

# WESTWOOD NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

March 8, 2023

Agenda Item # 12

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From: **Raquel Beltran** <[raquel.beltran@lacity.org](mailto:raquel.beltran@lacity.org)>

Date: Sat, Feb 18, 2023 at 4:21 PM

Subject: Statement regarding Hollywood Studio District NC Resignations

To:

Dear Neighborhood Council Leaders:

On February 15, 2023, the Department became aware of the resignation of several board members serving on the Hollywood Studio District Neighborhood Council (HSDNC) (see attached letters). The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment was disappointed and saddened to learn about the resignations. It is always concerning when a board member leaves the neighborhood council system, whatever the reason.

Specific to this situation, the Department is reviewing the circumstances associated with their decision to resign. According to the attached letters, the resigning members expressed strong objections over a decision made by the neighborhood empowerment advocate relative to an outreach event. After conducting an internal review and interviewing the employee(s) involved, a final determination will be made in the coming weeks.

However, one most confusing item we are trying to understand is why the board members did not appeal the neighborhood empowerment advocate's decision to the director who oversees the neighborhood council, as is our protocol. Several of these board members have reached out to us in the past and know we are accessible and responsive. Their decision to not contact the supervisor is particularly confusing considering the employee had been serving the neighborhood council well, having worked closely and collaboratively with the board to support their struggles while in exhaustive effort status approximately a year ago. We would have liked to have had an opportunity to work with them to resolve the matter.

For context, in January, the HSDNC was placed into Exhaustive Efforts (EE) for the second time after having been released from EE for the same challenges that caused them to fall into EE the last time, failing to meet the expectations of neighborhood councils as prescribed in The Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils. More information about the exhaustive effort process is provided below.

In the first instance of EE, with the assistance of the neighborhood empowerment advocate charged with providing direct neighborhood council support, they complied with the requirements of the EE work plan to create outreach and strategic goals. Implementing a successful outreach plan is essential to an NC's EE work plan.

With the Department's assistance in 2022, the HSDNC executed the outreach plan's deliverables and contributed \$35,000 to 5 organizations for the Paul Williams week of service, which consisted of community cleanups, as one example.

After being released from EE status on July 20, 2022, the HSDNC returned to facing the same challenges. Unfortunately, in the seven months following, the HSDNC could convene only two public meetings, July 2022 and September 2022, primarily because board members didn't show up or could not commit to attending meetings.

Under Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 22.810.1(e), the Department may place a neighborhood council board into Exhaustive Efforts (EE) by taking over all powers vested in the neighborhood council board to bring the neighborhood council or its members into compliance with applicable law, rule or regulation. Such actions may involve freezing of NC funds, and the Department may run board meetings, revise and update operating rules such as bylaws and/or standing rules, and mandate board training and/or staffing to focus on specific problems at the neighborhood council's expense. Every situation is different; as such, no one solution fits all.

The NC must complete the EE work plan to return to regular status. The work plan was sent to the board on January 27 and reviewed with them at the February 8, 2023, board meeting. The work plan informs the board of the requirement to attend meetings during EE status and possible removal if requirements are not met. The work plan also specified requirements to engage in outreach activities and ensure inclusive engagement in their NC. These are only a few of the HSDNC's EE Work Plan elements.

The Department used its judgment to identify opportunities to reach as many people as possible. The Sheriff's Youth Foundation regional event, to which the resigning board members objected, would have allowed the NC to promote itself with at-risk children and low-income families, who usually do not participate in the neighborhood council. Also, participation in this event was previously recommended by the board member serving as outreach chair. It is our understanding that no objections were raised about participating at that time.

Also, the upcoming elections are an opportunity to create awareness about the NC and get people involved and interested in board service. Therefore, the staff, using the Department's authority prescribed in the administrative code while an NC is in exhaustive effort, expended funds to design, produce and mail a call for candidates mailer sent in English and Spanish to approximately 5,000 stakeholders w/in the NCs jurisdiction. This successful Department-initiated effort delivered most of the new people who will soon lead this neighborhood council along with those remaining.

An appeal to the director overseeing the HSDNC could have been made. The decision of the staff member could have been overruled by the director had the request been made. There was sufficient time to appeal to the director between the February 8 meeting and February 15, when the Department received the resignations. The board members had ample time to present their objections directly to the Department. The first step is communicating concerns with the employee's supervisor (director). If there is no satisfaction at that level, they are encouraged to contact the director of administrative services or the general manager.

At this point, we are working with the remaining board members and preparing the board to receive the new stakeholders who will be affirmed in the coming weeks. In addition, we are continuing to assess whether the Sheriff Youth Foundation event is an appropriate event in which to participate and will work with the current and new board members on the subject.

The most important focus should be to increase awareness and engagement of stakeholders with the Hollywood Studio District Neighborhood Council.

*Raquel Beltrán*

[Raquel Beltran \(she/her\)](#)

**General Manager**

Department of Neighborhood Empowerment