



CITY OF LOS ANGELES
GRANADA HILLS SOUTH NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
SPECIAL BOARD MEETING MINUTES, Thursday, April 28, 2022
Approved July 7, 2022

In conformity with the Governor's Executive Order N-29-20 (March 17, 2020) and due to concerns over COVID-19, this duly noticed meeting was held entirely online and telephonically.

GHSNC (and all other) Meeting Minutes are a summary; Minutes were not, are not and are never meant to be an exact, verbatim, word-for-word transcript or comprehensive record of what was said at a Meeting. Exceptions: Motions/Resolutions (as stated at the Meeting, which take precedence over versions written on the Agenda, if different); quotes (words that have quotation marks ("") at the beginning and ending of a word or words); and other wording from the Agenda such as the first paragraph(s) of some Items. Items are listed in and match the same order as on the Agenda.

I. Call to order, Flag Salute

President Mike Benedetto called the Meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

II. Roll Call (Secretary)

Roll Call was taken by the Secretary. Fourteen of the 17 Board Members were present online at the Roll Call: Carlos Amador, Mike Benedetto (President), Cheri Norum Derohanian, John Horn, Michael Jordan, George Karam, Sally Kolstad, Christine LaMonica (Secretary), Carolyn Sanderson, Chantal Serrano, Brad Smith, Chavon Smith, Colleen Toumayan (Vice-President) and Christina Wallis. Launa Bogartz and Abbey Ronquillo arrived later. Verej Isanians was absent (unexcused). The GHSNC quorum (the minimum number of Board Members needing to be present to take binding votes on Agendized Items) is nine (see the Bylaws link at www.empowerla.org/ghsnc), so the Board could take such votes. All 17 Board Seats were filled (by election or appointment). No Board Seat was vacant. Also attended: at least 12 Stakeholders and Guests.

III. Public Comment

Resident Richard Fisk announced an upcoming event. Stakeholder Brian Allen reported that the Aliso Canyon Community Advisory Group (CAG) met for the third time with staff of L.A. County District Three Supervisor Sheila Kuehl; the CAG was told that the County Department of Public Health will not be questioned by Kuehl staff, and that they have not agreed to a "patient-centric study" or "a chemical list," about which the CAG "took a very strong stand"

IV. Community Speakers

[*This is copied from the Agenda.*] NONE

V. Approval of the Minutes of the Regular Meeting for March 3, 2022,

Mr. Benedetto noted that this already had been approved.

VI. Appointment of Board, Committee Members & Swearing-in

[This is copied from the Agenda.] None

VII. Budget Issues

A. *[This is copied from the Agenda.]* None

VIII. Board Issues

A. Discussion and possible action and that Carlos Amador moves for a no confidence vote on the president.

MOTION (by Mr. Amador, seconded by Ms. Sanderson): The Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council moves for a no confidence vote on President Mike Benedetto.

DISCUSSION: Stakeholder Keren Waters noted that, apparently, no Grievance has been filed and that “due process” needs to be followed; she said “this is out of order” and “suggests that this be withdrawn.” Mr. Fisk suggested that any personality conflict should be resolved in one-on-one discussion and noted that no specific reasons have been given for the Motion. Resident Maria Fisk noted Mr. Benedetto’s long community service and that no evidence has been given with the Motion. Marilu Guevara, Neighborhood Empowerment Advocate, L.A. Dept. of Neighborhood Empowerment [DONE; 818-374-9890; Marilu.Guevara@LACity.org; www.EmpowerLA.org], reported that she “was consulted”; she “provided consultation” to Mr. Benedetto and consulted with the City Attorney’s Office. She noted that “the process for censure is detailed in your Bylaws” and that, per the City Attorney’s Office, this Motion is not about removal, it “express[es] dissatisfaction.” She confirmed that the Bylaws “do not specifically speak to a ‘no confidence’ vote.” Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council President Gabriel Khanlian listed some of Mr. Benedetto’s many community projects; he “believe[d] the ‘no confidence’ vote [was] unjustified at this time.” Mr. Allen said that Mr. Benedetto has been “very fair, very honest and very transparent” and that he (Mr. Benedetto) has not been “anything less than appropriate.” He believed that the reason(s) for the Motion should’ve been included in the Motion.

Mr. Amador “recognized Mr. Benedetto’s” community work. He noted that, last July, Mr. Benedetto was unanimously supported to be the President. He believed that, soon after that, Mr. Benedetto “undermined” a now-former Board Member. He said that “the Agendas are unnecessarily long,” that Mr. Benedetto had spoken “condescendingly” toward people and undermined now-former Treasurer Launa Bogartz. He also believed that Mr. Benedetto made a joke that was “racist and sexist.” Mr. Benedetto strongly disagreed with the claim that he is racist.

Chavon Smith said that Mr. Benedetto has been “dismissive” She said that she had asked Mr. Benedetto to “pass the gavel” to Ms. Toumayan for this discussion, but that he did not do that. She noted that Mr. Benedetto called this Special Board Meeting, not anyone else, and that she and Mr. Amador had expected that this subject would be discussed during a Regular Board Meeting.

Ms. Sanderson agreed that Mr. Benedetto is “an asset to the community” but she has “experienced extreme frustration” with Mr. Benedetto’s meeting facilitation and believed that Mr. Benedetto has made “off-hand . . . disturbing” comments. Ms. Serrano said that “Mike is a genuine asset to the community” but there’ve been “conflicts with people of color”; she urged that he further consider possible meanings of words that may be considered by others to be racist or dismissive, saying “this has been a repeated issue.”

Board Members Launa Bogartz (6:48) and Abbey Ronquillo (7:00) had arrived online, making 16 Board Members present online (the GHSNC quorum is nine).

Former GHSNC President Dave Beauvais said “there is no provision for a ‘no confidence’ vote.” He noted that a Presiding Officer should, like any other Board Member, only comment once during a discussion. Ms. Derohanian noted that “this is not the only Board that has long meetings.” Mr. Jordan reported that he had “not been formally welcomed” or “trained.” He’d “heard a lot of dismissiveness” in Board Meetings from Mr. Benedetto that’s been “very disturbing.” He was advised by the City to effect change by revising the Bylaws; he reviewed the Bylaws and, in February, made recommendations to Mr. Benedetto and Ms. Toumayan but “it was never mentioned again.”

MOTION to CALL FOR THE QUESTION (by Ms. Derohanian).

MOTION to CALL FOR THE QUESTION FAILED with five in favor (“Yes” or “Aye”) (Benedetto, Bogartz, Derohanian, Kolstad and Wallis); 11 opposed (“No” or “Nay”) (Amador, Horn, Jordan, Karam, LaMonica, Ronquillo, Sanderson, Serrano, Brad Smith, Chavon Smith and Toumayan); zero abstained.

Mr. Horn believed that Mr. Benedetto “need[s] to set a positive tone” and be more inclusive in his comments. Ms. Toumayan noted that Mr. Benedetto helped her when she was a new Board Member and that she “want[s] to be a better leader . . . for our community.” Mr. Karam believed that Mr. Benedetto has many times shown in meetings “an air of dismissiveness” and that “this is something that [Mr. Benedetto] can work on.” Ms. Smith explained that the Cultural Affairs Committee couldn’t have events after February 2020 because of the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic shutdown. Ms. Derohanian encouraged having a mentor program “pairing older people with newer people.” Ms. Kolstad urged having a Board Retreat “to make this Board better.” Mr. Smith appreciated “everyone’s honesty and candor.” Mr. Amador said “there have been conversations to address this issue” but things “have not improved.” He noted that [former Board Member] Emayatzy Oliver helped lead the effort to establish anti-bias training for all Neighborhood Councils

Former Board Member Jeffrey Bohrer said Mr. Benedetto is “a man of outstanding character” and it is “untrue” that he (Mr. Benedetto) is a racist. Former Board Member Maria Fisk believed this was “a public lynching” of Mr. Benedetto and urged the Board to work together. Mr. Allen urged considering “facts” and believed this was “railroading.” Oscar Jimenez, of the Granada Hills

North Neighborhood Council: observed “tones” with which some Board Members have expressed frustration, which can be taken as “constructive criticism”; he urged Mr. Benedetto to “take what they’re telling you” and learn from it. Ms. Oliver believed Mr. Benedetto to be “racist” and “selfish” and that he did not support a 2019 event that she, as the then-Chair of the Cultural Affairs Committee, had led. Resident Mark Hovater noted that the 2019 event was cancelled by someone other than Mr. Benedetto. Ms. Serrano believed that referring to this as a “lynching” exemplifies what some of the concerns are about.

MOTION PASSED by a roll call vote of the 15 eligible voters present with eight in favor (“Yes” or “Aye”) (Amador, Horn, Jordan, Karam, LaMonica, Ronquillo, Sanderson and Chavon Smith); seven opposed (“No” or “Nay”) (Benedetto, Bogartz, Derohanian, Kolstad, Brad Smith, Toumayan and Wallis); one abstained (the GHSNC does not count abstentions as either “yes” or “no” votes) (Serrano).

B. related issues: meeting facilitation and member retention.

Mr. Benedetto indicated that this was covered in above Item #VIII. A.

MOTION to TABLE (by Ms. Smith, seconded by Mr. Amador): The Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council TABLES Item #VIII. B. to a future Regular Board Meeting.

MOTION PASSED by a roll call vote of the 12 eligible voters present with 10 in favor (“Yes” or “Aye”) (Amador, Horn, Karam, Kolstad, LaMonica, Sanderson, Serrano, Brad Smith, Chavon Smith and Toumayan); one opposed (“No” or “Nay”) (Benedetto); one abstained (the GHSNC does not count abstentions as either “yes” or “no” votes) (Jordan).

IX. Committee Reports and Motions

PLUM

A. Discussion and possible action on the Committee’s recommendation to the Board regarding Los Angeles City Planning Case Number ZA-2022-1981-CU-SPPSPR, i.e. “Project Description: Demolition of existing Movie Theater and various Commercial/ Retail of ~95,608SF. Construction of a proposed Home Depot of 107,560 SF with a Garden Center of 28,415 SF – for a total of 139,975 SF” aka “Proposed Home Depot Granada Hills.” For background, see link above for four documents, under “Initial Submittal Documents,” as follow:

- Application
- Environmental Assessment Form
- Findings
- Project Plans

Additional background:

<https://therealdeal.com/la/2022/03/25/san-fernando-valley-cinema-pegged-for-big-box-makeover/>

<https://www.bisnow.com/los-angeles/news/retail/regency-theatres-granada-hills-demolitionhome-depot-112398>

Motion – from committee, no second needed: [see the below Motion].

Mr. Smith described the project.

FUNDING MOTION (by the Planning and Land Use Management Committee): To further the objectives of the Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council (“Neighborhood Council” or “GHSNC”), as listed under the GHSNC Bylaws, notably:

1. Promote good planning and land use, fair taxation, representative government and the general welfare of the community of Granada Hills (“Community”);
2. Provide an inclusive open forum for the discussion, deliberation and collaboration of Community issues;
3. Act as an advocate for the Community on issues with government agencies and other organizations;
4. Collaborate with other organizations within the Community to help them in accomplishing their goals which the Neighborhood Council determines to support and are consistent with these Bylaws; and
5. Monitor the delivery and enforcement of city services within our boundary area, the Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council unanimously wishes to sponsor a community meeting, i.e., “town hall,” (to be decided if best scheduled as a planning committee meeting or a special meeting of the GHSNC Board as a whole) to consider the above project; said meeting to include representatives of the applicant, appropriate municipal agencies and officials, and the community. To support the above, the GHSNC Planning and Land Use Management Committee requests an allocation of not more than \$2,500.00 from the GHSNC budget for various needs to support this event, including but not limited to outreach, professional services, and ancillary expenses.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Fisk gave more information. Mr. Amador urged using inclusive language.

Board Members Launa Bogartz, Abbey Ronquillo and Christina Wallis had left by this time (8:45), making 13 Board Members present online (the GHSNC quorum is nine).

FUNDING MOTION PASSED unanimously by a roll call vote of the 13 eligible voters present with all 13 in favor (“Yes” or “Aye”) (Amador, Benedetto, Derohanian, Horn, Jordan, Karam, Kolstad, LaMonica, Sanderson, Serrano, Brad Smith, Chavon Smith and Toumayan); zero opposed; zero abstained.

- B. Discussion and possible action on the Committee’s recommendation to the Board regarding support of the GHSNC and GH BID deodar trees project(s), and a status report from the City of Los Angeles.

Motion – from committee, no second needed: [see the below Motion].

Mr. Smith explained this.

MOTION (by the Planning and Land Use Management Committee): The Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council is requesting a report about the City's plan for providing for the sustainment of the White Oaks Avenue Deodar Trees, LA City Cultural Historical Monument #41, in the face of the current drought.

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council held on Oct. 7, 2021, a motion was considered by the entire board. This motion, requesting a written report on this matter from CD 12, was passed unanimously by the board. A copy of the agenda item can be accessed at www.ghsnc.org. As of this date, no such report has been provided.

The health of these trees because of drought conditions have been of public concern since at least 2015, and the GHSNC heard testimony in 2021 from City of Los Angeles arborists that at least two currently standing trees are dead and others are threatened. In 2021, concerns have mounted to the extent that both the GHSNC and the Granada Hills Business Improvement District have allocated funding for City-recommended deep watering of the trees.

Given the importance of this issue to Granada Hills, and planning and land use, the GHSNC is requesting a formal, written report from the City of Los Angeles before the end of Q22022, and a timeline for implementation.

MOTION PASSED unanimously by a voice vote; zero opposed; zero abstained.

- C. Discussion and possible action on the Committee's recommendation to the Board regarding support of the Granada Hills Recreation Center pool project, and a status report from the City of Los Angeles.

Motion – from committee, no second needed: [see the below Motion].

MOTION (by the Planning and Land Use Management Committee): The Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council is requesting a report about the City's plan for providing for the repair and/or replacement of the pool at Granada Hills Recreation Center (generally known as Petit Park).

At the regularly scheduled meeting of the Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council held on Oct. 7, 2021, a motion was considered by the entire board. This motion, requesting a written report on this matter from CD 12, was passed unanimously by the board. A copy of the agenda item can be accessed at www.ghsnc.org.

As of this date, no such report has been provided.

The condition of the pool has been rated "D" by the City of Los Angeles since at least 2004, and the GHSNC has repeatedly heard testimony from CD 12 representatives in recent years that a replacement project is underway. There are, however, no obvious signs of work in progress, and no update has been provided publicly by CD 12 staff.

Given the importance of this project to Granada Hills, and the issues of planning and land use, the GHSNC is requesting a formal, written report from the City of Los Angeles before the end of Q22022, and a timeline for implementation.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Smith explained this.

MOTION PASSED unanimously by a voice vote; zero opposed; zero abstained.

Mr. Benedetto requested and it was agreed to TABLE all Committee reports.

Outreach
Homelessness
Education
Youth
Cultural Affairs
Seniors
Beautification
Public Safety

X. Board Members Comments and Submission of Agenda Items.

Mr. Karam hoped the Board can “come together . . . for the community.” Ms. LaMonica wanted “equitable, productive” meetings. Ms. Sanderson said “we do have to address the elephant in the room without being disagreeable.” She thanked Ms. Smith for her “points of order.” Ms. Serrano encouraged being “conscious” of the words we use. Ms. Smith said that the Board sets the Agenda, not the President; she supports having a Board Retreat, especially including Robert’s Rules of Order and “conflict resolution.” Ms. Toumayan “thank[ed] everyone for their voices” and encouraged asking her for help. Ms. Guevara said she will email Robert’s Rules of Order information to the Board and “will follow up with the President and the Executive team” regarding a Retreat.

[*This is copied from the Agenda.*] Next Regular Meeting of the Granada Hills South Neighborhood Council- Thursday May 5, 2022 at 6:30 PM

XI. Adjournment

MOTION to ADJOURN (by Mr. Benedetto, seconded by Mr. Karam).

MOTION to ADJOURN PASSED unanimously by a voice vote; zero opposed; zero abstained.

The Meeting was **ADJOURNED** at 9:39 p.m.

The first paragraph of some Items, Motions/Resolutions and other wording may have been copied from the Agenda. Minutes written by DL, possibly edited by the GHSNC. The GHSNC Board Meeting Minutes page is <http://www.ghsnc.org/resources/minutes-and-agendas>.