



ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA
MAYOR

March 31, 2006

The Honorable Alex Padilla
Chair, Education and Neighborhoods Committee
c/o City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall

Re: CF 05-0894, Creation of a Commission to evaluate the City's system of Neighborhood Councils

Dear Council Member Padilla:

City Charter Section 912 provides that the Mayor and Council appoint a Commission to evaluate the City's system of Neighborhood Councils no later than seven years after the adoption of the Charter on July 1, 2000.

Since December 11, 2001, with the certification of Coastal San Pedro Neighborhood Council, a total of 88 certified Neighborhood Councils have been organized and 1,700 board members are presently serving in elected positions. Neighborhood Councils have revitalized the public square and re-invigorated civic involvement in Los Angeles.

Although a great deal has been accomplished, Neighborhood Councils are far from realizing their full potential in terms of civic engagement. This Charter-mandated review provides our community an opportunity to refine and recalibrate the Citywide system of Neighborhood Councils in order to advance grassroots democratic participation in municipal government.

As the Education and Neighborhoods Committee deliberates on the various provisions to be included in the ordinance to create the "912 Commission", I propose the following overarching goals to guide the formation of the Commission:

1. **Respect for Neighborhood Council Voices:** Ensure meaningful involvement from actual participants in the Neighborhood Council system.
2. **Balance:** Create an appropriate balance of Neighborhood Council and non-Neighborhood Council representation on the Commission to ensure input and buy-in from those involved in this work on a day-to-day basis while at the same time involving new voices and insights.
3. **Diversity:** Create a Commission that is balanced and diverse in viewpoint, professional background, life experience, geographic representation, ethnicity, race, gender, age and sexual orientation.

Relative to the composition of the commission, I offer two starting models for your consideration:

- A 25-member Commission which would allow for one appointment by each Councilmember (15) and ten appointments by the Mayor (10). If Councilmembers make their selections first, I would follow with my appointments. I recommend that eight to ten members of the Commission be current or past elected Neighborhood Council board members to ensure that the voice and experience of Neighborhood Councils is present in the commission's deliberations.
- A 9-member Commission might be easier to organize and convene. If this approach were taken, I recommend that the City Council President and the Mayor each make three appointments, and the Education and Neighborhoods Committee make one appointment. The City Controller and the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners each would be asked to offer one recommendation, with these two individuals appointed by the Council President and the Mayor respectively. Again, Neighborhood Council representation should be linked into this process as well.

I also ask for your consideration of the following recommendations:

- The commission members selected by the Council and Mayor should not be required to undergo a confirmation process.
- The original appointing authority should be allowed to select a new Commissioner to fill any vacancy or replace any member.
- The commission members should select their own officers, e.g., a President and Vice-president.

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- The commission should be directed to complete its work within twelve months.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to our continued work together on this important matter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Antonio R. Villaraigosa', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

ANTONIO R. VILLARAIGOSA

Mayor

ARV:ca/jl

cc: The Honorable Janice Hahn, Education & Neighborhoods Committee
The Honorable Jose Huizar, Education & Neighborhoods Committee