



an insider look at city hall

CITYWATCH EXTRA

May 15, 2006
Volume 4 Issue 18

CityWatch Today—

Occasionally we offer you a CityWatch Extra. Such is the case with this issue—A “We’ve Got Mail” marathon of sorts.

A variety of views on a variety of stories and issues that have appeared in CityWatch.

We hope you find it provocative and helpful.

--Editor

Say What?

“Politics is supposed

to be the second oldest

profession.

I have come to realize

that it bears

a very close resemblance

to the first.”

--President Ronald Reagan



CityHall

LA Council OKs \$7-Billion City Budget; Political Charade Ends Long Session

By Ken Draper

The LA City Council gave the OK today to a record \$6.7-Billion city budget for 2006-07. With the exception of the perfunctory last minute amendment doodads offered by Council members, it pretty much looked like what came out of the Budget and Finance Committee.

The fun came at the end of a marathon eight-hour session. With all of the line items and departments put to bed, Councilman Alex Padilla noted that the Mayor said in his State of the City message that he was bypassing the public and looking to Sacramento for legislative help in his quest to take over LAUSD. Padilla said he wanted some assurance that if the Mayor were to succeed, he wouldn't be looking to the budget the Council had just approved for funding, since the budget didn't include dollars for the Mayor's project. And he offered a motion that he said would protect the budget from just such a raid.



Some of his colleagues agreed, Ed Reyes and Tony Cardenas among them. Some said he was moving to fast and suggested that such a vote might create the perception that the City Council was opposed to the Mayor's LAUSD plan.

Now comes the charade: You will recall that Padilla is running for the California Senate this June. You will recall that some of his council colleagues have endorsed Padilla. The Mayor chose to endorse his opponent. Councilmen Wesson and Huizar ... who found their way to the City Council with some serious help from Mayor Villaraigosa ... lead the opposition to Padilla's motion. Was Padilla seizing the opportunity for a mini-payback to the Mayor? Ya think?

Final vote on Padilla's motion to clarify that no money for the Mayor's LAUSD takeover was in the budget: seven to seven. Motion failed. Ronald Reagan may have had it right when he said: “Politics is supposed to be the second oldest profession. I have come to realize that it bears a very close resemblance to the first.” ■

CityWatch Assignments

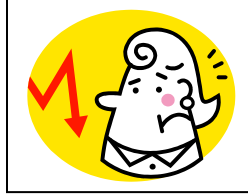
- Is DONE at It Again? Trying to thwart NCs in the 912 Commission Selection Process?
- Has the DONE GM Search Already Begun ... without NCs, as the Mayor's Spokespeople Promised?
 - The Hullabaloo over NC's Unspent Funding
 - The Case for Continuing the DWP Funds Transfer

Next CityWatch: May 22

We've Got Mail

I'm Confused: Has Hollywood Dropped off the Map?

I'm a bit confused here. I keep reading glowing remarks about NCs and all the influence they are enjoying downtown. It seems that there is much rejoicing around the partnerships that NCs are developing with their council reps and city agency general managers and CEOs.



Has Hollywood dropped off the map? The unholy alliance of Councilman Eric Garcetti, tightly bonded to Councilman Tom LaBonge, has successfully swept aside a whole community of stakeholders.

Last summer Garcetti and LaBonge decided that they were going to partner with the CRA and a faith-based lobbying firm (LA Voice) to play planning directors. Their brilliant planning for Hollywood and Gower includes a 60 unit housing facility for drug and alcohol dependant homeless right along side mentally ill homeless, families in transition (read children?) and those recently released from jail or prison. Just to be clear, this model of housing does not require tenants to be clean or sober in order to live there with the goal to get people off the streets - this is a no-strings-attached apartment facility with social services on the main floor some of which will be open to the general public (see the CRA's recently release RFQ). This right next to two day care facilities and two blocks from a public elementary school.



These plans were made with no opposition since no Neighborhood Council board members were consulted. I've watched developers and city agency general managers and council office deputies come before Neighborhood Councils at times when projects were merely a concept, a dream, an idea - just to get a measure of support from the Neighborhood Council. Smart actions because getting early support helps go through the project as plans are solidified. Making friends early is always good - ask any lobbyist.

Why Didn't NC Storm City Hall?

But when a plan is being created that changes planning and land use in the heart of any neighborhood, how is it that the city council persons are okay with holding this information back? A greater question could be asked of the local Neighborhood Council; Why did your board not storm city hall in disgust when learning that the early notification didn't include you?

The failure to react and demand early notification harms every Neighborhood Council. I'm certain that other neighborhood councils would stand up in support while the local NC holds the city's feet to the fire. Or am I missing something?

Community Has Done Its Fair Share

This community has done its fair share and continues to search for Hollywood properties for Transitional Housing for veterans, the working homeless, the working poor and families in transition. We support permanent supportive housing for the mentally ill in the right location to provide them safety. In short, we want to help those who need help and to whom that help will make a difference.

Rather than applaud such neighborhood generosity, the city goes forward in spite of all the voices raised in opposition sweeping their voices aside while labeling them as NIMBYs - shameful.

See next column

CITYWATCH

The E-Newsletter for LA's NC's

May 15, 2006
Volume 4 Issue 18

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From previous column

This is why reading your newsletter is such a curious experience. Why does this system seem to work everywhere but in Hollywood?

I guess the answer lies either in the funding, the fear of losing certification, the fear of making enemies of the city leaders and the lack of leadership and courage within our community.

How about some reality - share some real stories. Tell the public how DONE is doing and give us details. They are absent from Hollywood when Hollywood needs support. And the city council is off in their private quarters doing the planning with no regard for Neighborhood Councils - is this unusual or are there other NCs that are experiencing this same disgusting lack of empowerment.

Sorry to go on but I doubt that I will be reading City Watch again unless someone can tell me that it reflects real life Neighborhood Council experiences.

--Fran Reichenbach, Editor
Beachwood Voice

We've Got Mail



Picking up on Trash Talk What Subsidy?

A question to Michael Cohen regarding "More Trash Talk" (CityWatch-May 8). What subsidy are you talking about? Four unit buildings are treated like houses and supplied with different barrels for separating trash. Anything beyond four units is considered commercial property, and the landlord pays for trash removal.

No, we don't separate our trash. In my case I pay close to \$100 a month for trash pickup and recycling. You are right, however, about renters not paying their fair share. Again in my case, the 3%, or 4% this year, annual rent increase allowed by Rent Stabilization, doesn't make a dent in my increased costs for an adjustable mortgage, taxes, insurance, water, gas, electricity, trash pickup, pest control, gardener and incessant repairs. I go to work every day just like my tenants to pay for that myself.

--Sharon Anton,
Greater Valley Glen Council



Everyone Should Pay

The Bel-Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council, which is made up predominantly of single family homes from Laurel Canyon to Sepulveda Blvd and Sunset Blvd. to Mulholland Drive, voted against the trash fee increase for single family homes. The general feeling was that everyone, not just single family homeowners, should pay for the additional police.

Additionally, many of our neighbors are forced to pay for private security companies to monitor their homes because they are so distant from the West Los Angeles Police Station.

--Steve Twining, President
BABCNC



Users Pay

The current proposal is to raise trash fees for all residents for whom the City provides trash removal services: namely, properties with one to four dwelling units. Larger residential properties and commercial properties must contract for their own trash pickup. The fee increase is not limited to single-family homes; rates for duplexes, triplexes and four-unit buildings also will go up.

--Jeffrey Jacobberger, Secretary
Mid City WEST NC



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CITYWATCH

Welcomes your comments, ideas, opinions at:

Editor@CityWatchLA.com

Get Smart: DWP Rate Hikes Justified

I have no problem with HHPNC's position relative to the trash collection fee hike (CityWatch-April 27). But I do hope that you and the others considering the DWP rate hike proposal, take time to get informed on the pertinent information.

Several NC representatives took time to attend the presentations by the Barrington-Wellesley Group and DWP Management on the proposed rate actions.



The DWP rate hikes are both justified and reasonable. If you have not had time to review the BWG audit report or summary, I do recommend that you do so.

On the subject of the DWP transfers, I believe you need to review the history and justification. Historically DWP transfers 5% of Water System and 7% of Power System revenues to the City. This transfer is justified as an "in lieu" of franchise fees that would be charged if the DWP was a private utility. And, the amount of transfers are not out of line with fees other cities are charging to private water and power utilities.

What should be noted is that Mayor Hahn did hit up the DWP for an additional \$600 million transfer last fiscal year to help in the City's budget short fall. And, that should not be tolerated as we go forward, because that truly was a hidden tax.

So, please do note that the DWP historical transfer is justified and that the current proposal does not include any "extra" transfers such as was the case last year.

Please consider the proposed water and power rate hikes within the context of the needs to keep the utility on track as one of the better managed utilities in the country. Yes there are examples of waste and ways to better manage the DWP, but when you look at the bottom line, LADWP is supplying water and power at 25 to 30% lower rates than utilities in our neighboring cities in southern California.

--Jerry Schneider
ASNC Board Member (Environment)

CITYWATCH SuperPlanner

WEEK OF MAY 15, 2006



City Council

May 16, 17, 19 (10 a.m.)
City Hall (Council Chamber)

LANI 4th Annual Community Forum

May 18 (8 a.m. – 2 p.m.)
USC Davidson Conf Center
Info: www.lani.org

Urban Planning Forum

Friday, May 19 (7:45-9 a.m.)
The Regency Club (17th Floor)
10900 Wilshire Blvd
♦ LA Planning Director Gail Goldberg

LADWP Rate Increase Hearings

May 20 (Noon-2 p.m.)
Braude Service Center
6262 Van Nuys Blvd

May 20 (3-5 p.m.)
Mark Ridley-Thomas Service Center
8475 S Vermont

♦ Independent audit and LADWP rate increases

Bel Air Hillside Planning Meeting

May 20 (9 a.m. – noon)
Les River Community Center
10409 Scenario Lane

♦ Discussion of pressing issue facing hillside communities

Condo Conversion Hearings

May 22 (6 p.m.)
Walgrove Elementary School
1630 Walgrove Ave (Mar Vista)

May 31 (6 p.m.)
LA Valley College-Monarch Hall
5800 Fulton Ave (Valley Glen)

♦ Hosted by PLUM & HCED Committees to hear testimony on growing trend to convert rent-controlled apartment units to condominiums.

Make Contact!

To Reach CityWatch

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Featured: Deputy Mayor Larry Frank **Citywide Alliance**

Saturday, May 20 (9:30 a.m.)
Los Angeles City College
(Vermont one block South of Melrose)

Guests

Deputy Mayor Larry Frank
BONC Commissioner Diane Middleton

Special

Commemoration & Thank You for
Greg Nelson



FUTURES

NC Review Commission

Deadline for NC Nominations June 19, '06

Immigration Pros & Cons Forum

May 24 (7 p.m.)
National Council of Jewish Women
543 Fairfax Ave

♦ Free forum, moderated by City Councilman Bill Rosendahl on the pros and cons of government decisions and future impacts on society.

Congress of Neighborhoods

June 17 (8:30 a.m.-Registration)
LA Convention Center

♦ Info: www.lacityneighborhoods.com

**Send announcements related to
Neighborhood Councils and grass roots
LA to: Editor@CityWatchLA.com**



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