

CITY OF LOS ANGELES

SYLMAR NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

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Rick Donnelly
TREASURER: Randall Kelly
PUBLIC RELATIONS: Nick Krall



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Minutes of the
**SYLMAR NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL (SNC) SPECIAL BOARD and
L.A. CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION & NEIGHBORHOODS
JOINT COMMITTEE HEARING
Tuesday, April 21, 2009**

Olive Vista Middle School, Miles Hall Auditorium, 14600 Tyler Street, Sylmar, CA 91342

[Note: Minutes are a summary of what is said at a meeting. Minutes are never, and are never intended to be, a verbatim transcript of everything that was said. If you would like to hear the audio recording of this Meeting, see <http://lacity.org/lacity/YourGovernment/CityCouncil/CouncilCommitteeMeetings/index.htm>]

[Note: this Minutes was prepared at the request of and for the Sylmar Neighborhood Council. It can be seen through the SNC website at <http://www.sylmarneighborhoodcouncil.org/minutes-board/2009-0421-minutes.pdf>. It is distributed upon interest or request as a courtesy.]

Call to Order

L.A. City District Seven Councilman Richard Alarcon (818-756-8409; www.lacity.org/council/cd7) called the Hearing to order at 6:12 p.m.

SNC Board Members V.P. Administration Tammy Flores, V.P. Communications Rick Donnelly, Public Relations Coordinator Nick Krall, Martin Laufer, George Ortega, Guillermo Reyes, Jim Schopper, and Esteban Tavares were present, as were Councilman Alarcon and various City, State and Federal officials. Also attending were approximately 300 Stakeholders and Guests.

1. Council File No. 08-3144

Verbal presentations, report updates and discussion by various City, County and State departments and agencies, in response to Motion (Alarcón – Garcetti), relative to addressing issues related to the Sayre Fire in the Sylmar area of Los Angeles.

Councilman Alarcon welcomed everyone and said that the purpose of this Hearing was “to create a forum . . . so that everyone gets the same information . . . The primary issue is the debris removal process . . . The Sylmar Neighborhood Council is doing great work . . . particularly during the Fire . . . This is only the second formal Meeting between a City Council Committee and a Neighborhood Council . . . The last one was the other Meeting

we had [on November 25, 2008].” The Councilman introduced SNC Board Members and Council District Staff who were present, including Jose A. Rodriguez, Sylmar Office Director (818-756-9115; jose.a.rodriguez@lacity.org); Dan Rosales, Jr., Supervising Planning Deputy (818-756-8409; dan.rosales@lacity.org); Jose Sigala, Legislative Deputy (818-473-7007; Jose.Sigala@lacity.org); and Ackley Padilla, Legislative Deputy (818-756-9115; ackley.padilla@lacity.org). He then thanked Steve Poizner, California State Insurance Commissioner (800-927-4357; www.insurance.ca.gov), for negotiating with AIG Insurance for [Oakridge Mobile Home Park (OMHP)] homeowners. He also thanked Mr. Krall, who “pushed this project.”

Homeowners’ benefits will average \$100,000-\$125,000. The Councilman has “never been more pleased about the cooperation between” all government levels regarding this process. United Policyholders, CARE, and Commissioner Poizner fought for these benefits.

Mario Rueda, L.A. Fire Dept. Deputy Chief (311; mario.rueda@lacity.org), reported that “since the Fire, a tremendous amount of work has been done” with various agencies “to ensure that mudslides don’t occur . . . Plans are in place to clear debris.” They’re working “to prepare for the next brush [fire] season.” The Sayre Fire “cause is still under investigation . . .”

Craig Fry, L.A. Fire Dept. Assistant Chief (311; craig.fry@lacity.org), reported that fire hydrants [at the OMHP] had been tested within a year before the Fire and they did operate effectively. The amount of water that was needed that night [November 14-15, 2008] was . . . unavailable” as fast as it was needed. The “State Legislature is writing new laws . . . to make mobile home parks safer.”

Mike Kantor, L.A. City Deputy Engineer (213-485-4920), reported that “the debris removal process is going very well.” They’re “on schedule to complete the . . . process on or before May 2nd . . . Then they’ll turn it over to the [OMHP] owner . . . The removal of the masonry is not part of the scope of the debris removal process.” Councilman Alarcon stated that he “didn’t see any masonry in the Park that [he] would want to keep.” (Loud applause from many of the audience.) Mr. Kantor replied that masonry removal “was never requested . . . This is significant work way beyond the scope of the contract . . . The City Council would have to give direction.” The Councilman replied that “we already gave direction.” Mr. Kantor replied that they’re “removing hazardous debris, not non-hazardous debris.” The Councilman said that he “wants an estimate on a Change Order on that work . . . They’re going to have to take out the slabs.” (Applause.) Mr. Kantor replied that “a [City] Council Motion directing the work you want to be done [is needed] . . . As long as we have the legal authority [to remove the slabs, we will] . . . The only authority we had . . . that was delegated . . . was to abate the hazard . . . It makes sense to finish the construction.” The Councilman added that “it was the intent originally [to remove the slabs, as well].” Mr. Kantor replied, “It’s really the State HCD [Dept. of Housing and Community Development] and the [OMHP] owners . . . how access [to still-livable homes] is provided.” The Councilman said he “wants . . . [his] staff to explore . . . if [other people] can assist with [non-hazardous recovery work].”

Julie Spacht, DWP [L.A. Dept. of Water and Power], reported that “the system delivered beyond what it was designed to do . . . [more than 9,000] gallons of water . . . nearly twice the capacity. . . At this time, water is available . . . meters are up . . . [water work] is done.” (Applause.)

Cliff Damron, DWP Power System Safety [L.A. Dept. of Water and Power], reported that nine transformers were damaged . . . Work is being done as we speak . . . [including] environmental . . . replacing transformers . . . so that it meets a higher standard . . . [The OMHP] should be up with power for the existing (undamaged) homes . . . by the first week in May, barring unforeseen circumstances.” (Applause.) “Several crews are working . . . eventually, there’ll be more.”

Sal, California State HCD, reported that “101 homes are standing that didn’t receive any damage . . . When we receive authorization from [the L.A. Dept. of] Public Works, we’ll allow the reoccupancy of those homes, immediately after . . . the hazard [declaration] has been removed.”

Beth Jines, Assistant General Manager, L.A. City Environmental Affairs Department (213-978-0880; beth.jines@lacity.org), reported that “we’re working with the contractor to make sure the area is clean and safe . . . We’re beginning to work with the L.A. County Health Dept. now.”

Michael Moore, L.A. Police Dept. Deputy Chief (311; michael.moore@lacity.org), reported that “acquisition of a mass-notification system . . . is ongoing.”

John Biezins, L.A. Building and Safety Dept. (213-482-0446; john.biezins@lacity.org), reported that the State HCD has mobile home park jurisdiction and would be issuing reconstruction permits, not L.A. Building and Safety.

Daniel Scott, Principal City Planner, Metro Div., L.A. City Planning Dept., (818-374-5068; daniel.scott@lacity.org), reported that “regulation must occur at a State level” for mobile home parks.

Jim Featherstone, General Manager, L.A. City Emergency Preparedness Department (213-978-2222; www.lacity.org/emd), reported that the Department is working to finish their work “on or about May 4th.” (Applause.)

Tony Signarelli, from the State Insurance Commissioner’s Office, reported that they’ve “been manning disaster centers . . . and investigating insurance complaints.” The consumer help hotline is 1-800-927-HELP. Owners can add their own money to a purchase. There “may be an impact” if an owner “received SBA or FEMA money.”

Kevin Wynne, U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) Communication Specialist (916-216-9849, kevin.wynne@sba.gov), reported that more than 17 million “dollars in loans were approved for this area.” The SBA help number is 1-800-659-2955.

A State HCD person reported that “red-tagged homes need permits issued . . . to complete repairs . . . Permit fees have been waived . . . The Department has adopted new requirements that . . . the materials used for the homes . . . must comply with requirements . . . The law is not retroactive.”

Karma Hackney, Individual Assistance Program Manager, State Office of Emergency Services (916-845-8149; karma.hackney@oes.ca.gov; www.oes.ca.gov), reported that they “continue to process payments from the Supplemental Grants Program” and are working with the Long-Term Recovery Group.

Ira Glickman, L.A. County Assessor’s Office (www.assessor.lacounty.gov), reported that “if you haven’t received a refund check, it’s because we don’t have a forwarding address for you . . . Contact the Assessor’s Office . . . To qualify for disaster relief, a home must be of comparable size and quality.”

Michael Tou, Policy Director for U.S. 27th District of California Congressman Brad Sherman (818-501-9200; http://www.house.gov/sherman), reported that “if you still have outstanding issues with FEMA or SBA assistance, call our Office.”

Angel Barnuevo, Field Deputy for State 20th District Senator Alex Padilla (818-901-5588; angel.barnuevo@sen.ca.gov), reported that their Office is “working on SB [Senate Bill] 23 . . . [which would] require an emergency preparedness plan . . . for all mobile home parks in California.” [Applause.]

Public Comments

A Stakeholder was concerned about slow responses and no answers, and that his “landscaping will be ruined because he can’t get into his home . . . Tile roofs will need to be replaced.” Councilman Alarcon replied that “access should be available soon after May 4th, depending upon County Health Department [evaluation] . . . The City has no authority [regarding access] . . . it’s the State . . . My staff has been working very hard on this.” (Applause.) “The County Health Department has given [the City] limited authority to remove hazardous debris . . . We’re going to convene as quickly as possible . . . [to work it out].”

The DWP’s Ms. Spacht responded regarding a Stakeholder’s concern about water lines, “Strengthening . . . not only separating . . . water lines [may be helpful].” Leslie Teltoe, of the Rebuild Sylmar - Long-Term Recovery Group (818-360-2518; leslie@citizenactionteam.org), reported that resources are available at the website www.rebuildsylmar.org and with various local groups; also, April 28th, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., there’ll be a Mental Health Workshop at St. Didacus Church.

Councilman Alarcon conducted a straw poll of the audience regarding whether they wanted to have another follow-up Meeting like this one in a month or two. A majority of people agreed that they did want another Meeting. Some Stakeholders expressed concern about notification for this Meeting. Jose Rodriguez said that e-mails and notices were sent about this Meeting.

Tammy Flores announced that the next Sylmar Neighborhood Council [General Board] Meeting will be this Thursday at 6:30 at Sylmar Park. Nick Krall said that work is being done to bring the various levels of government together and encouraged everyone to stick together.

Councilman Alarcon **ADJOURNED** the Meeting without objection at 8:08 p.m.

Minutes written by DL.