

Communication from Public

Name: Lionel Mares

Date Submitted: 09/22/2022 10:08 PM

Council File No: 11-1020-S3

Comments for Public Posting: Dear City Council, After reviewing the Community Impact Statements from a couple of Neighborhood Councils and a statement from the "Budget Advocates", I am very concerned about the actions of the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) and the City of Los Angeles City Clerk office. I am concerned that the actions of the "General Manager" Raquel Beltrán and her department staff who are attempting to undermine the independence of the Neighborhood Councils in the City of Los Angeles. I joined the Neighborhood Council as a Board Member because I want to make a positive impact on my community but I found it challenging because the Department of Neighborhood Council (DONE) and the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC) don't do enough or have done enough to support the Neighborhood Councils (all 99 of them). I reached out for help but none was given. The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) should be REFORMED! I am strongly opposed to the city of Los Angeles and the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) taking away the rights of the Neighborhood Council's ability to raise funds for 'Budget Advocacy' work (e.g. workshops, Budget Advocacy Day, etc...). All 99 Neighborhood Councils have the right (should have the Right) to Self-Determination! I ask the city council to reconsider this motion so that the committee can FIX the issues that the 'Budget Advocates' and Neighborhood Councils raised. Thank you!

Communication from Public

Name: Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates

Date Submitted: 09/22/2022 10:28 PM

Council File No: 11-1020-S3

Comments for Public Posting: The Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates would like to address some of the statements in the communication from the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment dated 9/22/2022. Items in this report seem to portray a less than accurate picture. Please find in this attached response some facts. We are not responding to everything brought up in the report. We are choosing to respond to only some of the most important claims.



FACT: The Budget Advocates never claimed they were created by Charter Section 909. **Mayor Hahn created the Budget Advocates in the early 2000s to implement Charter Section 909.** In those days the organization was called the Mayor’s Budget Advocates. The Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates spun off from this in the 2008-2009 fiscal year. Section 909 says, “Each neighborhood council may present to the Mayor and Council an annual list of priorities for the City budget. The Mayor shall inform certified neighborhood councils of the deadline for submission so that the input may be considered in a timely fashion.” There is nothing that says that an organization composed of representatives from and elected by the Neighborhood Councils cannot present priorities collected from Neighborhood Council representatives at Budget Day breakout sessions, cannot do the leg work for the Neighborhood Councils, and cannot make the Charter-defined recommendations. Also note that in 2003, Mayor Hahn sponsored the first Budget Day where he divided the attendees by region to discuss services issues, a practice continued to this day.

FACT: The Budget Advocates are not funded by NPGs. **Budget Advocates are funded by money in the Budget Advocacy account created in 2013 by Council File 11-1020-S1 to support the Congress of Neighborhoods and the work of the Budget Advocates.** Council File 11-1020-S1 divided the NC accounting between the City Clerk and DONE with DONE keeping Congress and the Budget Advocates and the rest assigned to the City Clerk. Also see Ordinance 184835. When 11-1020-S1 was passed, an instruction was provided to the Controller to create an account for Congress and budget advocacy “specifically for the Congress of Neighborhoods and for the work of budget advocates.” Conflating the budget advocacy fund with NPGs does not reflect the reality of the Budget Advocacy account. Its funding was never intended to follow the procedures of NPGs as evident from its creation where it was in a shared fund with the Congress. Regardless, we all understand the public benefit for which the Budget Advocates use the money the Neighborhood Councils donate; Budget Day, town halls, and, before the lockdown, printing the White Paper for distribution.

FACT: Neighborhood Council Alliances are defined in Article I Section 2 of the Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils where it states that one of **the goals and purposes of the Plan is to, “Promote and facilitate communication, interaction, and opportunities for collaboration among all Certified Neighborhood Councils regarding their common and disparate concerns.** Neighborhood Councils may join together in regional and citywide alliances as a means to engage in communication, interaction and collaboration.” Specific to

the Budget Advocates, the motion in the 2011 Council File 11-0228 says, “The Neighborhood Council Budget Advocates are charged with reviewing and commenting on the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year, prior to its official release by the Mayor on April 20th.” These establish the legitimacy of the Budget Advocates.

FACT: The report discusses money that currently exists in the Budget Advocacy fund. The General Manager committed in an email to the Budget Advocates officers that the money the Neighborhood Councils previously contributed will be available to the Budget Advocates and we take her at her word. **The real question is what happens to future money raised for Budget Advocacy.** The General Manager stated there will not be sub-accounts for different Budget Advocacy organizations. As stated by the General Manager, DONE will decide how Budget Advocacy funds will be spent, which Budget Advocacy organization will receive what amount and for what purpose. Neighborhood Councils, in contributing to the Budget Advocacy fund, will not be able to choose the organization to receive their money. This is about the agency of Neighborhood Councils and their ability to decide where their money goes.

FACT: The Budget Advocates did not hold a Budget Day in 2020 because of the pandemic. We held an online Budget Day in both 2021 and 2022. **Budget Day in 2018 cost \$12,317.99.** **Budget Day in 2019 cost \$14,584.84.** The average cost of Budget Day in the last 5 years is meaningless because there were only two in-person Budget Days and online events are significantly less expensive. We hope to return to in-person Budget Day in 2023. Because of the inflation the country is now experiencing, we expect to see a significant, but unpredictable, increase in the 2023 cost.

FACT: **56 out of the 99 Neighborhood Councils contributed to the Budget Advocates in fiscal years 2015-2016 through 2019-2020.** After this, the ability to contribute to the Budget Advocates was removed from the City Clerk’s web page. It is important to measure contributing Neighborhood Councils over a period of time that spans years, because NCs contribute, but not necessarily every year. Most contributors take their action every few years, the frequency varying from NC to NC. It is also worth noting that a minimum of 3 NCs from each City Council District contributed to the Budget Advocates for the time period measured.