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GENERAL MANAGER

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April 21, 2022

Honorable Councilmember Paul Krekorian, Chair and Members of the Budget and Finance Committee
Office of the City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

SUBJECT: COUNCIL FILE 22-0600 - DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT FISCAL
YEAR 2022-2023 BUDGET REQUEST

Honorable Members:

We express our sincere gratitude for your leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to be a declared emergency two years later. We appreciate your strength and resilience. The Mayor's Office of Budget and Innovation (MOBI) and our partners in the Office of the City Administrative Officer (CAO) have also been terrific to work with during the past year. Thank you.

The Department has reviewed Mayor Garcetti's FY 2022-2023 Proposed Budget. The Department is grateful the Mayor recommended funding and support for the 2023 Neighborhood Council Election awareness and engagement, funding to regularize positions involved in digital community engagement strategies, regularization of an accounting clerk position, position funding to launch the Neighborhood Council Dispute Resolution team, and the restoration of funding to the Civic University for Neighborhood Council program.

We would also like to recognize and offer our gratitude for the Mayor's support of the City Clerk's Neighborhood Council Elections funding proposal, and a position that would offer additional accounting support to El Pueblo and our Department.

We have summarized items for which we seek further support to better advance our mission *To promote citizen participation to make government more responsive to local needs* in the Neighborhood Council System (System).

The combined total for these additional requests is \$345,440.

Respectfully Submitted,

Raquel Beltrán
GENERAL MANAGER

REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND SUPPORT

1. **Neighborhood Council Awareness and Engagement, and Elections Outreach.** Our humble request for the neighborhood council Awareness and Engagement program is for the funding to be ongoing vs. one-time funding. This will support Neighborhood Council requests for strategic and ongoing engagement of the public in the neighborhood council system.
2. **Targeted Local Hire Support for Neighborhood Council Support Services**

Request: Resolution authorities and funding for the following positions:

- A. 4 - Office Trainee Administrative Clerk positions (\$105,624 - 9 months salary)
- B. \$1,600 - Office and Administrative
- C. \$10,000 - Operating Supplies

Total Funding Requested for Targeted Local Hire Support for Neighborhood Council Support Services: \$117,224

Justification: Ever since the recession of 2008, the Department's operating structure was decimated by a loss of over 50% of its authorized positions. Since that time, and with the support of the Mayor, CAO, and City Council, the Department was able to increase its total position authorities gradually. One area continuing to cause additional strain on existing staff relates to the mostly flat hierarchical structure for all Department operations. While many City departments reflect a multilevel approach to accomplishing operational objectives, from executive management, upper management, middle management, frontline supervisors, operating staff, and support staff, EmpowerLA is currently challenged with various clerical roles and assignments on operational and management teams. Project Assistants, Project Coordinators, department managers, and in some cases, even the General Manager is currently doing clerical staff work. Similar requests for clerical support have been made in prior fiscal year budgetary asks (see EmpowerLA budget proposal in FY 2019-2020). However, for very understandable reasons of fiscal restraint, these requests have remained unfulfilled.

These positions will conduct the following work:

The Administrative Clerks in this portion of the request would be assigned as support to each of the 4 division directors in charge of providing Direct Neighborhood Council Support and their team of Neighborhood Empowerment Advocates. In addition to performing essential administrative and clerical duties for each division director, these positions would be responsible for posting NC agendas to the City's ENS system for their assigned Neighborhood Councils - **a core priority function supporting neighborhood councils described in the Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils**. They would also provide data entry and

database (QuickBase) support to the Neighborhood Empowerment Advocates, ensuring that records and case notes are updated regularly for liability and consistency. This work is currently absorbed by Neighborhood Empowerment Advocates (Project Coordinators) and the Division Directors (Sr. Project Coordinators and a Principal Project Coordinator).

Impact if Not Funded: If the request is not approved, these tasks will continue to fall on the operational and managerial classifications, which reduces the time they would have to achieve their core assignments and responsibilities and quality direct neighborhood council support.

3. Administrative Support for Board of Neighborhood Commissioners

Request: Resolution authorities and funding for the following position:

- A. 1 Commission Executive Secretary II (\$62,902 - 9 months salary)
- B. \$400 - Office and Administrative
- C. \$2,500 - Operating Supplies

Total Funding Requested for Administrative Support for Board of Neighborhood Commissioners: \$65,802

Justification:

The Board of Neighborhood Commissioners meets twice a month and has drafted many policies, including the code of conduct policy, digital communications policy, anticipated updates to its censure and removal processes, the grievance ordinance, and the virtual governance system.

The Commission Executive Secretary would organize the agenda-setting calls, monitor, and respond to email communications sent to the Commission, liaison with the Commissioners, and staff the Commission. The Commission Executive Secretary II would also organize the calendar and schedule for the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners. Furthermore, the Commission Executive Secretary would moderate the Commission meetings and coordinate the logistics of the meeting, including the posting of the agendas to the Early Notification System and physical postings of the agenda.

The roles and responsibilities for this assignment are currently performed by the Department's Executive Administrative Assistant III. However, this workload has been challenging to sustain and has caused a strain on the Department's administrative infrastructure since the duties are very involved.

Impact if Not Funded: If this request is not funded, the Department will continue to be strained in its ability to provide adequate support to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners. As of April 2022, these duties are split between Project Assistant, Executive Administrative Assistant III, Project Coordinator, and Senior Project Coordinator positions which are being pulled away from their core responsibilities to support the Commission's important work.

4. Neighborhood Council Training Platform and Translation Support

Request: Resolution authorities and funding for the following positions:

- A. \$100,000 - Contractual Services

Total Funding Requested for Neighborhood Council Training Platform and Translation Support: \$100,000

Justification: The Department is responsible for developing, designing, and arranging education programs and training for NC leaders considering diversity, equity, and inclusion. We request funding to create a user-driven training infrastructure that meets language access needs and considers the digital literacy of neighborhood council leaders. NC leaders are required to complete mandated training (Ethics, Funding, Code of Conduct, Anti-Bias, and Planning 101) once elected to the board and before they can act in their role fully. The current training infrastructure does not meet the language and access needs of the diverse membership of the NC System. Funding this request will allow the Department to create a user-friendly training platform that provides equitable services and education to all NC leaders.

Impact if Not Funded: The number of board members completing their mandatory training will not be increased if they cannot access and comprehend training material offered. This package, if funded, will equip them with the knowledge they need to serve in their total capacity and participate in all decisions made by the board.

5. Restoration of SIP position

Request: Regular authority and funding for the following position:

- A. 1 Project Coordinator (\$59,514 - 9 months salary)
- B. \$400 - Office and Administrative
- C. \$2,500 - Operating Supplies

Total Funding Requested for Restoration of SIP position: \$62,414

Justification: We request that (1) Project Coordinator position be reverted back to the Department. The position was removed from the Department by the Separation Incentive Program (SIP).

With the reduction of the neighborhood empowerment advocate (NEA), staff available to provide direct NC support has impacted operations and response time. Data from our EmpowerLA Listening Survey of NC views on the Department reported 1) a need to improve the NEA's connection with their NC, 2) concern regarding response times (37%), and 3) a interest for NEAs to attend more meetings and schedule more 1:1 sessions with board members (90%). There is a direct correlation between the number of NCs a NEA supports and the quality of direct neighborhood council support.

The role of an NEA includes providing support to neighborhood councils in many areas including: technical, organizing and logistical support for NC operations at NC meetings, retreats, Department workshops and training; conducting Neighborhood Council 101 outreach presentations to promote civic participation in government and in the NC system citywide; serve as liaisons with City elected officials, departments, commissions, community organizations to further the NC system; manage day-to-day functions, such as, incoming calls and emails to address inquiries and concerns early before they can escalate. Currently, NEA's average an assignment of 7-8 neighborhood councils.

They are required to attend regular board meetings for their neighborhood councils, about 2-3 additional evening meetings per week and may need to attend additional committee meetings to provide support early on and mitigate any issues that may arise in the near future. With limited staff, this creates a challenge for NEA's to provide quality direct NC Support because they regularly adjust their work hours during the day to be available to support NC's directly in the evenings, this limits the number of hours an NEA is available to provide quality direct NC support.

The current ratio of Neighborhood Empowerment Advocate (NEA) to NCs requires the NEAs to manage has increased from approximately 100 to 150 people per month. The proportion of NCs per NEA has increased from five to nine. This has resulted in a diminished level of our core responsibility - direct NC support.

Neighborhood Councils function at varying levels of intensity that are subject to change on a month-to-month basis. As a result the level of direct Neighborhood Council support fluctuates.

The challenges mentioned above also apply to the increasing unresourced demands for support for NC alliances, which operate outside of our initial core mission, as defined by the City Charter, the Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils.

The return of this position will improve the delivery of services to each NC and allow for the Department to support additional projects and City initiatives.

Impact if Not Funded: If this request is not approved, the department will not be able to provide the ideal level of quality and support to the Neighborhood Councils of the Neighborhood Council System.

Total of All Funding Requests: \$345,440