

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.

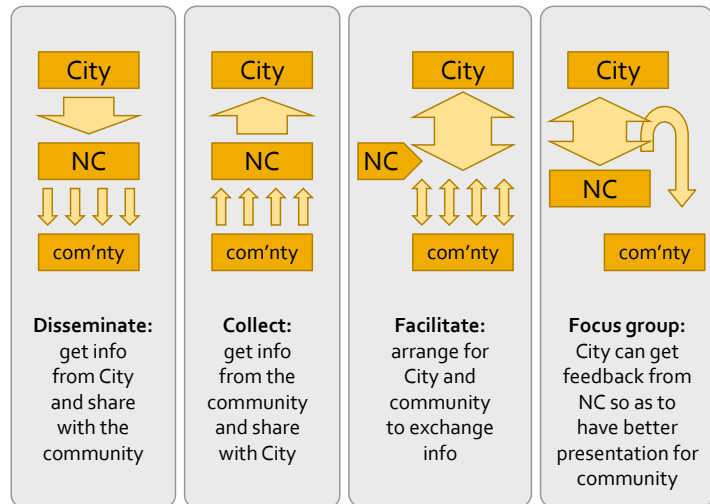
Commissions help us in the community to formally and effectively work together with you in the City. San José is a large city, and you on the Council can't possibly have the time to be thoroughly involved in every matter that occurs in your district. Commissions help you by working with us in the public, collecting and evaluating our input, and then forwarding alternatives and recommendations to you on the Council for decisions. The Neighborhoods Commission advises the City Council regarding San José neighborhoods on matters regarding issues, policies, and programs affecting the quality of life in San José neighborhoods focusing on neighborhood safety, transportation, and code enforcement, and it also makes recommendations regarding annual budget priorities.

The Neighborhoods Commission (NC) is unique in that its commissioners are selected by the community rather than by the city. For most city commissions, Councilmembers and the Mayor each select a commissioner, and the resulting commission may end up mirroring the Council. Commissioners on the NC, on the other hand, are community volunteers selected by delegates of that district's various neighborhood associations in a caucus, an open process run by the NC with minimal Staff involvement, and then confirmed or rejected by the Council. (In the case of a mid-term vacancy, the Council can make interim appointments.) The result is a NC that is more reflective of the community, giving it the ability to more truly express the concerns of the neighborhoods.

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

Dear NSE Committee Members

I am opposed to the suggestion in the memo from PRNS Director Cicirelli to sunset the Neighborhoods Commission. I am suggesting the following next steps.

- Staff assemble an Ad-Hoc committee immediately comprised of remaining commissioners, and former commissioners, neighborhood leaders and city staff to discuss any needed changes to the Neighborhoods Commission. To conclude in July with recommendations presented in August to the NSE
- 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

Each District represented by two commissioners. The commissioners were responsible for attending Neighborhood Association and District Leadership group meetings to gather information regarding concerns and issues of their neighbors in their respective districts. The information was shared with the entire commission at the end of meetings using a roundtable format. The information was used

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.

The Neighborhoods Commission is a formal commission as defined in San Jose City Ordinance 292997 and has the functions, powers and duties to study, review and make recommendations to the council regarding issues policies and programs affecting the quality of life in San Jose neighborhoods city wide. The Neighborhoods Commission has made numerous recommendations regarding the four areas of responsibility as defined in the city ordinance. The Neighborhoods Commission is focused but not limited to the areas of code enforcement, transportation, Safety and budget recommendations.

The Neighborhoods Commission has assigned commissioners upon request from the city to participate on interview boards for department heads, participate in the Emergency Services Council and had two commissioners participate as members of the Reimagining Public Safety Committee. The Neighborhoods Commission also was assigned oversight to the Measure B ¼ cent sales tax. Per council resolution 78016 adopted December 13, 2016

The Neighborhoods Commission has not met in person since March of 2021. Covid restrictions prevented in person meetings. The Neighborhoods Commission these past few months had difficulty meeting quorum. Several commissioners were termed out. A couple of commissioners had moved out of their districts and or were removed from the Neighborhoods Commission because of redistricting. One commissioner had a conflict of interest as they were newly appointed to a council office as an administrative assistant. It was reported to the commission that because of new council members coming into office that appointments were being held back until the new council members were in office for them to approve of the recommended appointments to the commission.

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