

**2012 NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL ELECTIONS
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

- **Are Neighborhood Councils having elections in 2012? * updated**
Yes, the City Council took action on the ordinance on May 9, 2012 and authorized the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (Department) to conduct the elections in the 2012-2013 fiscal year. We cannot, however, conduct elections without adequate funding so we will be working with the Budget and Finance Committee in the next few weeks to finalize their recommendation to the City Council on our \$659,000 funding request for the elections.
- **Who will administer the Neighborhood Council elections in 2012?**
The draft ordinance is written to temporarily give the Department the authority to conduct elections in the 2012-2013 fiscal year. The Office of the City Clerk retains the ability to conduct elections in 2014.
- **Who is paying for the elections?**
We have requested funding in the amount of \$659,000 in our proposed fiscal year 2012-2013 budget. This amount would cover hiring the additional staff needed to conduct elections, translation, printing, location fees and any necessary equipment and supplies. Neighborhood Councils will be responsible for the outreach to their local community about the elections. This funding request must still be approved by City Council.
- **What if my Neighborhood Council voted to opt out of the 2012 elections on the City Clerk survey?**
The City Clerk survey was only to determine those Neighborhood Councils that would be willing to wait until 2014 for the elections if there were no elections in 2012. If the Department administers elections in 2012, we will not be offering the ability for Neighborhood Councils to opt out of having either an election (or selection) in 2012 pursuant to the recommendations of the Mayor's Office and the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners. The Education and Neighborhoods Committee also recommended no opt out provision as well.
- **If there is no opting out of 2012 elections, why are some Neighborhood Councils not having elections?**
When the City Clerk administered the elections, Board terms were reset to two, four, or four year staggered terms. Neighborhood Councils selected what terms they wanted. The City Clerk set the default term to four year staggered terms in situations where the Neighborhood Council Board did not take action. In order to start a four year stagger, the Board decided which seats were would have two year terms and which would have four year terms. Those seats that received two year terms in 2010, will have four year terms in 2012 in order to complete the four year staggered term cycle.

The Department would be conducting elections only for those Neighborhood Councils with two year and four year staggered terms in 2012. The handful of Neighborhood Councils that are not having elections in 2012 have four year straight terms and are not due to have elections until 2014.

- **When is the Department holding elections? *updated**

We will be conducting elections starting August 4, 2012 through the end of October, 2012, and the week of November 12, 2012 to November 18, 2012, so as not to run into the national election day on November 6, 2012 or to go into the holidays. While it is possible to hold elections in the beginning of 2013 as well, we do not want to do that as that would result in one year terms and bylaw changes because the next elections are scheduled to be held in the spring of 2014.

- **How will the Neighborhood Council elections be administered?**

We will be administering elections in twelve regions with an Independent Election Administrator assigned to each region. We are also bringing on paid and volunteer poll workers to assist on the day of the election as well. Each region has been assigned a week in which the Neighborhood Councils in that region will choose one day to hold their election by majority vote. On the day of the election, the Neighborhood Council can set the time in which they would like to hold their election. All Neighborhood Councils will be on this election timeline unless they have notified us that they are holding a selection process instead.

- **What's a selection process?**

A selection process is an open, fair and transparent way to select Board members in a non-secret vote, unlike an election, which requires a secret vote. All of the outreach requirements for candidates and voters will be the same as in an election, but the selection process will occur in a town hall setting. A neutral third party will oversee the town hall where candidates will speak first before the vote will be taken with either a show of hands or with a written ballot that must be signed by the voter. A selection process is usually completed within an hour or two.

- **Why would a Neighborhood Council want a selection process instead of an election?**

If a Neighborhood Council wanted one year terms for Board members or wanted more flexibility as to the day they want to hold a vote for the new Board members, then they will want to use a selection process. Elections are only held during the even numbered years so Board terms have to be two or four years. The Department's timeline for elections does not allow for as much flexibility for date selection since all of the Neighborhood Councils in a region must have their election on the same day. If a Neighborhood Council wanted a certain day not chosen by the region, then they will need to go to a selection process.

- **What do we have to do if we want to have a selection process instead of an election?**

Your Neighborhood Council will have to change its bylaws by May 12th in order to hold a selection process. Please contact Grayce Liu at grayce.liu@lacity.org or by calling (213) 978-1551 as soon as possible for more details.

- **What if my Neighborhood Council turned in bylaws amendments and hasn't received the Department approval yet?**

We are trying to incorporate any election updates and information from the City Clerk's 2010 Election Stipulation Worksheet as well as the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners Bylaws Table of Contents policy into all bylaws. Because of staffing issues, this is taking much longer than anticipated. We are working in order of the election regions so your Neighborhood Council will receive these updated bylaws with enough time before the elections to prepare.

- **What's different about how elections were conducted by the Department before the City Clerk and now?**
Building on the great foundational work that the Office of the City Clerk established in the 2008 and 2010 elections, we are trying to further streamline election procedures and processes to make elections easier on the Neighborhood Councils while providing some flexibility, too, given the tight timeline.
 - **Regional Election Meetings** – because we are holding the elections regionally, we will be working to get information to the Neighborhood Councils via regional meetings so Neighborhood Councils in the same region will have the opportunity to get to know one another and to conduct regional outreach to save money if they want to
 - **Timeline** - the timeline for elections has been shortened to sixty days – thirty days to get candidates and thirty days to get voters. This sixty day timeline is counted from the day of the elections.
 - **Outreach** - rather than send out two mailers as outreach, we encourage Neighborhood Councils to utilize their existing outreach events to publicize their elections. Neighborhood Councils will be asked to provide an outreach plan that shows how they will reach their stakeholders during the candidate recruiting and voter notification phases of the elections. In addition, because we will be handling all of the sensitive election documentation, such as ballots and applications, Neighborhood Council Board members will be able to work on their election and/or outreach committees until the day of the election.
 - **Election Procedures** - we will use approved election procedures from the City Clerk unless the Neighborhood Council tells us otherwise. Neighborhood Councils will only need to provide us a coversheet with the changes for the 2012 elections, such as election day, time and location.
 - **Election Time** - the standard election time will be a four hour window with the ability to extend to six hours by request.
 - **Board Affirmation and Shortened Election Times** - in order to save on resources, if a Neighborhood Council has uncontested seats after the candidate filing deadline, we will hold a Board Affirmation town hall event instead of an election. At the town hall, the uncontested candidates will be acknowledged and affirmed to the Board seats for which they filed. If three or less seats are contested, then we will hold a shortened election time of two hours for the Neighborhood Council instead of the four.
 - **Vote by Mail** - we are offering vote by mail with an initial set up fee of \$500 because of the extra staffing we will bring on to administer your vote by mail, which includes setting up all paperwork, fulfilling requests for ballots, verifying any documentation as necessary and doing the final count.
 - **Candidate Write-In** - because of the Board Affirmation process described above, we are not offering candidate write-in's in this election cycle.

- **Department Back Office** - we will be handling all the election administration and paperwork, such as bylaws, election procedures, ballots, candidate/voter verification, vote by mail, etc. in order to free your Board members and stakeholders up to recruit candidates and voters.
- **Defaults** - like the City Clerk, the Department will set defaults for necessary election information, such as the election day, time, location, etc. if the Neighborhood Council does not provide the information by the set deadlines.
- **What else is the Department doing to support Neighborhood Council elections? *updated**
We have brought on former Independent Election Administrators, Jerry Kvasnicka and Stephen Box, as Election Coordinators to help us with administering elections and conducting outreach throughout the City. Stephen has already taken the EmpowerLA Leadership Academy on the road to the various regions to recruit and teach candidates such skills as public speaking, effective outreach via mail, social media, etc., and how to get your voice heard at City Hall. We will be contacting the Neighborhood Councils in each region to set up meetings in May and June to start regional outreach collaborations, but please feel free to contact your neighboring councils now to set up regional outreach meetings.

We are working on an Elections Manual that will be coming out shortly with all the nitty gritty on elections. We are also updating our www.empowerla.org website so it can effectively provide information on elections and Neighborhood Councils. More importantly, along with the EmpowerLA Leadership Academy, we are also planning a citywide outreach campaign on elections to assist Neighborhood Councils in their local outreach. We'll be providing outreach templates and ideas to the Neighborhood Councils as well.

- **What should my Neighborhood Council do now? *updated**
 - **Start Talking Elections at your Neighborhood Council** - convene your elections and/or outreach committee and select representatives to send to the regional meetings where they will get a lot of great help via templates and effective outreach strategies from our Election Coordinators and other Neighborhood Councils. Remember, it's okay now for Board members who are candidates to be on these committees until the election day.
 - **Make a Commitment to Recruit Candidates** – a good way to get great voter turnout is to have contested elections, i.e. multiple candidates for each Board seat. Make a commitment to recruit at least two candidates for each Board seat that is up for elections, and your candidates will be motivated to help with outreach.
 - **Start Outreach Now** - if your Neighborhood Council has already planned a series of outreach events for the rest of the fiscal year, throw in a blurb about the upcoming elections into the materials so you can include that in your election outreach plan. Don't forget to tell them about the EmpowerLA Leadership Academy workshops (see below) so that we can help you with your election outreach. Start meeting with the other Neighborhood Councils in your election region to work collaboratively on outreach.

- **Encumber Election Outreach Funds** - if your Neighborhood Council has extra funds this fiscal year, you can encumber them by May 16th for the next fiscal year. Plan well because they must be used for election outreach, however, and cannot be reallocated if your Neighborhood Council doesn't use the funds next fiscal year.
- **Make Bylaw Changes** - if you want to have a selection, you need to change your bylaws by May 12th.
- **Election Stipulation Worksheet** – have your Board complete the Department's Election Stipulation Worksheet to finalize your Neighborhood Council's election procedures. The Department will be sending these out to each Neighborhood Council for Board action. Please make sure to return them to the Department by the deadline noted on the worksheet or the defaults will kick in.
- **Take an EmpowerLA Leadership Academy Workshop** - we've had a lot of great feedback from long time Board members about Stephen's workshops on campaigning and outreach, and we know you'll learn a lot of effective strategies. Advertise our workshops in to your stakeholders, too. There may be a future Board member ready to step forward with the right encouragement.

We really look forward to working with all of you on your elections! For questions on bylaws or more information in general, please contact Grayce Liu at grayce.liu@lacity.org or by calling (213) 978-1551. For questions on the regional election meetings, please contact Jerry Kvasnika at jerryelections@earthlink.net. For questions on the EmpowerLA Leadership Academy workshops and election outreach in general, please contact Stephen Box at stephen@thirdevecreative.net.