

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

SYLMAR NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

**EXECUTIVE OFFICERS**

**PRESIDENT:** Quyen Vo-Ramirez  
**VICE-PRESIDENTS:** Tammy Flores and Rick Donnelly  
**TREASURER:** Randall Kelly  
**PUBLIC RELATIONS:** Nick Krall



SYLMAR NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

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Secretary: David Levin

Minutes of the  
**SYLMAR NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL (SNC)**  
**SPECIAL BOARD MEETING**

**Thursday, December 18, 2008**

Sylmar Recreation Center, 13109 Borden Ave., Sylmar, CA 91342

**1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**

Ms. Quyen Vo-Ramirez called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

**2. Roll Call**

Roll Call was taken by the Secretary. Board Members present: Erlin Arellano, Hiral Bhakta, Cheri Blose (late), Hector Cabrera, Rick Donnelly, Tammy Flores, Fabian Garcia (late), Randall Kelly, Nick Krall, Martin Laufer, George Ortega, Guillermo Reyes, Jim Schopper, Esteban Tavares, and Quyen Vo-Ramirez.

Board Members absent: Bonnie Bernard (excused), Saul Gonzales (unexcused), Jeanne Rowe (excused), Jan Sandstrom (excused), and Lynn Zekanis (excused).

Thirteen of the 21 Board Members were present at the beginning of the Meeting, which is a quorum, and the business of the Council could be conducted. Also attending were nine Stakeholders and Guests.

**3. Adoption of Minutes** – November 20, 2008 General Board Meeting and November 25, 2008 Special Board Meeting Minutes

**MOTION** (by Mr. Kelly, seconded by Ms. Flores): to approve the Minutes of the November 20, 2008 General Board Meeting and the November 25, 2008 Special Board Meeting as written.

**MOTION PASSED** without any objections.

**4. Housekeeping and explanation of Stakeholder comments and Speaker Cards; Timekeeper.**

Ms. Flores explained the above and thanked Mr. Kelly for bringing food.

## **5. Public Officials, Community Representatives and Board Member announcements and presentations.**

Ms. Vo-Ramirez noted that Mr. Krall is also a Liaison for L.A. City District Seven Councilman Richard Alarcon (818-756-8409; [lacity.org/council/cd7](http://lacity.org/council/cd7)) and is assisting with long-term recovery planning from the recent fires. Also, have fire victims contact the SNC Office to help the NC provide assistance. The SNC received letters of commendation from Congressman Brad Sherman for assistance to fire victims, and from Councilman Alarcon regarding the SNC's participation in setting up the Evacuation Center during the Sayre Fire and for participating in the Hansen Dam July 4<sup>th</sup> Celebration.

Mr. Bhakta announced an Open House at Board Member Jeanne Rowe's house this Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup>, 2:00 – 5:00, at 12701 De Foe Ave. (818-367-5410).

Mr. Krall announced the Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 – 3:00 "Gift of Christmas" event for Sayre and Marek Fire victims at Sylmar High School. "It's called the "Gift of Christmas" to give donations without going through all the City paperwork." Food, cash and donations, such as gift cards, will be provided, and there'll be entertainment. Volunteers are needed, including helping handicapped people get from the parking lot to the event. They "want to make it a festive event, so wear your party clothes."

[Mr. Krall reported the following after Item #7.] As a Council District Seven representative, Mr. Krall stated that the "purpose of the November 25<sup>th</sup> [Joint SNC – City Education and Neighborhoods Committee] Meeting was for City Committees to report to Councilman Alarcon, not to begin communication with Fire victims." Also, other services are available besides FEMA [the Federal Emergency Management Agency]. They're focusing on disaster recovery and planning. He'll post notices of public meetings regarding Fire victims assistance. Also, CERT [Certified Emergency Response Team] classes are starting in January for seven Wednesdays.

[The following was reported after Item #12.] Amelia Herrera-Robles, Neighborhood Empowerment Analyst, L.A. Dept. of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) (818-374-9895; [amelia.herrera-robles@lacity.org](mailto:amelia.herrera-robles@lacity.org)), reminded about completing the City Budget Survey, available at the DONE website, [www.lacityneighborhoods.com](http://www.lacityneighborhoods.com), which "only takes a couple of Minutes," and encouraged everyone to ask people they know to complete it. Board Members who complete it should identify themselves as such so the City knows how many NC Board Members did so. Also, conflict of interest training is "a State law . . . really important . . . Visit the DONE website . . . You can do it at home . . . It'll generate a Certificate that's good for two years." Ms. Vo-Ramirez added that it only takes around 2 ½ hours and only six [SNC] Board Members have taken the training.

## **6. Public Comments**

Stakeholder Richard Perry was disappointed that, he believes, concerns were not addressed and reports were long at the November 25<sup>th</sup> Joint Meeting with the City.

Stakeholder Louis Puglisi, a candidate in the March 3<sup>rd</sup> School Board election, introduced himself. He's an Educational Psychology lecturer at CSUN with 14 years

experience as an LAUSD teacher. The Mayor appointed him as a Children, Youth and Families Commissioner and he can be reached at [www.lausd2009.com](http://www.lausd2009.com).

## 7. **Reports**

### Secretary's Report

People from around Los Angeles wanted to donate clothing to fire victims. Officials and others were spoken with regarding fire victim assistance programs, a fire victims list, the November 25th Joint Meeting with the City Education and Neighborhoods Committee, the current Office lease, getting a phone line installed for the new Office, the January 7th State Ins. Dept. Recovery Forum, our phone service, and website updates. The Minutes of the November 20th Special Board Meeting and the November 25th Joint Meeting with the City, an Agenda for that November 25th Meeting, a 'Board Member Board Meeting Attendance' list, a Sayre Fire Donor Organizations list and an "Office Equipment and Supplies Inventory" were completed.

### Treasurer's Report/Budget Committee

Mr. Kelly has been working with the Secretary to move the phone lines to the new Office location. There are currently four lines, though we're not using all of them. "The plan is to cut the four phone lines to" a lower amount. Also, the Secretary was slightly underpaid during a number of pay periods and will be compensated at the "Minutes Writer" pay rate. Committee budgets need to be controlled, including having invoices and backup information submitted.

### Land Use

Mr. Ortega reported that there was no Meeting last month. The next Committee Meeting will be Monday, January 12<sup>th</sup> at the Recreation Center.

### Commercial/Business Interests

Ms. Sandstrom was not present and there was no report.

### Outreach

Mr. Bhakta reported that the Committee's November approved and December unapproved Minutes are available, and described the Committee's work.

### Election Committee – Chair to be appointed

### Events

Mr. Tavares said that there was no report.

### Public Services

Mr. Schopper reported that he contacted Stakeholders Kathy Fuentes regarding a neighbor's chickens coming into her yard; Gina Kaufman regarding donations; Harriet Wall regarding a street lighting issue, which was resolved; and April Washington, who was concerned that a power pole was falling over; he replied that the pole is okay and will be replaced. Mr. Reyes reported that the next Committee Meeting will be Monday, January 5<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at the Recreation Center.

### Beautification/Grants

Ms. Arellano gave pictures from the Mayor's Day of Service / Sylmar Appreciation Day on November 22<sup>nd</sup> to Mr. Donnelly for website posting.

### Education

Mr. Gonzales was not present and there was no report.

### Public Safety/Emergency Preparedness

Mr. Garcia reported that a "big shipment of toys" was received that will be handed out at the "Gift of Christmas" event on Saturday. Gang Injunction statistics show that 105 San Fers gang members have been served with arrest warrants, not counting those in jail, and 30 arrests have been made. Crime is up, mostly from car vandalism. Sylmar Youth Task Force events are coming up. LAPD Captain Villegas got a promotion and is transferring to the Valley Bureau. The LAPD Mission Station may have eight additional gang Officers and one Captain for the CLEAR program. The CRA [Community Redevelopment Agency] gave \$360,000 to the Mission Station for security cameras. He'll attend an NC coalition Meeting for service providers about gang intervention/prevention on Monday the 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 at the NC Office, and he'll have an Emergency Preparedness Plan outline.

### Bylaws Ad Hoc

Mr. Laufer reported that the Committee didn't meet this month, but they're working on Bylaws changes. Ms. Zekanis received a DONE e-mail regarding new Bylaws election language, so the NC "will probably have to revisit" that issue.

## **8. Presentation of Sylmar Neighborhood Council "Spirit" Awards for our community members who displayed heroism and selflessness during the Sylmar Sayre Fire.**

Ms. Vo-Ramirez relayed that this was recommended by the Public Services and Outreach Committees. Many volunteers, some of whom have their regular, family and volunteer jobs, spent sleepless nights and long days helping Fire victims and evacuees.

The NC presented a Spirit Award to Stakeholder Peter Berlick, about whom the Neighborhood Council received four letters about his having "fought spot fires at neighbor's houses with garden hoses." Mr. Donnelly read the Award and the entire Board of Directors gathered around Mr. Berlick to be photographed.

## **9. Discussion and possible action to participate in the 'Gift of Christmas' event.**

**MOTION** (by Ms. Flores, seconded by Mr. Donnelly): to participate in the "Gift of Christmas" event, in partnership with City Council District Seven, in the amount of \$1,000, to be given to the Sayre and Marek Fire victims toward gift cards.

**DISCUSSION:** The allocation would be from the Outreach budget, for Sayre and Marek Fire victims. Council District Seven will hold and then distribute the cards.

**MOTION to CALL FOR THE QUESTION** (by Mr. Kelly) was **PASSED** without any objections.

**MOTION PASSED** on a Roll Call vote with Ms. Arellano, Mr. Krall and Mr. Ortega abstaining.

10. **Presentation** by Lilian Ortiz from Phoenix House on Substance Abuse programs. Ms. Ortiz was not present and this Item was skipped.

Recess: There was a recess at this time from 7:23 – 7:37.

11. **Discussion and possible action** to schedule our meeting locations quarterly. Mr. Kelly explained that this is to rotate the NC [General Board] Meetings to reach out to the community.

**MOTION** (by Mr. Kelly, seconded by Mr. Bhakta): to schedule SNC General Board Meeting locations quarterly: January-March at Hubbard Elementary School, April-June at Sylmar Recreation Center, July-September at Palacio Torres Banquet Hall, and October-December at Sylmar Recreation Center.

**DISCUSSION**: Ms. Flores would like to change the January-March location to Gridley Street Elementary School.

It was agreed to **AMEND THE MOTION**, replacing “Hubbard Elementary School” with “Gridley Street Elementary School.”

**DISCUSSION**: Mr. Laufer is glad the Meetings will move from Hubbard Street Elementary School because the outside lighting is bad there and the Meetings “should be in a well-lit, safe place” for people to attend. Mr. Ortega is concerned whether the Gridley Street Elementary School is a comfortable place in which to meet. Ms. Vo-Ramirez noted that the Recreation Center is available year-round.

**AMENDED MOTION PASSED** by acclamation without any objections.

12. **Discussion and possible action** to be a part of the Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC). We are to be advocates and serve as a referral base for the constituents affected by the fires.

Ms. Flores explained that at a November 24<sup>th</sup> Meeting at St. Didicus Church hosted by Mr. Donnelly and others, the LTRC was formed, and she and Ronald Lopez of Christian Charities were appointed the Chairpersons. She described the LTRC’s work and that it “will become a 501 (c) (3) [tax-exempt, non-profit organization] so that we can accept grants and loans for our community.” St. Didicus is holding funds until the LTRC is [legally formed]. “Mr. Garcia will be in charge of the preparedness and response.” They’re following up on how vouchers can be distributed and will do case management for Fire victims. The LTRC could exist for two or three years. Information is available at [www.RebuildSylmar.org](http://www.RebuildSylmar.org) and their e-mail address is [RebuildSylmar@yahoo.com](mailto:RebuildSylmar@yahoo.com).

**MOTION** (by Ms. Flores, seconded by Mr. Tavares): for the Sylmar Neighborhood Council to become a partner with the Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) to become the advocates for this community by serving as a public liaison for the LTRC.

**DISCUSSION:** There was extensive discussion. It's a "good thing to do, but it goes way beyond the scope of what NCs were originally designed to do . . . This needs to be consulted about with the City Attorney and DONE." Ms. Flores explained that "the LTRC is its own Committee . . . [The SNC] would be one of the sponsors." Mr. Ortega observed that "becoming a 501 (c) (3) is a long, arduous task . . . [and he doesn't] know if it's our role [to do this] . . . [The SNC] agenda needs to reflect the City Council agenda . . . [The SNC would be] competing against charitable organizations that're already doing that work."

Ms. Flores **MOVED** to **WITHDRAW** the **MOTION**.

**MOTION** (by Mr. Kelly, seconded by Mr. Tavares): for the Sylmar Neighborhood Council to assign a liaison to be a part of the Long Term Recovery Committee.

**DISCUSSION:** Ms. Herrera-Robles advised that if money is involved, the issue can be revisited later. Mr. Laufer expressed that the NC's job is to represent the Stakeholders to the City Council and other elected government and he "wants to make sure that whatever we do, we do it legally." He's concerned about the use of the NC name and funds. Ms. Flores explained that the SNC is the first organization to participate in this Committee, which exists to help Fire victims after help from organizations such as the Red Cross and FEMA "runs out." Mr. Tavares pointed out that "we were elected to represent and advocate for our community . . . We have to be there and help them . . . If it wasn't for [the SNC, Fire victims] would've been hungry."

**MOTION PASSED** unanimously on a Roll Call vote.

**13. Discussion and possible action** to approve Land Use Committee recommendations.

- a. 13520 Herron Street zone variance to allow parking of commercial for a landscape business in the rear of 19,998 sq ft lot.

Mr. Ortega described the project and handout ["#1"], revealing that the plant storage part of the request was withdrawn; it would only be for vehicle storage.

**MOTION** (by Mr. Ortega, seconded by Ms. Blose): to approve a Land Use Committee recommendation to allow a zone variance at 13520 Herron St. to allow parking of commercial vehicles for a landscape business in the rear of the 19,998 sq. ft. lot.

**DISCUSSION:** The vehicles will be visible from the street.

**MOTION** to **CALL FOR THE QUESTION** (by Ms. Blose) was **PASSED** without any objections.

**MOTION PASSED** with all in favor except for two abstentions (Bhakta and Laufer).

- b. 14113 Foothill Boulevard Zone variance to legalize three accessory buildings in the RA zone and a 7' high fence in the front yard setback on 6,750 sq ft lot.

Mr. Ortega described the project and handout [“#2”], saying that “the Committee recommends approval on the condition that the street improvements be done.”

**MOTION** (by Mr. Ortega, seconded by Ms. Blose): to approve a Land Use Committee recommendation to allow a zone variance at 14113 Foothill Blvd. to legalize three accessory buildings in the RA zone and a 7’ high fence in the front yard setback on a 6,750 sq. ft. lot.

**DISCUSSION:** Ms. Blose pointed out that “the developer is asking for the zoning change to legalize and legitimize everything on their property . . . [The zoning] would change . . . from RA . . . to commercial” and the developer is not obligated to make improvements outside of their application area. There was extensive discussion regarding the application boundaries and the need or not for the developer to ask for the zoning change to apply to all three adjacent lots.

**MOTION to CALL FOR THE QUESTION** (by Mr. Kelly) was **PASSED** without any objections.

**MOTION PASSED** with all in favor except for two opposed (Kelly and Vo-Ramirez).

- c. 13725 Foothill Blvd CUP for a restaurant to expand an additional 931 sq ft and continue to serve beer and wine.

Mr. Ortega described the project and handout [“#3”], explaining that this is Caruso’s Restaurant.

**MOTION** (by Mr. Ortega, seconded by Ms. Blose): to approve a Land Use Committee recommendation to allow a CUP [Conditional Use Permit] at 13725 Foothill Blvd. for a restaurant to expand an additional 931 sq. ft. and continue to serve beer and wine.

**DISCUSSION:** Mr. Garcia believes that when we expand alcohol sales, and Mr. Kelly agrees that, we should consult with the Police. Mr. Bhakta estimated that this expansion can add revenue for the City. Ms. Arellano is concerned about the Options for Youth School being nearby and what the Police would say. Mr. Ortega indicated that “it’s one of the best restaurants in Sylmar . . . [he doesn’t] think there’ll be any negative impacts at this location.”

Mr. Ortega **AMENDED THE MOTION**, adding “. . . with the proviso that law enforcement has input on the application.”

**AMENDED MOTION PASSED** by a voice vote, with three abstentions (Bhakta, Donnelly, and Laufer).

**14. Appointment of Chairs to the appropriate Committees by the President.**

Ms. Vo-Ramirez said that Ms. Arellano expressed that she’d like to be on the Events Committee. She’ll Co-Chair that Committee with Mr. Tavares and has been removed from the Beautification Committee.

## **15. Board Member Comments**

Mr. Kelly relayed that “the San Fernando Valley Coalition on Gangs purchased recreation equipment” for the Mobile Skate Unit [of the Teen Extreme Program for Sylmar Recreation Center] and it “is on site . . . As soon as the [safety] equipment comes in” [for which \$2,500 was approved at the October 23, 2008 General Board Meeting], it’ll be available.

Ms. Flores announced an LTRC Meeting January 20th at 2:30 p.m. at St. Didicus Church and thanks Board Members for their work. Mr. Donnelly disclosed that Ms. Herrera-Robles e-mailed that the Mayor proposed cutting the Fire Department ambulance from Sylmar. Mr. Laufer thanks Board Members for all their work and suggests that it would help if land use conditions are better known to help the Board vote on those issues.

Mr. Garcia announced that the LAPD is starting a Juvenile Boot Camp for at-risk teens. It costs \$100 and waivers are available. The Sylmar Relay for Life will be held April 18-19; he and Mr. Tavares are the Co-Chairs. There’ll be a 5K Run / Health Fair in March. The Topanga Police Station is opening January 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Mr. Cabrera stated that the Buckeye Neighborhood Watch was established at Osceola Elementary School on November 25<sup>th</sup>, with 29 families attending. Their next Meeting will be the last Tuesday in January [the 27<sup>th</sup>]. Ms. Blose announced that Stetson Ranch is closed due to the recent fires.

Mr. Bhakta announced that the next Outreach Committee Meeting will be Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 p.m. at the SNC Office. A “How Money Works” seminar will be held January 8<sup>th</sup> at the House of Brews, 231 N. Maclay. Ms. Arellano thanks Board Members for their work and looks forward to working with the Events Committee.

## **16. Next Meeting date, Future Agenda Items**

[The next General Board Meeting will be Thursday, January 22nd at 6:30 p.m. at Gridley Street Elementary School. No future Agenda Items were mentioned.]

## **17. Closing Remarks, Announcements; Acknowledgements & Adjournment**

Ms. Vo-Ramirez announced that BONC [the L.A. Board of Neighborhood Commissioners] gave the NC a plaque for our Sylmar Fires work. There’ll be an Insurance Recovery Forum January 7<sup>th</sup>. She thanks the Board for their work.

Ms. Vo-Ramirez **ADJOURNED** the Meeting without any objections at 9:00 p.m.

Minutes written by DL.