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April 21, 2021

Honorable Councilmember Paul Krekorian, Chair and Members of the Budget and Finance Committee
Office of the City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

SUBJECT: COUNCIL FILE 21-0600 - DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD EMPOWERMENT FISCAL
YEAR 2021-2022 BUDGET REQUEST

Dear Honorable Members:

We would like to begin by expressing our sincere gratitude for your leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, which continues to be a declared emergency one year later. We appreciate your strength and resilience. The Mayor's Office of Budget and Innovation (MOBI) and our partners in the Office of the City Administrative Officer (CAO) have also been terrific to work with during the past year. Thank you.

The Department has reviewed Mayor Garcetti's FY 2021-2022 Proposed Budget and are grateful the Mayor recommended no further reductions. We have summarized items for which we seek support to better advance our mission *To promote citizen participation to make government more responsive to local needs* in the Neighborhood Council System (System). Our short-term requests are those necessary to comply with new mandates adopted during recent months for which the City Council did not allocate resources. Additional requests are those necessary to minimize liability for the City of Los Angeles and support the increasing *program* revenue to the Department with external funding.

The combined total for these requests is \$687,281. Of this total, \$182,561 is requested to support the new City Council mandates, and \$504,720 is for other requests regarding increasing revenue and decreasing liability. Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Respectfully Submitted,

Raquel Beltrán
GENERAL MANAGER

REQUESTS FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND SUPPORT

1. Fundraising / Grant Applications Team.

Request: Resolution authorities and funding for the following positions:

- A. 1 Senior Project Coordinator (\$76,875 - 9 months salary)
- B. 1 Accountant (\$54,246 - 9 months salary)
- C. \$25,000 - Salaries, As-Needed (1070)

Total Funding Requested for Fundraising / Grant Applications Support: \$156,121

Justification: The Department is entirely dependent on the General Fund for revenue. However, we believe that there may be external resources available to support expansion of our work and improve the System. Examples of efforts for which funding would be sought include development of a Neighborhood Council Emergency Preparedness Plan, with attention to disaster recovery disparities. Resources are also needed to address digital divide disparities experienced with our data literacy program. We are in need of professional assistance to develop a two-year board, year-round educational and training curriculum to include content relevant to the board members and separate content (sometimes overlapping) for stakeholders. Engagement should include presenters with the cultural competency to serve LA's diverse population.

A Senior Project Coordinator is requested to plan, develop, and implement a fundraising and grant application strategy. They will identify opportunities that align with Department goals and objectives and direct the work to successfully acquire additional funding and revenue. An Accountant is requested to work with the Senior Project Coordinator in tracking the receipt and expenditure of grants and additional revenue. The Accountant would provide financial reporting and ensure compliance with applicable regulations and guidelines. As-Needed funding is requested to provide administrative support and coordination of application submissions, correspondence, and communications.

Impact if Not Funded: If this request is not funded, the Department will continue to be wholly dependent on the General Fund for revenue. The Department will be unable to pursue grants or generate revenue to partially fund programs and operations, or expand upon services provided to the Neighborhood Council System and communities.

2. NC Resolution Program / Gender Identity & Gender Expression Training

Request: Resolution authorities and funding for the following positions:

- A. 1 Management Analyst (\$69,123 - 9 months salary)
- B. 2 Project Coordinators (\$129,476 - 9 months salary)
- C. \$15,000 - Contractual Services (3040)

Total Funding Requested for Dispute Resolution Program / Gender Identity & Gender Expression Training: \$213,599

Justification:

NC Resolution Team: During the past two years, the Department has experienced increased conflicts associated with board dynamic issues between board members and stakeholders. These conflicts have presented unique challenges in the virtual governance system created for neighborhood councils and consume approximately 60% of the staff resources. A NC Resolution Unit with dedicated resources are necessary to design and implement a program that builds the Department's competency to manage these growing circumstances.

A team of **neutral** Project Coordinators identifying these disputes quickly and addressing the concerns of the aggrieved parties can provide answers, training, and positive paths forward to drastically minimize any escalation. With the number of grievances and complaints coming from Neighborhood Councils, the Department needs to create an administrative team that can focus on handling these issues swiftly. The Field staff cannot both support Neighborhood Council board members and investigate them at the same time without creating tension in the relationship, so a separate team has to conduct this work instead.

A Management Analyst is requested to plan, develop, and implement the work of this team, 2 Project Coordinators will be responsible for intake and preparation of documents and information for review and consideration of potential action plans to resolve situations quickly and at the lowest possible level. Conflict needs to be administered in a supportive, empathetic, and systematic manner with clear guidelines, rules, and consequences. The NC Resolution Plan would reflect an approach of building common ground; opening lines of communication; ensuring representation and recognition; and building sustainable possibilities for resolution.

Council Action Requiring Mandatory Training for Board Members (CF 20-0990) - Gender Identity & Gender Expression Training: Pursuant to Council File 20-0990, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment was instructed by City Council to develop a plan and protocol to proactively provide training on issues relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion for all board members. The action was subsequently amended to include training on gender identity and gender expression.

Impact if Not Funded: Board members are volunteer City public servants. These board dynamics create potential liability for the City and reflect poorly on this grassroots arm of City government. A three part training has been conceptualized in partnership with the Civil and Human Rights and Equity Department which has allocated funding for part two. The first part will be administered and funded by the Personnel Department as part of their effort to implement the Mayor's Executive Directive #27 on racial equity at no cost to the Department. Additional funding is needed for the procurement of a service provider with the necessary background and experience to conduct effective and informative gender identity and gender expression training for the neighborhood councils. If this request is not funded, the Department will be greatly hindered in its ability to carry out the City Council's instructions appropriately.

3. Olivia Mitchell Youth Council (Council File 21-0182)

Request: Resolution authorities and funding for the following positions:

- A. 1 Management Analyst (\$69,123 - 9 months salary)
- B. 2 Project Assistants (\$98,438 - 9 months salary)

Total Funding Requested for Youth Council: \$167,561

Justification: On February 10, 2021, the City Council directed the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment to create the Olivia Mitchell Youth Council with the assistance of the Chief Legislative Analyst. The Youth Council will include one male and one female young person per council district which will serve one year terms. Funding is requested to establish a team that can develop, implement, and administer the Olivia Mitchell Youth Council effectively and carry out the will of the City Council.

A Management Analyst is requested to plan, develop, and implement the details of the Youth Council program. They will direct the work of 2 Project Assistants who will aid in the administrative and communication tasks of the project.

Impact if Not Funded: The Department has met with Ms. Mitchell to research the program support involved with administering a City of Los Angeles Youth Council. The request represents only a portion of the funding allocated to support this work over twenty year ago. Without dedicated funding, staff would need to reduce support for our Charter mandated mission which is direct neighborhood council support for board members and stakeholders.

4. Outreach Funding for Non-Election Year

Request: Continued funding for outreach of the Neighborhood Council System:

- A. \$20,000 - Printing & Binding (2120)
- B. \$80,000 - Contractual Services (3040)
- C. \$50,000 - Office and Administration (6010)

Total Funding Requested for Outreach: \$150,000

Justification: Since the formation of the Neighborhood Council System, the role, duty, of the Department to conduct outreach has been an unequivocal expectation. Our experience implementing a model *Elections Outreach Strategy* for the 2021 Neighborhood Council elections has provided evidence of the requirement for outreach to be conducted on an annual basis in order to address participation inequities in the System. Neighborhood Councils do not have the capacity to engage the public at the scale required to 1) education people about city government, 2) train the public on how to participate in their Neighborhood Councils and why it is important to do so, 3) to further one of the *desired* characteristics of Neighborhood Councils to be “*inclusive and open to all... stakeholders*”, and 4) “establish realistic standards for participation in Neighborhood Councils [NCRC 2007, item #16]. Past recommendations from Neighborhood Council review bodies have even recommended moving unspent Neighborhood Council funds at the “end of 3 years to be administered by DONE to support a Neighborhood Council outreach education and communication” program. The amount requested is a modest investment toward accomplishing the goals stated above.

Metrics to be developed would include accountability measurements to identify solutions to improve engagement of populations not participating such as youth, community organizations, immigrants, and non-citizen populations.

Impact if Not Funded: Outreach strategies will be minimal and insufficient to fulfill the expectations of the Department and Neighborhood Council System.

Total of All Funding Requests: \$687,281

ANTICIPATED SERVICE DELIVERY LEVELS BY PROGRAM

Department wide

The Department expects to maintain its four operational goals to strengthen the Department's position as a resource for NCs; strengthen the relationship with and service to the NCs; to improve NC engagement and advocacy approaches; and to improve City Hall's relationship / engagement with Neighborhood Councils. However, recent events have altered the foundational infrastructure of the Department's ability to provide its support and oversight as defined in Article IX, Section 900 of the Los Angeles City Charter.

Staff reductions have required a consolidation of Neighborhood Councils assigned to Directors and Neighborhood Empowerment Advocates (NEAs). Reductions in the area of administration required increasing requests on NEAs to perform some of the NC operational maintenance duties.

Using diverse methodologies and context-specific data to respond to 99 diverse Neighborhood Councils' needs and concerns, the Department's Listening and Learning Tour informs our program structure and expectations for the next 1-2 years. They operate as entities of LA City's government. The core value is to cultivate deep civic belonging and participation. Neighborhood Councils should be spaces where all residents can serve as vested stewards of their own neighborhoods. The data collected provides specific descriptions of language, governance, communications, and administrative needs from the City.

We are entering a new era of our signature *Empowered Virtual Governance*. We are navigating unknown territory relative to anticipated changes to the State's open meeting laws, including the Brown Act. We will be providing updates to the City Council on the operational impact and needs of the Department and System as more information becomes available.

Anticipated Challenges for All Direct NC Support Programs:

- Continued low levels of direct neighborhood council support until vacancies are filled.
- Compromised oversight of NC meetings and activities.
- Limited ability to support Citywide initiatives.
- Inadequate security for Department employees at NC meetings (assumes the return to in-person meetings).
- Limited knowledge about the legislated changes that may be adopted and how those changes will impact operations.

Budget Program 4701 - Neighborhood Council Operations / Direct NC Support

Program Overview:

In addition to providing direct Neighborhood Council support, the Operations team manages department-wide systems for all Neighborhood Council functions. This Division is currently without a director. The responsibilities have been absorbed by the General Manager.

Performance Metrics:

Prog Code	Performance Measure Name	Unit/Value	Anticipated 2021-22
4701	Percentage of Staffed Neighborhood Council meetings	%	85

Budget Program 4703 - Policy & Government Relations / Direct NC Support

Program Overview:

In addition to providing direct Neighborhood Council (NC) support, the Policy and Government Relations Team conducts planning, research, development, and implementation of effective Departmental policies to promote civic participation and effective Neighborhood Council practices including, but not limited to, agenda preparation, conflict resolution, board member training, regional trainings, analysis of grievances, Community Impact Statement support, parliamentary procedure / Brown Act / bylaws interpretation guidance, liaison with elected officials and City departments, and collaboration with community organizations.

The Policy and Government Relations Team also supports the Neighborhood Council liaisons, including the Homelessness, Emergency Preparedness, Aging, and Film liaisons, and also collaborates on the implementation of Neighborhood Council system reforms as proposed by Council. Furthermore, the Policy & Government Relations team monitors and tracks legislation including the development of a Legislative summary report distributed to all Neighborhood Council board members, and also implements policies from the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners.

Performance Metrics:

Prog Code	Performance Measure Name	Unit/Value	Anticipated 2020-21
4703	Number of Community Impact Statements Submitted by NCs	#	750

Budget Program 4704 - Outreach & Communications / Direct NC Support

Program Overview:

In addition to providing direct Neighborhood Council (NC) support, the Outreach and Communications Team provides ongoing Citywide outreach, marketing and communication strategies for the Department and City as well as for Neighborhood Councils to raise the awareness of the Neighborhood Council system in Los Angeles, which feeds into the Neighborhood Council (NC) elections during the spring of every other year.

Performance Metrics:

Prog Code	Performance Measure Name	Unit/Value	Anticipated 2020-21
4704	Number of Candidates for 2021 Neighborhood Council Elections	# Candidates	n/a
4704	Number of Voters for 2021 Neighborhood Council Elections	# Voters	n/a

Budget Program 4705 - Office of Community Engagement and Innovation

Program Overview:

The Office of Community Engagement (OCE), created within the Department and in partnership with the Office of the Mayor, the Personnel Department, the Information and Technology Agency (ITA), and various other City agencies, proposes the expansion of current efforts to support and develop a structured way to respond to the engagement needs of the Neighborhood Councils (NCs) and under participating communities in Los Angeles.

Performance Metrics:

Prog Code	Performance Measure Name	Unit/Value	Anticipated 2020-21
4705	Number of Civic University Sessions directed to Neighborhood Council Board Members & attendance*	#sessions / Attendance	1
4705	Number of Departments Partnered with Neighborhood Councils	# Partnerships	10

* Assumes ability to conduct in-person meetings

Budget Program 4750 - General Administration and Support

Program Overview:

The General Administrative and Support Program (GASP) for the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment is comprised of staff supporting the Executive Office, Board of Neighborhood Commissioners support, Customer Service, Budget, Accounting and Payroll, Human Resources and Investigations, IT/Systems and Marketing, Public Information, Facilities and Records Management including PRA requests, NC Administrative Support Services, and Contract development and implementation.