

Valley Alliance of Neighborhood Councils

VANC

34 San Fernando Valley Neighborhood Councils
Established March 03, 2003 by Jill Banks Barad-Hopkins

Neighborhood Council Elections 2023 What went *RIGHT* - What went *WRONG*

Neighborhood Council Elections Consensus

While intentions are good, there seems to be a lack of organization and coordination between the City Clerk, DONE, NCs and Non-Profits.

There apparently is no master plan.

Wanting to seat all NCs in July without a plan for timely on-board training or mandatory training BEFORE seating, which results in lack of quorum or the undue pressure to forward budgets for a new fiscal year is tomfoolery and unbecoming a major city.

People are assigned to tasks in their domain and are unaware of other deadlines facing NCs, that NC Boards work off hours, need responses quickly and need time to discuss and vote on their plan and budget.

Election Administrators play a vital role to “hand hold” Board members through the process. Stating “I’ll get back to you a month before the election” or never returning an email or phone call is unacceptable. Who has oversight? Who knows if they did a great job or not?

DONE’s contract with Non-Profits for outreach does not have any coordination with NCs. Where is their plan, was it approved and executed? How was their budget spent, how does it benefit NCs, what is the result? NCs are working with a portion of their yearly budget for elections and each expense has to be board approved. How was the half million dollar budget spent to help us? And where is the City Clerks unused funds going since there were so many NCs that did not have an election?

Below are comments, observations, and suggestions from VANC Neighborhood Councils during the 31JUL2023 special election follow-up meeting. We submit them so that “WE”, City Clerk, DONE and NCs, have more efficient, well organized and coordinated future elections.

Notes & comments taken and transcribed by VANC chair, Linda Gravani

1. Election Handbook:

- Appreciate City Clerk holding a working group of their staff and Neighborhood Council members
 - Increasing candidate filing period back to 45 days vs 30
 - Appreciate the deadlines being extended to 1159p vs 5p as in the past

- Great information, well organized
- NC board members didn't know it existed or where to find it
- Election Poll worker unaware of the Handbook but advised the training was great
- Affirmation was assumed to be read and signed if you submitted candidate paperwork
- Rules of board affirmation were not followed by city clerk

2. Regional Election order: dates and timeline

- Happy the SVF didn't have the first elections again
- Information learned at earlier elections should be disseminated to later voting regions.
- Poor planning to have elections in June which is the end of the fiscal year
 - Region 4's election 1 week before the end of the fiscal year
 - 2023-2024 budget could not be submitted before 1JUL2023
 - 2023-2024 budget created by previous board
 - DONE seating policy requires **all board members** to be seated July 1.
 1. Region 11 held their election on Sunday March 26, board and has to wait until July 1
 2. Board affirmation NCs also have to wait to seat their new board
 3. Some NCs do not meet in July
 - DONE training not available July 1 for newly seated board members although DONE did provide training credentials when NC received unofficial list.
 - Why wasn't fund training scheduled to accommodate new board members

3. Polling Location, date/hours/confirmation?

- Avoid special holidays like Father's day, extremely problematic for West Hills NC
- Thursday voting to accommodate the large orthodox community works for Valley Village but not for Van Nuys
- NC required locations were identified but NOT reserved, ultimately lost the location and had to scramble at the last minute to find a new location
- Signage too small, not enough, need banners – NCs should be responsible for signage knowing the facility – West Hills placed 8x3 vinyl banner at their location 4 weeks before the election,
- Porter Ranch location had 3 major events happening at the same location, very confusing, one small sign in the parking lot and another advising candidates cannot go beyond this point.
- Van Nuys NC wanted Jon's Super Market, second choice Braudy Center which was already reserved so we were put in an obscure place in the Civic Plaza. Direction not clear on how to get there, was not visible from the street, tiny signage, competed with a vendor whose pop-up was more visible than ours. There were about 11-12 people who voted, what a ridiculous waste of time.
- The Best election turnout was in 2016 at Von's parking lot in Sunland-Tujunga
- Sherman Oaks/Senior Center, there were no signs, nothing even after walking through the entrance. ADA access was not well marked, it was available but you had to already know how to use the access.
- Sunland-Tujunga never received confirmation for their location

4. Candidate filing: online registration portal, documentation, filing period, candidate statement/photo, candidate challenges:

- City Clerk's determination of qualifications must be improved and shared with NC BEFORE the challenge deadline, especially with Community interest and non-profit. The city clerk is not familiar enough with the community to make these judgements without assistance from NCs
 - NCs need to know specifically which Non-profit

- What is their specific community interest
- Qualification information must be retained, NOT DESTROYED
- What to do when a candidate withdraws after the withdrawal period, administrator suggested to follow bylaws regarding resignation
- Way too complicated to register, Board member helped register a few because they couldn't get in or weren't accepted
- The use of one initial as their name, for example, should not be allowed unless it is their legal name

5. Election Administrator (EA)– City Clerk

- Some were great and others not
 - What was their job description/duties
 - Was being an EA their total responsibility or part of other assigned duties
 - How often were they to follow-up with NCs
 - NCs not knowing about the Election Handbook
- To date, neither my NC (Lake Balboa) nor the candidates have been advised there will not be an election on Jun 18, 2023.
- Northridge West had no connection with their administrator. Affirmed candidates could not be advised they were on the board, nor were they invited to the ice cream social to introduce them because we didn't have their contact information.
- Lack of communication, waiting for information which never came
- Early communications was good but as time went on, minimal or non existent
- City funding was great, we know agent well, got back to us quickly. Help from other city departments, almost none. Weeks to get responses back, Biggest complaint as election chair is the lack of support from the city.
- Saw EA once via zoom and no additional contact until the last minute when we need to find a location.
- As election chair, I never heard from our EA, any communication was originated by me

6. DONE and NC Outreach – bus benches, social media, tools (Canva), mailings, newspapers, etc.

- Canva is a good tool for NCs
- DONE sent post Cards to some regions, how were the regions selected
 - Chatsworth area received the DONE postcards 1 week before their SELECTION announcing elections weeks after their selection, which confused the stakeholders. When advised, DONE thought the error was funny
 - Van Nuys received 1,000 outreach letters for Sherman Oaks NC election
- Non-Profit(s) were contracted for NC election outreach. Where are the results?
- Non-Profit contracts questionable (per city attorney)
- No coordination between DONE and NCs – Lack of communication
- Northridge West received zero DONE letters, notifications, flyers..zilch. No canvassing.
- Voter registration forms are still at the Chatsworth Library
- Sherman Oaks sent out 5,000 postcards via “every door direct”. Large signs were provided but never posted at election site
- West Hills spent \$6000 for mailout of the candidate photo, candidate statement, and election info, probably last time due to cost
- DONE had their own outreach program which was never communicated to NCs, they worked separately vs with NCs and who knows which NCs got the outreach
- We got almost no support from DONE
- DONE's mail outs for support DONE not NC elections
- Delivery of flyers and not knowing if there was anyone available to receive them, no coordination

7. Vote-by-mail

- 3 people in same household requested ballots, received confirmation however, 2 received 1 was never received. Many of my neighbors had the same issue
- The process to register was too complicated, the Board member assisted several neighbors to complete mail request, they majority did not receive a ballot
- Signing up for an Angeleno accounts was a huge barrier
- NCs didn't know Angeleno account would be required
- What is this Angeleno account, is the city collecting information on me
- Vote-by-mail was a nightmare
- Request for ballot and received notification that this NC was NOT having an election
- Would like to know of the votes cast, how many were vote-by-mail
- Request ballot and received within 2 days, my experience was good

8. Election Day

- Election team ½ hour late
- Should have American Flags at polling locations, it is an election
- Only 2 metered parking spaces reserved for voters at Braudy Center

9. Election Results: CANVASS OF VOTES, ELECTION CHALLENGES

- Election held on 22JUN2023 and not certified until 6JUL2023
- Vetting problems for non-profit, not a brick and mortar organization, suspicious of the process of vetting

10. Other considerations and possible recommendations:

- Recommend DONE election outreach funds be divided by the NCs having election/selection to do their own outreach in their own community
- At least \$10,000 additional funds should be provided to NCs for election outreach since postage keeps rising
- DONE has resources available for outreach such as ENS and Nextdoor.com, however they had no concept of timing. The afternoon of candidate CLOSING messages were sent to be a candidate
- Non-profit(s) were contracted for NC election outreach. NCs should be involved to know what outreach they will provide and when. There should be an organized joint effort with NCs. Therefore, NCs need
 - Contact person at the Non-Profit
 - Copy of the contracts,
 - Copy of their plan for outreach with dates,
 - Copy of their materials and methods
 - Map of the regions they were outreaching to
 - To avoid conflict of interest, have they requested/received NPGs from NCs
 - Report on their success rate,
 - Accounting of money spent
- Non-profits contracted to get candidates which is/would be a conflict in the future should they request NPGs
- Juniors and Seniors at local High Schools could assist with day of election duties which could bring out voters for the youth seats and possibly their parents
- Booking venues for voting should be top priority for city clerk
- Some NCs received candidate information others did not, that's a training problem or management problem
- Election Administrators should work ONE Region vs being assigned individual NCs
- NCs would like an accounting of how DONE spent the funds allocated for NC elections

- NCs would like an accounting of CITY CLERK funds NOT used for elections since many NCs were board affirmation.
- City Council should ask DONE for a financial accounting of the money spent, not only on their mailers, but also their payment for employees. How was that half million dollars spent