

Communication from Public

Name: Elaine Alaniz

Date Submitted: 07/25/2025 10:25 AM

Council File No: 24-0867

Comments for Public Posting: Before any action is taken on Council File 24-0867, I respectfully request a public, transparent justification from the City Council regarding why paid officials, who earn over 250,000 dollars annually, are pushing a policy that directly undermines the voices of unpaid community volunteers. Neighborhood Council board members are not political appointees or paid staff. We are renters, homeowners, parents, caretakers, and residents who carve out time from our already demanding lives to serve the neighborhoods we live in. We do this with no salary, no benefits, and often no support, only a desire to see our communities thrive. And yet, the policies proposed in this motion would silence many of us, forcing out stakeholders who have dedicated years to advocating for cleaner, safer, and more accountable neighborhoods. It must be put on the record, why are full time, paid City Council members attempting to limit the participation of grassroots volunteers who work tirelessly without compensation? Why push for term limits and mandatory seats that only create more barriers for councils already struggling to meet quorum due to high turnover, crime, and lack of housing security? These efforts appear disconnected from reality and dismissive of the tremendous sacrifices volunteers make, giving up time with their families, juggling work, and managing personal obligations to make their neighborhoods more livable. As a constituent in Westlake North and a participating board member, we have already faced difficult decisions, such as eliminating youth and senior seats due to lack of participation and quorum. We have gone above and beyond to conduct outreach, build interest, and support engagement. But these efforts are not always met with results, and forcing artificial mandates only worsens that reality. Rather than impose mandates, we strongly recommend that City Council members take time to survey and speak directly with Neighborhood Councils to assess whether these approaches have already been attempted because in many neighbor councils it has already been tried without success. The assumption that this is a universal fix is misguided. In our case, it was precisely this type of mandated structure that prevented us from meeting quorum and remaining active. Please take the time to understand and respect the unique culture and diversity that already exists within each community and within the makeup of each board. Many

councils, like the one in our neighborhood, have already implemented thoughtful strategies to support engagement and build functionality. Mandates that ignore this lived reality only fracture what is working. Neighborhood Councils are not all in the same phase of development. Some are still rebuilding, while others are finally thriving. City Council should be encouraging growth, not forcing blanket policies that disrupt progress. We urge you to look back at similar initiatives from the past, and evaluate what did or did not work. In our case, removing those required seats allowed us to finally meet, organize, and begin to thrive again. This is not a city council seat. This is a neighborhood council, a body meant to reflect the people, not professional politicians. Instead of pushing out committed voices, the City Council should be voting on how they can increase our budgets, support our outreach efforts, and become allies and partners in the work we are already doing, not cutting us off. We call on the City Council to withdraw or significantly revise Council File 24-0867 and instead engage in a public dialogue with Neighborhood Councils before imposing policies that disregard our lived experience and the value of our civic contributions. If elected leaders truly believe in empowering communities, then they should show it, not with mandates, but with partnership. Sincerely, Elaine Alaniz (Community Member)

Additional Comments on Council File 24-0867

Submitted by: Elaine Alaniz

Before any action is taken on Council File 24-0867, we respectfully request a public, transparent justification from the City Council regarding why paid officials, who earn over 250,000 dollars annually, are pushing a policy that directly undermines the voices of unpaid community volunteers.

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It must be put on the record, why are full time, paid City Councilmembers attempting to limit the participation of grassroots volunteers who work tirelessly without compensation? Why push for term limits and mandatory seats that only create more barriers for councils already struggling to meet quorum due to high turnover, crime, and lack of housing security? These efforts appear disconnected from reality and dismissive of the tremendous sacrifices volunteers make, giving up time with their families, juggling work, and managing personal obligations to make their neighborhoods more livable.

As a constituent in Westlake North, we have already faced difficult decisions, such as eliminating youth and senior seats due to lack of participation and quorum. We have gone above and beyond to conduct outreach, build interest, and support engagement. But these efforts are not always met with results, and forcing artificial mandates only worsens that reality. Rather than impose mandates, we strongly recommend that City Council members take time to survey and speak directly with Neighborhood Councils to assess whether these approaches have already been attempted. The assumption that this is a universal fix is misguided. In our case, it was precisely this type of mandated structure that prevented us from meeting quorum and remaining active.

Please take the time to understand and respect the unique culture and diversity that already exists within each community and within the makeup of each board. Many councils, like ours, have already implemented thoughtful strategies to support engagement and build functionality. Mandates that ignore this lived reality only fracture what is working.

Neighborhood Councils are not all in the same phase of development. Some are still rebuilding, while others are finally thriving. City Council should be encouraging growth, not forcing blanket policies that disrupt progress. We urge you to look back at similar initiatives from the past, and evaluate what did or did not work. In our case, removing those required seats allowed us to finally meet, organize, and begin to thrive again.

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If elected leaders truly believe in empowering communities, then they should show it, not with mandates, but with partnership.

Sincerely,

Elaine Alaniz (Community Member)