

Neighborhood Services and Education Committee Members
Chair Dev Davis, Vice Chair Peter Ortiz,
and Members Bien Doan, Omar Torres, and Domingo Candelas
City of San José, 200 E. Santa Clara Street
San José, CA 95113
via email, sent March 7, 2023

re: Neighborhoods Commission – NSE Cmte agenda item (d)3, March 9, 2023

Dear NSE Committee Members,

I write to you in support of the Neighborhoods Commission. I write as an individual who has worked with many other community volunteers on various commissions, committees, etc., to equitably and sustainably improve our quality of life here in San José. And while I served on the Neighborhoods Commission from its start in 2008 (and was its Chair from 2014 to 2016) and now currently serve on another commission, this is a personal letter in support of the Neighborhoods Commission.

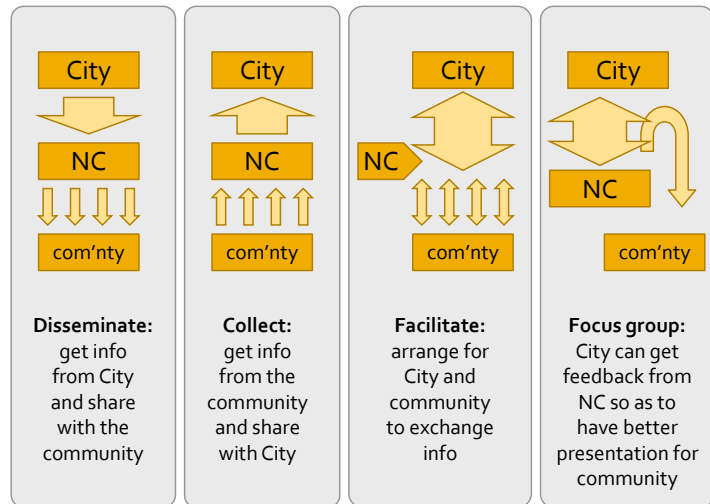
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The NC recently lost a number of its members due to term-limits and redistricting, Covid interfered with the planned caucuses, and the outgoing Council deferred the appointment of interim replacements to let the new Councilmembers make the appointments. As a result, the NC now lacks a quorum and can't even meet: a number of you on the NSE Committee who are new to the Council may never have seen the Neighborhoods Commission in action. I hope you will appoint interim replacements so the NC can reach a quorum, resume the caucus process, and revitalize itself.

The NC is a formal city commission, not merely an ad hoc group, and it has formal roles to serve in the city:

- The Neighborhoods Commission helps disseminate information from the City to the various Community associations and groups in the district.
- The NC helps collect issues and concerns from the community that are then incorporated into feedback to the City, such as the annual report on the City Budget or position papers on topics of community concern like protecting the city's tree canopy or stopping illegal fireworks. An upcoming topic concerns the operation of the city's animal shelter.
- The NC can also help facilitate an exchange of information between City and the community, as it did in 2015 when the NC hosted a series of community forums to help the SJ Police Department develop policies on the use of drones.
- And the NC can serve as a "focus group" – a representative sampling of community concerns, allowing the City to refine its presentation prior to general release.



There is work to do. We in the community want our issues to be heard and our input on the city budget to be considered.

I urge you to continue supporting the Neighborhoods Commission. I hope the Council will fill the vacancies with interim appointments so that the Neighborhoods Commission can make quorum and can conduct the district caucuses to rebuild itself.

Thank you,

~Larry Ames

Dr. Lawrence Ames, longtime community advocate.

cc: San José Mayor Matt Mahan and Members of the City Council;
Angel Rios, Deputy City Manager; City Clerk;
Jon Cicirelli, Dir., PRNS; Olympia Williams, Division Mngr., PRNS;
Jim Carter, Chair, NC;
Dist. 6 N'hd Leaders Group; All District Leadership Group.

Neighborhood Services and Education Committee Members

Chair Dev Davis, Vice Chair Peter Ortiz, members Bien Doan, Omar Torres and Domingo Candelas

City Of San Jose, 200 E. Santa Clara Street

San Jose California 95113

Subject: Neighborhoods Commission-NSE Cmte agenda item(d)3 March 9, 2023

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- Do not sunset Neighborhoods Commission until recommendations are presented by the Ad-Hoc committee.
- Placing on hold the recommendation of staff to send to council the proposal by PRNS to sunset the commission until the Ad-Hoc Committee makes recommendations.

Covid has had a significant impact on the ability of the NC to meet in person these past couple of years. Unable to meet in person or even have a hybrid meeting reduced the capacity to conduct business in the usual manner.

The commission was still able to meet on the 2nd Wednesday of the month by zoom given the existing commissioners. A work plan was constructed as required by the City Charter and Ad Hoc committees met to work on the work plan. An annual report and a budget priority recommendation memo was submitted to council .

The neighborhoods commissioners were selected by their respective districts using the caucus process. Our neighbors selected the commissioners and is a bottom up concept where neighbors would be actively involved. Recommendations for appointment would be forwarded to the council for approval. More recently Commissioners were appointed by their Council Members. The commission was unable to conduct the caucus process even though commissioners had arranged times, dates, locations and volunteers for the caucuses

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to make up the Neighborhoods Commission work plan . The information and work plan was also shared with the Council Member in that district during their in person meetings. As mentioned the work plan was utilized to construct the annual budget priorities recommendation memo and the Annual Report.

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It has been challenging these past few months. I ask you to reject the proposal put forward to sunset the Commission and consider recommendations by the Ad Hoc Committee regarding the Neighborhoods Commission. It is unknown what this new Neighborhood Engagement Model will be or if it will be effective however by sunseting the commission there would not be an formal neighborhoods commission to resume its intended function.

Thank You

Jim Carter

Chair pro-tem

San Jose Neighborhoods Commission

OPPOSE NEIGHBORHOODS COMMISSION SUNSET-SUSPENSION -- DISTRICT 2 NEIGHBORHOOD LEADERSHIP COUNCIL BOARD

[Redacted] <[Redacted]>

on behalf of

[Redacted] <[Redacted]>

Sat 4/8/2023 12:10 AM

To: District1 <district1@sanjoseca.gov>; Gomez, David <david.gomez@sanjoseca.gov>; District1 <district1@sanjoseca.gov>; Sandoval, Vanessa <vanessa.sandoval@sanjoseca.gov>; District3 <district3@sanjoseca.gov>; Arreola, Kiara <Kiara.Arreola@sanjoseca.gov>; District4 <District4@sanjoseca.gov>; Nguyen, Lam <Lam.Nguyen@sanjoseca.gov>; District5 <District5@sanjoseca.gov>; Madero, Angel <Angel.Madero@sanjoseca.gov>; District 6 <district6@sanjoseca.gov>; Groen, Mary Anne <maryanne.groen@sanjoseca.gov>; District7 <District7@sanjoseca.gov>; Fleming, Jonathan <Jonathan.Fleming@sanjoseca.gov>; District8 <district8@sanjoseca.gov>; Adera, Teddy <Teddy.Adera@sanjoseca.gov>; District9 <district9@sanjoseca.gov>; Hughes, Scott <scott.hughes@sanjoseca.gov>; District 10 <District10@sanjoseca.gov>; Dexter, Michele <Michele.Dexter@sanjoseca.gov>

Cc: City Clerk <city.clerk@sanjoseca.gov>

4 attachments (3 MB)

D2NLC to Mayor-Council Signed FINAL 4-7-23.pdf; D2NLC Council Cover Signed FINAL 4-7-23.pdf; Wilkins letter to Mayor 2023.pdf; 3-9-23 Letters from Ames and Carter.pdf;

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DATE: APRIL 7, 2023

SUBJECT: PROPOSED SUNSET/SUSPENSION OF SAN JOSE NEIGHBORHOODS COMMISSION

Dear Member of the City Council:

Please see the attached letter to Mayor Mahan. It expresses our sincere opposition to the proposed sunseting and/or suspension of the San Jose Neighborhoods Commission. We are convinced that the Commission is a necessary and highly-valued resource to our neighborhoods here in District 2 as well as to those of all of the neighborhoods throughout this city and, in fact, to the City Council itself.

We urge you to support the restoration of the Commission to full operation without delay.

In the event that you have any reservation or doubt that keeps you from supporting our request, we respectfully request that you read the attached letters. Each of these highly-respected members of the community are either current or former Neighborhoods Commission members or Commission chairs. If, after reviewing their remarks, there are any remaining questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Board of Directors, District 2 Neighborhood Leadership Council,

Lalbabu "Babu" Prasad
Chairman, District 2 Neighborhood Leadership Council
President, Hayes Neighborhood Association
Current D2 Representative, San Jose Neighborhoods Commission

BP/sgs

Attachments: Letter from the D2NLC Board of Directors; letters from current and former Commissioners and Commission chairs

cc:

Director, PRNS
City Manager
Chair and Members, Neighborhood Services and Education Committee
Members of the Council
Mayor
San Jose All District Leadership Group
District Neighborhood Leadership Council Executives

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District 2 Neighborhood Leadership Council

April 7, 2023

Hon. Matt Mahan
Mayor, City of San Jose

Dear Mayor Mahan:

We, the members of the Board of Directors of the San Jose District 2 Neighborhood Leadership Council, write to request that you restore the San Jose Neighborhoods Commission to full operation as soon as possible.

Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services seeks your approval to sunset the Commission; the Community Services and Education Committee, that met March 9, 2023 on this issue (agenda item #3), recommends suspension pending an organizational review.

We respect the dedication of the PRNS professional staff in developing their findings. As part of our research on this issue, we also consulted several current and former Commission members. These individuals, representing many years of voluntary service to their neighborhoods and to San Jose, take unanimous and serious issue with the suspension and sunset proposal. You will find attached several letters in which they express their views in detail.

After fully considering both groups' opinions, it is our judgement that PRNS' assertions, copied below, fail to justify sunsetting or suspension. We believe that the Commission performs as its founders intended. However, certain issues are outside the Commission's control. We re-state the arguments and include our responses below:

- Inability to meet quorum at meetings on an ongoing and consistent basis due to high turnover.
 - **Our response:** *Covid-related issues prevented caucus selections; redistricting stripped out certain commissioners; COSJ did not arrange interim appointments as specified in the Commission charter.*
- There is a lack of participation and feedback loop with neighborhood associations and leaders often cite the lack of interaction and problem solving of neighborhood issues due to the Commission meeting format.
 - **Our response:** *This finding was communicated only once in passing to the commission, should have included, but did not include, the detailed complaint and neighborhood contact information so that Commission leadership could have addressed the issue. There was no formal complaint communicated and no further mention was made.*
- Doesn't adequately address issues from unrepresented and underrepresented neighborhoods.
 - **Our response:** *This is a function of the caucus selection process which is open to all. It is not a function of the Commission structure.*

We propose the following with full consideration for both our dedicated PRNS director and staff contributions as well as the highly respected members of the community who serve, and who have served, on the San Jose Neighborhoods Commission:

1. Restore the Commission to full operation as soon as possible; repopulate the commissioners as necessary for quorum with former members on an interim basis until caucus can be held;



District 2 Leadership Council

City of San Jose, District 2, Lalbabu "Babu" Prasad, Chairman
For more information, e-mail [REDACTED] or call: [REDACTED]

Board of Directors
Lalbabu "Babu" Prasad,
Chairman
Hayes Neighborhood
Association
Bikram Jeet, Vice-Chair
EGOPIC
David Wilkins, Secretary-
Treasurer
Silver Leaf NA
Darryl Ospring, Director
Coyote Creek NA
Terry Lee, Director
Coyote Creek NA
Carla Davis, Director
Cottle-to-Lean NA
Steven Spivak, Director
Cottle-to-Lean NA
Jennie Han, Director
Basking Ridge NA
John Leipelt, Director
Basking Ridge NA
Wanda Wong, Director
Basking Ridge NA
Tobias McLeod, Director
Christopher-Hellyer NA
Alain Mowad, Director
VEPCA
Carlos Rosario, Director
VEPCA
Veronica Talton, Director
Oakridge Palmia NA

District 2 Neighborhood Leadership Council

2. Provide Commission leaders detailed complaint and contact information so that they may directly resolve community participation problem areas;
3. Develop a Commission caucus marketing plan to ensure that all neighborhoods receive ample notice of the caucus process, dates and opportunities.

For the reasons enumerated above, and on behalf of our District 2 Neighborhoods, we urge you to act to restore the Neighborhoods Commission as soon as possible in order to maintain its critically important service to this and to all San Jose neighborhoods.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



Lalbabu "Babu" Prasad
Chairman, District 2 Neighborhood Leadership Council
President, Hayes Neighborhood Association
Current D2 Representative, San Jose Neighborhoods Commission

BP/sgs

Attachments

cc:

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City Manager
Chair and Members, Neighborhood Services and Education Committee
Members of the Council
Mayor
San Jose All District Leadership Group
District Neighborhood Leadership Council Executives



District 2 Leadership Council

City of San Jose, District 2, Lalbabu "Babu" Prasad, Chairman
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District 2 Neighborhood Leadership Council

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Coyote Creek NA

Terry Lee, Director
Coyote Creek NA

Carla Davis, Director
Cottle-to-Lean NA

Steven Spivak, Director
Cottle-to-Lean NA

Jennie Han, Director
Basking Ridge NA

John Leipelt, Director
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Wanda Wong, Director
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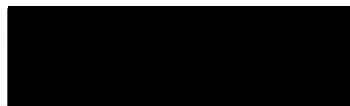
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District Neighborhood Leadership Council Executives



District 2 Leadership Council

City of San Jose, District 2, Lalbabu "Babu" Prasad, Chairman

For more information, e-mail [REDACTED] or call: [REDACTED]

To: Mayor Matt Mahan
Cc: Steven Spivak, Lalbabu Prasad
Fri, Mar 10 at 2:51 PM
Honorable Mayor Mahan,

I have been active in D2 community services since 1985, when I first worked with our District 2 Councilmember as the Secretary for the Silver Leaf Neighborhood Association. Over the decades, I've been on neighborhood association boards, school site councils, a school boundary committee, Diversity Commissioner, Neighborhoods Commissioner, high speed rail community group (Visual Guidelines), as well as being Secretary for the D2NLC for many years. I only say this to demonstrate that I recognize the importance and responsibility of community involvement as a partner in running the City of San Jose. It is our duty to provide helpful input to city officials, as well as being a good conduit for communications from the city and council back to the neighborhoods. Your push for transparency is refreshing, and all of these activities help in that regard.

I'm concerned with the current push to sunset the Neighborhoods Commission. Coupled with the council's decision to appoint replacement councilmembers rather than by public vote sends a terrible message, whether intended or not. While I have been pleased in the past with how well the city accepted community feedback early on, sometimes modifying their stance, I've been hardened by what now appears to be "the city will do what the city wants to do." To be blunt, the only purpose of community forums seems to be "we involved the community, so we can check that box." We've had many recent examples of overwhelming community response to initiatives where the input was ignored.

The Neighborhoods Commission is a perfect forum for listening to the community. While I was a Commissioner, I didn't understand why several councilmembers objected to our involvement other than the obvious protection of "their turf.". Decisions by the commission have always been advisory and nonbinding. I might understand if the commission had the power to dictate directives or make policy decisions, but there is zero harm in listening to the community. The push to sunset is not coming from the community. Rather, it's coming from threatened councilmembers. Killing this valuable forum may be out of your control, but surely it's within your sphere of influence. Please help support maintaining the Neighborhood Commission.

Should the decision be to replace the commission by another forum or community process as proposed, never turn off anything until the replacement has been tested and proven. At minimum, we need to keep the commission running in parallel until such time as the results of the replacement process successfully achieve the goals of the commission.

This email presents my view only and not necessarily the D2NLC.

Respectfully,

David Wilkins

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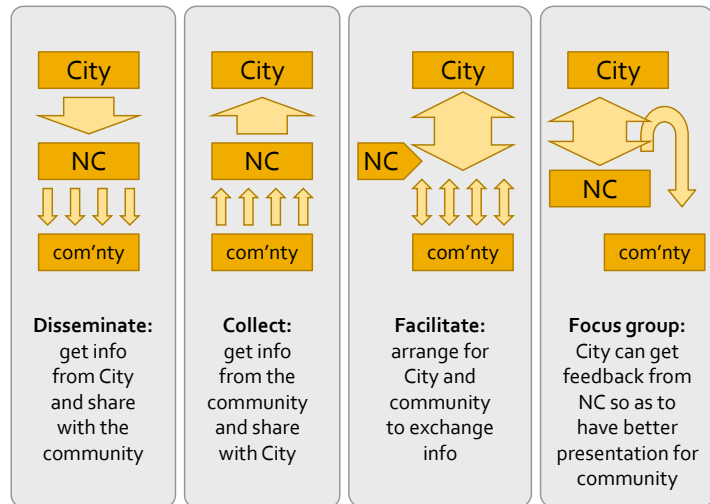
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Chair pro-tem

San Jose Neighborhoods Commission