WEST LOS ANGELES SAWTELLE NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, May 22, 2019, 7:00 PM
Felicia Mahood Multipurpose Senior Center
11338 Santa Monica Boulevard – Community Room – Los Angeles, CA 90025

Attending: Migdal, Ross, Keeton, Wright, Handal, Nakamura, Shigematsu, Kageyama, Kwok, Torro. All others absent. Pindell arrived at 7:05 p.m. Arman Ghorbani arrived at 7:07 p.m. Philadelphia arrived at 7:37 p.m.

Absent: Rudnick.

TIME BEGINS: 7:03 p.m. TIME ENDS: 8:17 p.m.

I. Call to Order

Chair Keeton officially called the meeting to order with quorum at 7:03 p.m.

II. Community Partner Reports

Zachary Gaidzik from Supervisor Kuehl’s office updated those present on Voting Solutions For All People. The law was passed to let counties look at their voting systems and ways to improve them. For LA County, they will be changing the locations where they can vote. Instead of having one polling location by a stakeholder’s house, they will be able to go to one of 1,000 voting centers across the entire county, and stakeholders will have 11 days to vote. They are trying to identify the best locations for voting centers to be, and are looking to the individual neighborhood councils and communities for information and knowledge of possible locations. They will also have a new ballot marking device with a touchscreen incorporating 14 different languages. The website for the initiative is vsab.lavote.net.

Jessica Salans, representing Councilmember Bonin’s office, informed stakeholders that the Bureau of Street Services will be paying for the improvement of the stoner park sidewalk.

Senior Lead Officer James Lavenson introduced himself, and wanted to let those present know that next Wednesday, the LAPD is having an open house for their 100th anniversary. There will be dignitaries, food, rides for the kids, and they will have a tour of their local station. They will also be having a simulator to allow the public to participate as a police officer in a potential shooting situation. They will communicate with a partner and they will then be presented with a shooting or non-shooting situation. He also added that they have a Citizens on Patrol program in West LA, where the LAPD trains citizens to spot suspicious situations. He also thanked the board for their homelessness forum last night. Finally, he added that the LAPD open house will offer the opportunity to meet patrol officers and commanding officers; it will be on Wednesday, May 29th from 3 to 7, and that Butler will be blocked off from Iowa to Santa Monica.

III. General Public Comments

Stakeholder Bertrand thanked the board for the homelessness forum, and introduced himself as the manager for the LA Family Source Center. They are in partnership with the city of LA and the housing and community development department, provide youth services, transportation and healthcare signup services.

IV. Approvals
Jay Ross requested to pull all approval items to go through them one by one.

a. Outstanding draft meeting minutes

Motion to approve outstanding draft meeting minutes from 4/24/19 WLASNC Board Meeting. 12 Yes (Migdal, Ross, Keeton, Wright, Handal, Nakamura, Shigematsu, Kageyama, Kwok, Torro, Pindell, Ghorbani). 0 No. 0 Abstain. Motion passes.

b. Outstanding MERs reports

Steven Kwok requested clarification on the April 2019 MER, items 5 and 6 regarding Phantom Lithography. Handal explained that the credit card transaction for $100.00 was for flyers for the Tenants’ Rights fair. The other was for $978.57 for the event, and the subcategory of elections is correct as expended.

Motion to approve outstanding MERs reports. 11 Yes (Migdal, Ross, Keeton, Wright, Handal, Nakamura, Kageyama, Kwok, Torro, Pindell, Ghorbani). 0 No. 0 Abstain. Shigematsu is ineligible to vote for financial items due to lapsed ethics training. Motion passes.

c. June Agenda

Chair Keeton explained that the proper June agenda is not attached. She explained that the next meeting, the board as currently constituted will no longer be sitting, with no one to chair and no one to set agenda, so they are doing it at this meeting. She then read the agenda put forward out loud: Call to order, community partner reports, general public comment, nomination and election of executive committee, formation of standing committees, approval of continuing ad hoc committees and reformation, then approval of outstanding meeting minutes and MERs reports, then presentation and possible motion re: speed limits, then election report, then PLUM report. They cannot consider anything at the May PLUM meeting, and anything regarding the May PLUM meeting will go to the July PLUM agenda. Then public comment on items not on agenda, then board announcements, then adjournment. She added that the standing committees are listed in the bylaws for new members.

Motion to approve proposed agenda for the June WLASNC Board Meeting. 12 Yes (Migdal, Ross, Keeton, Wright, Handal, Nakamura, Shigematsu, Kageyama, Kwok, Torro, Pindell, Ghorbani). 0 No. 0 Abstain. Motion passes.

d. Up to $4,000 for a grant to Japanese Institute of Sawtelle

Jay Handal explained that the Japanese Institute has submitted an NPG to buy textbooks for the people at the facility, and it’s pretty straightforward.

Judy Okita introduced herself as a representative of the Institute, co-president of it with stakeholder MiwaTakahashi, co-president of the language school. She said she has been successful in getting many people inside and outside of the community to attend the school, including native and non-native speakers. They
currently do not even have enough classroom space, and need more books and dictionaries so they can have these students continue their education.

Handal added for the record that he worked with Eric Nakamura on the NPG, everything is there and ready to be submitted, and they have about 24 hours left to get it in before this fiscal year.

Danilo Torro asked how many students they have at the Japanese School, and Okita said they had 150 students, with a waiting list. Torro asked if they have class on the weekends as well, and Okita explained that they actually do not have day school since the teachers have other jobs. Torro asked why they need to buy new textbooks, and if their current ones were outdated. A stakeholder explained that the new textbooks are from a Japanese government program, and that the dictionaries are $50-$60. Torro asked if the stakeholders had asked the Japanese consulate for help buying books, and they explained that the Japanese government is very strict and refuses to support a non-profit program in the United States.

Ron Migdal said, for the record, that the number works out to just under $27 a student, so they know that won’t buy a lot of books.

Steve Kwok thanked representatives for coming; he said that he knows they have had a lot of involvement from the Japanese community from this neighborhood council, and wanted to make clear that his questions or comments are not a reflection on the actual grant, merely a question of the timing and amount of info given to the board. He had not received information on this, and is not familiar with the details of the grant. He added that $4,000 was 10 percent of their initial budget, and this council will not lose any funds if they do not approve the grant today since $10,000 will roll over. He also would have liked to have been prepped for this grant with a formal presentation. Chair Keeton responded that last month the board approved $5,000 each for Nora Sterry and Brockton schools, and they did not have info ahead of time.

Handal moved to approve up to $4,000 for a grant to Japanese Institute of Sawtelle, and Galen Pindell seconded.

Motion to approve up to $4,000 for a grant to Japanese Institute of Sawtelle. 11 Yes (Migdal, Keeton, Wright, Handal, Nakamura, Shigematsu, Kageyama, Torro, Pindell, Ghorbani, Philadelphia). 2 No (Ross, Kwok). 0 Abstain. Motion passes.

e. Appoint Phillip Ganchev to the NC Sustainability Alliance.

Jay Handal moved to appoint Phillip Ganchev to the NC Sustainability Alliance, and Arman Ghorbani seconded.

Motion to appoint Phillip Ganchev to the NC Sustainability Alliance. 13 Yes (Migdal, Ross, Keeton, Wright, Handal, Nakamura, Shigematsu, Kageyama, Kwok, Torro, Pindell, Ghorbani, Philadelphia). 0 No. 0 Abstain. Motion passes.

f. Motion to support budget advocates:

Jay Handal said that he will recuse himself from this item’s vote. He explained that budget advocates are appointed city-wide and meet with every general manager, department heads, and union leaders, and their goal
is to produce a white paper advising the city on issues of services and funding. In 7 out of 10 years as chair, and this is his last year, over 37% of the items they presented have been adopted, and 36% are in council and in budget this year. The balance are being looked at for future budgeting and fiscal years. Budget advocates are funded by NC donations, and 45-46% give money. Now with the NPG, they have $2,071.60 to give to them, and he has always believed it is good to participate in the city budget process.

Jay Ross asked who the check was made out to, and Handal explained that it would be made out to the city of LA, and goes to DONE. Ross added that it would be helpful to get the budget advocates’ finances and financial statement.

| Motion to support budget advocates. 12 Yes (Migdal, Ross, Keeton, Wright, Nakamura, Shigematsu, Kageyama, Kwok, Torro, Pindell, Ghorbani, Philadelphia). 0 No. 0 Abstain. 1 Recuse (Handal). Motion passes. |

V. Outreach Report

There was no Outreach Report.

VI. Election Report

Jay Handal said that there was a forum about the election that was extremely poorly attended. 20,000 post cards went out, and they ended up with 7-8 people total. It was moderated by a former board member, Helga Akimi. His understanding is there was some decent questions and some good back and forth. He encouraged everyone to give out their info and make sure they show up with to the election itself. The only organization representative candidate running has pulled out, so that will be an appointed seat.

Steven Kwok added that he had been looking into the first election mailer, which had some anomalies. He is working with David to get info and make sure it does not happen again. He will bring the documentation together for a future meeting.

VIII. Pearl Street Parking Committee Report

(Item VII. was pushed to later in the agenda due to its length.)

IX. Yamaguchi Center Committee Report

Chair Keeton explained that they did a formal request for documents from the city 25 days ago, and have received no response whatsoever. They will do another request, though she was told there was a response letter that went out at some point that nobody’s seen. Residents have said that the issue is still ongoing.

XIII. WRAC Motion re: dockless scooters

(Item was moved up.)

Jay Handal moved to support the WRAC motion, and Steven Kwok seconded.
Arman Ghorbani asked if the motion was asking the city to deny business licenses, and Chair Keeton explained that the letter will come from WRAC and say it has been accepted by all these different neighborhood councils. Ron Migdal said that he had traded emails with Handal about this, and would like to include in the motion some sort of fine or disciplinary action for scooters left on the sidewalk. Even if they deny business licenses, it doesn’t mean people can’t come in on scooter from Santa Monica.

Ghorbani added that the motion itself does not mention scooter companies, which seems kind of blanket. He was hesitant to say they should deny business licenses to any companies, and assumed the city already has ways to enforce this. Chair Keeton added that she did not think the city could deny a business license for a failure to comply with law enforcement.

Handal said that the bottom line is that the users of the scooters, if it is reported and documented that people are leaving things in the middle of the sidewalk, they should be able to submit that somewhere and have their credit card docked as a fine. They will not be able to rely on the LAPD for enforcement on this. He does not think the motion is a good motion and it is not a good item for them to support at this point. It needs to be better thought out with legal ways to be punitive against the user, saying for example that when you get a ticket in a rental car, YOU get a copy of the ticket.

Ron Migdal asked if someone takes a photograph of a scooter on the sidewalk, ho does it get associated with a scooter? Eric Nakamura explained that a rider usually has to take a picture to show where they park. Ghorbani clarified that anyone can come by after a user takes the photo and move the scooter. After they take the photo, they give up custody of that scooter. He thought it should not automatically debit the card of a person, and they could instead offer temporary bans.

Jay Ross said that this motion does not deal with where scooters are parked because when a scooter company causes an injury, this has nothing to do with where they leave them. It’s about making sure the companies divulge info on people who have injured others.

Steven Kwok said that the language is very broad, and it actually doesn’t specify a lot of things. He cannot support it with this language. Ghorbani said that after hearing the intent of the motion, he thinks it is an invasion of the user’s privacy. Chair Keeton said that she does not think it is, but that there are things such as subpoenas.

Handal added that the city does not issue business licenses, they issue BTRC’s. The only permits issued are LAPD conditional permits for certain special businesses that do not come under the Police Commission. He added that in his opinion, it is a moot point anyway; he believes it is out of line, and that they do not know what they are talking about.

| Motion to support WRAC motion re: dockless scooters. 1 Yes (Ross). 12 No (Migdal, Keeton, Wright, Handal, Nakamura, Shigematsu, Kageyama, Kwok, Torro, Pindell, Ghorbani, Philadelphia). 0 Abstain. Motion fails. |

XII. PLUM Report

There was no PLUM report.

X. Homelessness Committee Report
Naomi Kageyama reported that they had a great community forum yesterday, with a packed room upstairs in the municipal building. They had good speakers from the city’s office, LAHSA, and others, as well as supporters from other neighborhood councils and Councilman Bonin’s office. She hopes that it sets the stage for future community forums, and that Jay Handal as a moderator did an amazing job.

VII. West LA Community Plan Committee Report

Stakeholder Corey commented that the community plan is from the committee, and that he wanted to speak in favor of the changes that were made; it is a lot of stuff to go through one by one, but in general it goes over cultural, development, landscaping, residential, commercial, and zoning aspects, with an emphasis on open space, architecture, and landscaping.

Jay Ross added that the committee met two or three times with 8-9 community members through different meetings. They tried to address residential, commercial, industrial, open space, and resiliency issues, along with some of the items are from their old community plan that were good ideas. The document they drafted establishes concept goals and a good general framework, and they will get into specifics later. A lot came from their community plan, some from other cities, including design guidelines, etc. Through the LUPC meetings and planning chairs over 5-6 years, they have been collecting ideas.

Chair Keeton asked, regarding the overhead power lines mentioned in item 16, what the proposal was, and Ross clarified that these were concept goals, all to be fleshed out. They envisioned a 3-step process, with General Conceptual Goals first, then Specific Goals, then actually zoning.

Desa Philadelphia asked if they are voting on submitting the document as is, and Ross explained that it would be a resolution, if it passes. Jay Handal added that the agenda states it is strictly a report, so they cannot vote on it. Philadelphia explained that she is on the committee and support a lot of what’s in it, but right now it seems to be more of a data dump than an edited, realized document. She thought they need to do further work on it as this neighborhood’s comment on the community plan.

Galen Pindell agreed, and said there is a lot that they have discussed on PLUM as well, and some stuff needs to be cleaned up. For example, in the residential section, it refers to a couple of things as things they want to support, then it moves to things they do not support without being clear.

Chair Keeton suggested they have an entire meeting with the next board and the committee to talk about what’s important to them. A document this large could invoke hours of discussion, and she thinks it would be unrealistic to have a document like this come before the board, and needs to read better.

Eric Nakamura said that the document was an awesome starting point, that there was a lot of work to be done, but he suggests that they keep going. Ross said that people need to send him specific comments and discussion, as he has not heard anything back from anybody, and will not keep going just by himself. He needs people to come in and edit this and write specific things. Philadelphia added that he shouldn’t do it all by himself; to Chair Keeton’s point, this should be a foundational document, and she would support going through section by section and assigning work to the entire board.

Jay Handal asked to remand this issue to the new board, since they are going to be either replacing Jay Ross or giving him more people since committees will be disbanded. He agreed with Ross and Philadelphia that he
should not be doing it alone, and that it is one of the most important things that the board will work on next year. It will shape, reshape, or destroy their community depending on how it goes.

Naomi Kageyama agreed that this is incredibly important, and knows there have been years in the past that have gone into many of the concepts and many stakeholders and community leaders that have added to it already. She thought it might be time to start thinking about putting aside part of the budget for someone to be an independent consultant.

Ron Migdal thanked Ross, and said he thinks most of the board agrees with the concepts he has in there, but does not think it is a specific enough document for them to vote on. Chair Keeton seconded Kageyama’s idea of putting aside part of their budget for getting a consultant or having town hall meetings frequently, reminding people continuously and paying for Facebook ads. Her recommendation for whoever writes the July agenda is that this should be an agenda item.

XI. Presentation, Discussion and possible motion re: 2218 Sawtelle Boulevard Sushi Stop CUB Alcohol Renewal

Jay Ross explained that the item was for a CUB renewal for Sushi Stop, south of Olympic at Sawtelle in the Marshall’s mall. This is after 5 years, 2218 Sawtelle, the hours are midnight on weekdays, then until 2 AM on Friday and Saturday. Kevin Franklin is the representative for the owner.

Kevin Franklin introduced himself and explained that Sushi Stop has been in business for about 7-8 years. They have operated without any violations, the sushi is reasonably priced with good food, and is one of about 6 locations throughout LA. He is a retired ABC investigator, so he does a lot of beer and wine applications. There are no changes to the CUB. They’ve applied for the distilled spirits upgrade, the reason being it’s being issued for life under new CUB rules. In September every year, the ABC has a lottery/priority every year where people can get an upgrade. The owners of Sushi Stop will probably put in for the September upgrade. They currently have no full liquor licenses on property.

Jay Handal moved to approve the Sushi Stop CUB alcohol renewal, and Ron Migdal seconded.

Ross said that his concern is that he does not like to support restaurants having liquor licenses past midnight. He does not like the lifetime vote, and prefers having to renew every 5 years, and would recommend putting in the motion that the state would change that. Chair Keeton said that that would have to go to a WRAC motion. Desa Philadelphia and Chair Keeton added that they do like having liquor licenses that go until 2 AM.

Steven Kwok asked, if the business changes hands substantively and is no longer a Sushi Stop, what happens to the licenses? Franklin began by explaining that the city is swamped with work and understaffed, which is why he thinks they have the for-life provisions now. This also affects consultants like him. They also upgraded the conditions compliance unit, so they can actually monitor now whether applicants are complying with conditions of their permits, and they now are actually sending out building and safety inspectors. He added that if the owner changes, they will have to ask the city if they need a new CUB.

Motion to support 2218 Sawtelle Boulevard Sushi Stop CUB Alcohol Renewal. 12 Yes (Migdal, Keeton, Wright, Handal, Nakamura, Shigematsu, Kageyama, Kwok, Torro, Pindell, Ghorbani, Philadelphia). 1 No (Ross). 0 Abstain. Motion passes.
XIV. Motion to thank current board for their service

Jay Handal said that they have been through a lot of stuff as a board, and in the end they have almost always been able to get a lot of good things done. Whether the people realize it or not, the board is an all-volunteer group that spends hundreds of hours a year digging into things in our community. He thinks that they have all done a good job, and deserve to applaud themselves. He especially wants to thank those not running again, and everyone who’s staying. He thanked everyone on the board, everyone who has worked for them, and Chair Keeton for being Chair.

Handal moved to thank the current board for their service. Steven Kwok seconded.

Danillo Torro thanked everybody on the board for their time, because he knows that time is very valuable. He thanked Naomi Kageyama, thanked Chair Keeton for her time and dedication, and thanked Jay Ross for the time he has put into the community. Torro said he appreciates the time put into the agenda, and that is why he is not running again; other board members are showing him up with how much time and effort they devote to the work of the board. He said he would be eagerly watching for Stoner Park improvements and hopefully working on bringing NPGs to the council.

Ron Migdal thanked Chair Keeton for doing a stellar job, and especially wanted to thank Naomi Kageyama: secretory is really a thankless job and people have no idea how much work goes into it.

Motion to thank the current board for their service. 13 Yes (Migdal, Ross, Keeton, Wright, Handal, Nakamura, Shigematsu, Kageyama, Kwok, Torro, Pindell, Ghorbani, Philadelphia). 0 No. 0 Abstain. Motion passes.

XV. Public Comments for Items Not on the Agenda:

No public comment.

XVI. Board Comment and Announcements

Desi Philadelphia wanted to put into the record a complaint she heard from a neighbor who lives on Olympic and Colby; on a townhouse property that has public storage on the Federal side, because it’s a business that is abandoned in the evening, a homeless camp is starting to develop there. People are defecating on the street and it is becoming a real problem. She wanted to put it on the record since the complainant could not come tonight, and Philadelphia suggested to him that he come to the next meeting.

Arman Ghorbani said that earlier this month they had the renters’ rights fair, and he just wanted to say thank you to board members who came to help set up and break down. He also wanted to thank Jessica Salans and the Councilmember’s office, and thanked Zachary Gaidzik and the Supervisor’s office. They also had the LA Tenants Union and California Lawyers for the Arts. He hoped the future board will put on the fair for a third year running.

XVII. Adjournment

Ron Migdal motioned to adjourn, Jay Handal seconded. The board voted to adjourn at 8:17 p.m.