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GENERAL MANAGER

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July 19, 2021

TO: President Eli Lipmen, Members of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners

FROM: Raquel Beltrán, General Manager

SUBJECT: Proposed Amendments to the Code of Conduct Policy

BACKGROUND:

Over the years, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners became aware of a rise in relationship and board dynamic challenges involving Neighborhood Council board members and stakeholders. Particularly alarming were challenges reaching acute levels of concern. Increasingly, board member and stakeholder public testimony at Commission meetings, requested action be taken to provide Neighborhood Councils with policies and implementing rules that would make it possible resolve these challenges. In 2018-2019, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners initiated a process to review policies related to board conduct, engagement, and leadership development. The policies selected were adopted or revised between 2016 – 2019. They included the Leadership Orientation (2020-01), Censure (2020-03), Removal (2020-04), and the Code of Conduct (2014-2(2)) policies.

Through a town hall engagement review process, the Commission started with the Censure and Removal policies. These two policies were revised in March and April 2020 respectively. A new Leadership Orientation Policy was adopted in February 2020.

On March 3, 2020, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners adopted a motion calling for amendments to the Commission's Code of Conduct Policy. The action was deemed necessary to provide additional language and updates to the Commission's Code of Conduct Policy. Two members of the Commission were appointed to an Ad Hoc Committee to work with the Department to prepare draft amendments to the Policy. They include Commissioners Len Shaffer and Quyen Vo-Ramirez.

SUMMARY:

In partnership with the Commission's Ad Hoc Committee, the Department led a Neighborhood Council Code of Conduct Work Group of City Department leaders with neighborhood council experience. They set out to review current policy, implementing procedures and processes, and current and anticipated City policies. The Work Group members included representatives of the Personnel Department's Division, the City Attorney's Labor Relations and Neighborhood Council

Advice Divisions, and EmpowerLA's Leadership Team. Additionally, the Work Group included representatives of the City of Los Angeles Civil, Human Rights, and Equity Department (LA Civil Rights). EmpowerLA is grateful to these seasoned professionals for their dedication to this project.

The Work Group began meeting in October 2020 on an accelerated schedule. They met twice a month to review the Code of Conduct Policy's history, the City of Los Angeles Draft Workplace Equity Policy, and the numerous authorities representing the regulatory framework of the Neighborhood Council System. The Work Group presents these proposed amendments as reasonable considerations necessary to address the escalating incidents of acts that do not comport with the City of Los Angeles's expectations for representatives of City employees, advisory bodies, commissions, and volunteers. The draft amendments advance the mission, desired characteristics, and foundational mandates of the Neighborhood Council System.

FISCAL IMPACT: Staff time required to oversee and manage the administration of the Code of Conduct and related proceedings.

REQUESTED ACTION:

The Ad Hoc Committee and Department of Neighborhood Empowerment respectfully request the Commission:

1. Approve the attached DRAFT amendments to the Code of Conduct Policy adopted in 2018 solely to circulate to the Neighborhood Council System for education, discussion, and comment.
2. Approve the Department's Neighborhood Council and City Department review schedule:
 - a. Include the DRAFT Code of Conduct Policy Amendments on the Commission's agenda once per month until the conclusion of the review schedule.
 - b. Maintain a report on comments and community impact statements filed on the DRAFT Code of Conduct Policy Amendments on the Commission's webpage.
 - c. Administer a minimum of four workshops (two weekday evenings and two weekends) to introduce the DRAFT Code of Conduct Policy Amendments and to respond to questions. Weekday workshops will be held on a Monday - Thursday evening when Neighborhood Councils are not having regular board meetings.
 - d. After the review period, the Department will summarize the most commonly asked questions and comments.
 - e. At the conclusion of the review period, the Department will prepare a summary of the most commonly asked questions and comments.
3. At the end of the review period, the Department's report will include recommended amendments to regulatory authorities that guide administration of the Neighborhood Council System, including but not limited to the Los Angeles Administrative Code (which incorporates portions of the Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils) and Commission Policy(ies).
4. As a courtesy, once revisions to the Code of Conduct Policy have been approved, the Department will return to the Commission and present the procedure the Department will follow to implement the new Code of Conduct Policy. The presentation shall include how the Department proposes to:
 - a. Support Neighborhood Councils with the application of the policy to Committee Members,
 - b. Assist Neighborhood Councils with roster management, including that of Committee Members in compliance with the policy,

- c. Clarify the steps Neighborhood Council will be expected to take to address Code of Conduct issues,
 - d. Provide resources to assist Neighborhood Councils in their efforts to manage board dynamic challenges to avoid the necessity to suspend or remove Board and or Committee Members,
 - e. Manage Neighborhood Council rosters and compliance notification.
5. Once revisions to the Code of Conduct have been approved and the implementing procedures developed, the Department will hold workshops for Neighborhood Council Board and stakeholder Committee members to review expectations.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Community Impact Statements and letters filed are available on the Commission's EmpowerLA webpage.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed amendments to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners Code of Conduct Policy are consistent with the envisioned desired characteristics of the Neighborhood Council System and values expressed in current Mayoral Executive Directives. These amendments provide clear guidelines of expected behavior in the Neighborhood Council System.

The recommendations include a well-defined process to involve Neighborhood Councils and their stakeholders in a notice of proposed rule-making comment period. By advancing a transparent and inclusive process, the Ad Hoc Committee and Department believes Neighborhood Councils will be more likely to integrate the final version of the Code of Conduct Policy into the Neighborhood Council System's meeting and decision-making culture.

Respectfully,



Raquel Beltran, General Manager
Department of Neighborhood Empowerment