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May 25, 2004

Dear Grass Roots Venice Neighborhood Council (GRVNC) Board Members:

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment encourages you, in the strongest possible way, to convene a special meeting(s) of the Board and of the stakeholders within the next 30 days in order to take the following actions:

1. Utilize the process outlined in the GRVNC bylaws (amended in 2002), and amend the bylaws to allow for a one-time extension of the Board terms for 90 days, and submit a Neighborhood Council Application to Change or Adjust Bylaws to the Department on only this issue. This request can be approved by me, and does not require approval by the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners.
2. Postpone the election proposed for June 27, 2004 for 90 days, and suspend all election activity until the issues surrounding the 2004 election have been analyzed, a resolution has been reached, and the Department has reviewed the 2004 election procedures to ensure that they comply with your bylaws and other applicable laws.
3. Seek immediate assistance from the Dispute Resolution Division of the Office of the City Attorney to bring all of the relevant parties together to finalize bylaws amendments and election procedures that address the election-related issues which divide your community.

There are several major issues that make it impossible for our department or commission to propose alternative solutions at this time.

- A. It is currently unclear if the Neighborhood Council Application to Change or Adjust Bylaws submitted by the Board on April 17, 2004 is valid without stakeholder ratification as outlined in the GRVNC bylaws in Article X, Section A.2.
- B. It is unclear if the Neighborhood Council Application to Change or Adjust Bylaws submitted by the GRVNC Board on behalf of the stakeholders

(5/24/04) is valid due to issues raised by the Board about the process by which the petition was passed.

- C. If it occurred on June 27, 2004, the election of the GRVNC would most likely be challenged on several grounds including, but not limited to, overall timeline and stakeholder verification, since these activities began without approved election procedures to support them.

It may never be possible to reach a point where Venice stakeholders find themselves working together for the betterment of Venice. It remains a dream for some of us, but we understand that Venice may always find itself in conflict through the actions of too many people who seem to be driven by the need to win. In the world of neighborhood councils and participatory democracy, those who are driven by the need to win only ensure that everyone loses. As the first words of the City Charter explain, our goal is to increase public participation in government.

Our system of neighborhood councils is unique. It attempts to bring together people of different values, backgrounds, priorities, personalities, and socioeconomic status, and have them sit as peers in guiding the future of their neighborhood. Accomplishing this goal in Venice is especially challenging.

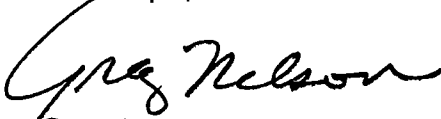
If you don't believe anything else that we've ever told you, believe us when we tell you that if you proceed with an election amid these chaotic conditions, the election will produce division, conflict, and confusion from which Venice may never recover.

We are receiving dozens of e-mail messages a day regarding the election. Rarely do we read any that argue that people should put aside their personal agendas and put Venice first. Instead, each argues why their position should prevail.

The actions of the governing board and the stakeholders have raised many unique questions that should be answered with the assistance of the Office of the City Attorney, the legal counsel for the Grass Roots Venice Neighborhood Council, before proceeding with the election.

We await your response. Please contact Jamiko Bell, Sr. Election Coordinator, at jbelle@mailbox.lacity.org for assistance in planning your next steps.

With hope,



Greg Nelson
General Manager

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