Empowerment