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WEST HILLS NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

JOINT BOARD AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA

Monday, November 24, 2025 @ 7:30 PM

**Chaminade College Preparatory – Condon Center 2nd Floor
23241 W. Cohasset Street, West Hills, CA 91304**

Enter Chaminade through the Cohasset Street entrance between Woodlake and Platt Avenues. Drive through the parking lot, bear left and continue over the hill until you see the Condon Family Technology Center on the left. Park in the nearest lot.

In conformity with the October 6, 2023 enactment of California Senate Bill 411 (Portantino) and La City Council Approval on November 1, 2023, the West Hills Neighborhood Council Government Relations Committee Agenda Committee meeting will be conducted virtually, telephonically and in person.

- To attend online via Zoom Webinar: Click or paste the following link into your browser: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88391608200>
- To call in by phone, dial (669) 900-6833, then punch in this Webinar code when prompted: **883 160 8200**, then press #.
- To attend in person, please attend Chaminade College Preparatory – Condon Center 2nd Floor, 23241 W. Cohasset Street, West Hills, CA 91304

This meeting is open to the public. Doors open 10 minutes before the meeting starts. Those who wish to speak during the meeting may be asked to complete a Speaker Card. Comments on matters not on the agenda will be heard during the Public Comment period. Those who wish to speak on an agenda item will be heard when the item is considered.

1. Call to Order / Establish Quorum: Joanne Yvanek-Garb, Co-Chair, Brenda Citrom, Co-Chair, Kim Koerber, Co-Chair Aida Abkarians, Saif Mogri, Joan Trent, Faye Barta, Brian Murray, Brad Vanderhoof, Secretary
2. Comments from the Chairs.
3. General Public Comment
4. Review and Approval of October Meeting Minutes.
5. Discussion and Possible Action –Charter Reform meetings and progress.

SB 411 Updates: If a Neighborhood Council has a quorum of board members in a physical location, board members who wish to join the meeting via teleconferencing must adhere to AB 2449 rules and regulations. If a Neighborhood Council does not have a quorum of board members in a physical location, they must adhere to SB 411 rules and regulations. In the event of a disruption that prevents the eligible legislative body from broadcasting the meeting to members of the public using the call-in option or internet-based service

option, or in the event of a disruption within the eligible legislative body's control that prevents members of the public from offering public comments using the call-in option or internet-based service option, the eligible legislative body shall take no further action on items appearing on the meeting agenda until public access to the meeting via the call-in option or internet-based service option is restored. Actions taken on agenda items during a disruption that prevents the eligible legislative body from broadcasting the meeting may be challenged pursuant to Section 54960.1. The eligible legislative body shall not require public comments to be submitted in advance of the meeting and shall provide an opportunity for the public to address the legislative body and offer comments in real time. Notwithstanding Section 54953.3, an individual desiring to provide public comment through the use of an internet website, or other online platform, not under the control of the eligible legislative body, that requires registration to log in to a teleconference may be required to register as required by the third-party internet website or online platform to participate.(i) An eligible legislative body that provides a timed public comment period for each agenda item shall not close the public comment period for the agenda item, or the opportunity to register, pursuant to subparagraph, provide public comment until that timed public comment period has elapsed.(ii) An eligible legislative body that does not provide a timed public comment period, but takes public comment separately on each agenda item, shall allow a reasonable amount of time per agenda item to allow public members the opportunity to provide public comment, including time for members of the public to register pursuant to subparagraph (D), or otherwise be recognized for the purpose of providing public comment.(iii) An eligible legislative body that provides a timed general public comment period that does not correspond to a specific agenda item shall not close the public comment period or the opportunity to register, pursuant to subparagraph (D), until the timed general public comment period has elapsed.

Public Input: Comments from the public on agenda items will be heard only when the respective item is being considered. Comments from the public on other matters not appearing on the agenda that are within the Board's jurisdiction will be heard during the General Public Comment period. Please note that under the Brown Act, the Board is prevented from acting on a matter that you bring to its attention during the General Public Comment period; however, an issue raised by a member of the public may become the subject of a future Board meeting. Public comment is limited to two minutes per speaker, unless adjusted by the presiding officer of the committee.

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Notice to Paid Representatives -If you are compensated to monitor, attend, or speak at this meeting, City law may require you to register as a lobbyist and report your activity. See Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 48.01 et seq. More information is available at ethics@lacity.org/lobbying. For assistance, please contact the Ethics Commission at (213) 978-1960 or ethics.commission@lacity.org

Public Access of Records - In compliance with Government Code Section 54957.5, non-exempt writings that are distributed to a majority or all of the board in advance of a meeting may be viewed at our website: www.westhillsnc.org or at the scheduled meeting. In addition, if you would like a copy of any record related to an item on the agenda, please contact the WHNC's executive director via email at michelle.ritchie@westhillsnc.org

Reconsideration and Grievance Process - For information on the NC's process for board action reconsideration, stakeholder grievance policy, or any other procedural matters related to this Council, please consult the NC Bylaws. The Bylaws are available at our Board meetings and our website www.westhillsnc.org

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IT'S OUR NEIGHBORHOOD. LET'S BUILD A COMMUNITY.



West Hills Neighborhood Council

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JOINT GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE/BOARD MEETING MINUTES Chaminade High School October 20, 2025

Revised October 22, 2025

The Committee shall take official action by a simple majority of yes and no votes cast by the committee members present at a duly noticed regular or special Government Relations Committee meeting, not to include abstentions. There shall be no proxy voting.

Attendance: Faye Barta, Brenda Citrom, Kim Koerber, Saif Mogri, Brian Murray, Joan Trent, Brad Vanderhoof, and Joanne Yvanek-Garb

Committee Members Absent: Aida Abkarians

Other Board Members Present: Glenn Jennings

1. Call to Order / Establish a Quorum: Chair Joanne Yvanek-Garb called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. A quorum was established.

2. Comments from the Co-Chairs: Joanne spoke about the Woodland Hills – Warner Center NC “WHIP Document” regarding Charter reform of Article 9. This is the article concerning the formation of NCs. Their redline document turns 2 pages into 23. Brenda said Bel Air NC also has an impressive revision. Joanne discussed the projected budget shortfall and how many items are not included.

3. General Public Comment: None

4. Approval of September Meeting Minutes: Minutes approved.

5. Charter Reform meetings and progress: Joanne gave an outline of the approach she would like to take. Kim suggested the elimination of BONC and DONE should be considered. Saif suggested a word-by-word review of Article 9 be the focus of the next meeting.

Chair Joanne Yvanek-Garb adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM.

The next meeting of this committee is scheduled for November 17, 2025, 7:30 PM, Chaminade High School.

West Hills Neighborhood Council City Charter Reform Recommendations

The West Hills Neighborhood Council extends our sincere appreciation for the magnitude of your charge. Reforming the City Charter is both technically complex and democratically consequential, and we recognize the diligence, judgment, and civic commitment required to undertake this work. At the same time, we must underscore the urgency of this moment. Neighborhood Councils—created to serve as the City’s eyes and ears—have been persistently under-resourced, underutilized, and structurally constrained in fulfilling their intended role. Effective, durable reform is needed now. We respectfully submit the following recommendations for your consideration.

I. Fiscal Transparency and Revenue Authority

Los Angeles cannot build public trust or maintain essential services without full financial transparency. The Charter must require that all City budget and financial data be publicly accessible in clear, searchable formats so residents can understand how public resources are allocated and spent. The City also needs modern revenue tools: for example, allowing City-operated asphalt recycling facilities to sell reclaimed material, and taxing commercial users of the public right-of-way—such as autonomous delivery robots and autonomous vehicles like Waymo—that impose measurable wear on streets without contributing to their upkeep. These measures would strengthen the City’s fiscal resilience and create a fairer, more sustainable revenue structure.

City Controller Kenneth Mejia has repeatedly highlighted the City’s lack of “budget conformity,” in which the adopted budget does not reflect actual departmental spending or operational practices. His findings underscore the need for a Charter framework that guarantees transparent, accurate, and accessible financial information. Ensuring reliable fiscal data is essential for restoring public trust and enabling residents, Neighborhood Councils, and policymakers to make informed decisions.

To support these transparency reforms, the Office of the City Controller must be structurally strengthened. The Charter should provide the Controller with an independent budget, designate the Controller as the City’s Chief Financial Officer, and establish minimum professional qualifications for the office. The Charter should also clarify that the Controller’s audit authority includes performance audits of all City programs funded with public tax dollars, including those overseen by elected officials. Additionally, the Controller must be empowered to hire outside counsel when necessary, and the City’s Fraud, Waste, and Abuse function should be fully enshrined in the Charter. Together, these reforms would fortify the City’s financial oversight framework and ensure that public resources are managed transparently and responsibly.

2. City Council Structure and Democratic Representation

The scale and diversity of Los Angeles demand a legislative structure proportional to its population. Expanding the size of the City Council and establishing district populations no greater than **150,000 residents**—similar to peer cities—would create more responsive representation. With today's population, this adjustment would result in roughly 26 council seats. More reasonable district sizes promote constituent access, accountability, and more geographically relevant policymaking.

Electoral reform is also essential to strengthening democratic participation. Adopting ranked-choice voting for multi-seat districts would broaden representation, reduce vote-splitting, and increase opportunities for historically underrepresented communities.

Finally, the Ethics Commission plays a central role in maintaining integrity within City government. Expanding the EC from **five to seven commissioners**, including two selected through an open application process, would introduce new voices, reduce political influence, and reinforce public confidence.

3. Ethics and Accountability Reform

Los Angeles must modernize its ethics rules and enforcement mechanisms to reflect contemporary political and economic realities. Granting the Ethics Commission authority to place ordinances directly on the ballot would introduce a meaningful check on Council inaction and allow the public to address urgent issues without undue delay. A stable and predictable funding formula—tied to (Consumer Price Index) CPI, new mandates, (Cost of Living Adjustment) COLA, and step increases—is necessary to ensure the EC can fulfill its growing responsibilities.

The Charter should also close longstanding loopholes. Currently, lobbyist employers and clients may still give gifts to City officials even though lobbyists themselves cannot. This inconsistency undermines trust and should be corrected. Similarly, the ability of lobbyists and firms to bundle campaign contributions weakens the intent of existing campaign finance restrictions and should be prohibited.

To keep contribution limits aligned with real economic conditions, the EC should be empowered to adjust limits based on broader indicators such as wage growth, disposable income, and poverty rates—not just CPI. And because ethics violations too often go unenforced, the City must clearly designate prosecutorial authority—whether through the EC, City Attorney, District Attorney, or an independent office—to ensure consistent and credible enforcement.

Taken together, these reforms would establish a more modern, transparent, and enforceable ethics framework.

4. Transparency and Data Infrastructure

A 21st-century city requires 21st-century data capacity. The current reliance on third-party vendors for essential datasets often leads to fragmentation, high costs, and barriers to transparency. Establishing a **City Data Bureau** would centralize data expertise, streamline operations across departments, and strengthen public access to information.

Such a bureau is especially vital for complex processes such as redistricting, where accurate data and clear public visibility are indispensable. A permanent in-house team would reduce redundancy, improve analysis quality, and ensure consistent citywide data standards.

5. Infrastructure and Governance Modernization

Los Angeles must overhaul how it manages the public right-of-way. Making LADOT a Charter department with full responsibility for street and sidewalk construction, maintenance, and repair would create a unified and accountable structure for one of the City's most essential functions. The current multi-agency system diffuses responsibility, slows coordination, and complicates capital planning.

Replacing the Board of Public Works with a **single accountable Director** would streamline oversight and eliminate the fragmented governance that has often impeded timely infrastructure delivery. To coordinate the City's complex capital programs, we recommend creating an Office of Infrastructure Management led by an executive chosen for demonstrated operational and capital-delivery expertise.

This Office should house the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and the Charter should require two-year budget **cycles** and a five-year CIP to bring predictability, transparency, and apolitical stability to long-term planning. Funding should be stabilized through dedicated revenues specifically, allocating **0.05% of assessed property value** to LADOT, restoring service levels to approximately 2022 capacity and insulating infrastructure maintenance from fiscal volatility.

6. Neighborhood Empowerment and System Reform

Neighborhood Councils require clear authority and dependable support if they are to fulfill their chartered purpose. NCs should be empowered to take official positions on County, State, and Federal legislation affecting their communities. Establishing an Assembly of Neighborhood Councils would ensure that bottom-up priorities reach the legislative agenda by allowing the Assembly to select one topic annually for an evening City Council meeting.

There have also been arguments posed against implementing term limits for Neighborhood Council board members. Many community members have expressed concern that term limits would lead to the loss of institutional knowledge and experience that long-serving board members bring to their councils. Others argue that frequent turnover could disrupt continuity, delay long-term projects, and interrupt established relationships with City departments. Some worry that the volunteer nature of NC service already makes recruitment challenging, and mandatory turnover could leave some boards without enough willing members to serve. Additional concerns include limiting stakeholders' ability to elect knowledgeable and effective representatives of their choice, reducing leadership continuity, and diminishing the strength of advocacy for underserved communities. These arguments reflect the belief that experience, continuity, and community trust are essential to the effective functioning of Neighborhood Councils.

DONE must recognize that Neighborhood Council members are volunteers with limited time and competing personal and professional obligations. They cannot accommodate hours-long training sessions that extend well beyond what is necessary for compliance. Most required trainings can be completed within a half hour, and if they were made interactive, they would be far more effective and retainable.

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment must therefore be restructured as a facilitative, not directive, agency. Its role should be limited to training, compliance support, election administration, and fiscal processing. It should not impose discretionary policy constraints or interfere in local decision-making. Performance dashboards for election logistics, funding approvals, and service delivery should be published regularly, and DONE's budget should be formula-based to provide equitable support across all councils.

BONC also requires modernization. Seats should be reserved for NC-elected or regionally nominated commissioners to ensure deeper community understanding and direct system experience. Annual "State of the Neighborhood Council System" reports should measure election turnout, grievance resolution timelines, board retention, and overall system health. Grievance and code-of-conduct processes must include clear timelines and transparent appeal rights. Regular evening meetings held across multiple

regions would further democratize access and ensure that commissioners engage directly with the communities they oversee.

These reforms would restore Neighborhood Councils to the role envisioned when the system was created and ensure that local civic participation is respected, supported, and meaningfully integrated into City governance.

7. Strengthening Community Participation and Access

Civic participation is strongest when it is accessible. City Council and PLUM meetings should be held at times and locations that allow maximum public engagement, particularly evenings and weekends, and in or near the communities affected by the agenda items. Improving hybrid broadcast quality, translation services, and accommodation accessibility is essential to inclusive participation.

Neighborhood Councils must receive timely notice of City decisions that affect their communities. A 96-hour notice requirement for Council or Commission actions and 48 hours' notice for new planning and development applications would allow NCs to consult residents and respond meaningfully. City departments should attend NC meetings with 30 days' notice and must provide a written explanation when they disagree with an NC recommendation.

These changes would transform NCs from symbolic advisory bodies into meaningful participants in local policymaking.

8. Land Use, Local Authority, and Planning

Neighborhood Councils possess local knowledge essential to sound planning. They should be granted meaningful authority in land-use matters—either through structured advisory weight in discretionary decisions or a formal right of appeal to City Planning or Building & Safety. When the City acts contrary to an NC recommendation, it should be required to issue written findings demonstrating consistency with applicable Community Plans and public welfare standards.

Area Planning Commissions should be restructured to support these reforms or eliminated if they cannot be aligned with enhanced NC engagement.

This framework acknowledges that local insight is not merely supplemental but indispensable to effective land-use governance.

9. Strategic Collaboration and Ongoing Evaluation

Charter reform must establish processes for continuous improvement. A City–Neighborhood Council Strategic Plan should mandate regular review of engagement tools, oversight structures, and communication systems. Neighborhood Councils should have the authority to initiate system reviews, assess public communication strategies, and recommend improvements to City processes.

Ongoing evaluation ensures that reforms remain relevant and responsive as Los Angeles evolves.

Closing Statement

We offer these recommendations with deep appreciation for the Commission's work and with the urgency born of two decades of first-hand experience. Neighborhood Councils can fulfill their foundational purpose only if the Charter provides clear authority, dependable support, and meaningful access to policymaking. These reforms—spanning revenue, governance, ethics, infrastructure, representation, and community participation—are essential to restoring trust and ensuring that civic engagement in Los Angeles is substantive rather than symbolic.

With appreciation and resolve,

West Hills Neighborhood Council

GELFAND'S WORLD - This is aimed mainly at our city's neighborhood council participants, who I see as victims of an irrational system. It may also be considered as a wider message about how our Los Angeles city government works.

The central observation I want to make is that no sane and rational person would design our city's neighborhood council system the way it presently operates. The city's current Charter Reform effort offers us an opportunity to communicate what changes need to be made. In order to decide what they should be, we really should be thinking about what a neighborhood council system might be and might be doing. Then, and only then, will we be able to offer a rational proposal. In this discussion, I offer a few observations about the system and the logical changes that ought to be made.

The effort involves designing the neighborhood council (nc) system in a way which adequately serves the public interest while avoiding the mistakes that currently exist.

One question that we should ask about the existence of a neighborhood council system is Why? In other words, what is the reason for having such a system at all? The historical basis was centered around the Valley Secession movement. The system was essentially a way of offering a teensy little bit of influence to people who felt alienated from their city government. The nc system was a bone that was tossed to the secessionists and to people who were thinking about voting for secession.

The nc system, as envisioned originally, was a group of independent bodies that chose their own representatives, determined their own agendas, and basically served to allow people from the neighborhood to come together and talk about their mutual concerns. They would serve as a conduit to the City Council representative and also serve as a warning system regarding problems of particular concern.

The nc's are not given much power. They are merely invited to offer advice to the city government and to comment on anything that affects their neighborhood. But even in this limited authority, we've seen the city government try to meddle, as discussed in previous columns. Therefore, any advice that nc's offer about Charter reform should include a return to this level of autonomy. We need to be free to comment on any issue that affects us, and to communicate our views to any and every level of government or the private sector. This, after all, is our central purpose.

What mistakes currently exist within the system, and what can we do about them?

For the most part, the mistakes are all involved with giving too much power to city bureaucrats over a system – and its participants – who ought to be working freely and independently. There should be strict limits on what kind of training, and how much of it, the city can require of any neighborhood council participant. Neighborhood council participants should have the right to negotiate over any and every requirement that the system attempts to foist upon us. Every other person involved in city government has some such right, ranging from municipal unions to professional associations. Only neighborhood council participants are denied such rights. This is one of the more critical issues that we face, yet it is ignored by higher levels of government.

The city should finally give in and admit that some level of freedom of speech still holds, even in the City of Los Angeles. The BONC has been wrestling with what it calls the Code of Conduct

for years, because it can't rationalize taking away someone's right to speak bluntly with somebody else's desire to avoid being insulted. What the city has been unwilling to do is to trust us to work through our own differences, even when the result is unappealing to some participants.

Finally, the city should understand that Charter-guaranteed diversity in neighborhood council participation has to include intellectual and religious diversity, and not just ethnic and sexual diversity. This failure is most evident in the way that the city is trying to force ideological indoctrination in the form of training mandates. It's time for a negotiated settlement over these and other stresses.

In a recent neighborhood council congress, one of my colleagues suggested that a Declaration of Rights (that one of my colleagues wrote) be included in the Charter as one of the suggested Charter amendments. The declared rights include the autonomy of each neighborhood council to defend the intellectual rights of its own members, to determine the manner of its own elections, and to be the lone organization with the right to discipline any of its members. That declaration undercuts the current approach taken by BONC and the city's administrators, who basically treat nc participants like unruly fourth graders. The counterargument to BONC policies is simple: I am running out of fingers (at least on one hand) for counting the number of Los Angeles City Council representatives who have been indicted or are currently under investigation. If I add other scandals such as the Nury Martinez tape, I'm well into the second hand.

Let's consider the BONC as a test case for this analysis. The original Charter language establishes a Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC) which has two sorts of authority. The first is to establish neighborhood councils by vote. The second is to provide overall policy guidance. There is an additional power, which is to abolish a neighborhood council if there are extreme conditions which make this necessary, but it has rarely been used over the entire quarter century of our existence.

The problem with the BONC is that it fails to follow the original vision of the founders, which was to provide for independent neighborhood groups who determined their own path and destiny. Since the BONC members are appointed by the mayor (and appointments must be ratified by vote of the City Council), the BONC is about as non-independent of the bureaucracy as it is possible to be. They basically serve the mayor, and over the years this propensity has shown itself, and not to the better.

The BONC should either be abolished or turned into an elected body – perhaps a body which is chosen by action of neighborhood councils themselves. But simply abolishing this organization would suffice. Everything it does could be replaced easily enough, including the creation of a limited organization which serves solely to create and abolish neighborhood councils should there ever be conditions which demand it.

There is one more organization which needs to be looked at. It is called the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment. It was created in the 1999 Charter amendment process. The DONE is a city department which is supposed to assist neighborhood councils in our operations and in putting on a neighborhood council congress. In its current form and function, the DONE functions more as the nc police department than as a helpful servant. It keeps track of every nc board member in terms of required trainings, and denies the right to vote at board meetings to those who it deems to have run afoul of its rules. This is exactly contrary to the original vision of

the neighborhood councils as independent bodies which are chosen by election (in other words, letting the people decide who can vote on an nc board, and what the qualifications are).

It is possible that the DONE is offering some useful assistance to somebody at some level, but I'm not seeing it. What I am seeing is the occasional presence at a board meeting of somebody from DONE who tries to find some point of procedure to be critical about.

It goes on, but I'm going to stop here. Generations of City Councils, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, and mayors have added layer upon layer of rules and demands that get in the way of people doing what neighborhood council participants are supposed to do. There is a simple way of summarizing the problem, which goes like this:

Neighborhood Councils are supposed to tell the city government what we are thinking. Instead, the city tries to tell us what to think.

Some of the problem lies in the wording of the Charter itself. For example, do CityWatch readers know that a convicted rapist fresh out of prison can be elected to a neighborhood council board and can vote during its deliberations? This is the result of the last round of Charter reform, which tried to create a system in which any Los Angeles resident (and even some non-residents) can be elected to a neighborhood council.

There is much more to be said about this point, but in practice it creates a system in which election of neighborhood council board members has become increasingly cumbersome, to the extent that some board seat elections get less than half a dozen votes in total.

Meanwhile, the city boards and commissions and agencies and elected officials continually try to fix things and in so doing, make things worse. The buildup in the number of rules is analogous to the original formulation of Parkinson's Law, which explained why the number of employees in any government agency expands year after year, even when the original purpose has long since expired. The BONC and DONE are constrained in their hiring, so they make rules. There is little or no reason to retain BONC and DONE under a newly reformed Charter.

There is lots more to say, and I hope to say it at some future time here in CityWatch. In the meanwhile, consider a newly revamped neighborhood council system which has the freedom to function as it should.

And one other thing. There is some suggestion that neighborhood councils be given some real power. For example, they might have some authority (perhaps Veto authority) over zoning changes. It is worth thinking about.

(Bob Gelfand writes on science, culture, and politics for CityWatch. He can be reached at amrep535@sbcglobal.net)