

DRAFT 5-11-22

Dear Vanessa Serrano,

cc Raquel Beltran

cc Raul Precidio

cc Elise Ruden

This letter is in response to your letter dated March 10, 2022 in which you expressed concerns about allegations of exclusion and/or discrimination by the Sunland -Tujunga Neighborhood Council.

Except for the blatant discrimination expressed by a Board Member, who was censored for that action and was also brought up for removal, no other board member's conduct has raised to that level. We would like to state our opposition to your claims and "concerns." We would also like to point out that Department of Neighborhood Empowerment did everything they could to interfere with the appropriate steps taken to correct those actions and chose, rather, to support the discriminatory behavior and violations of both the Code of Conduct and our Bylaws. Further, the Department has shown a complete bias against this Neighborhood Council and has tried to force us to change our Bylaws and Standing rules to accommodate the Department's opinion instead of listening to what is actually happening.

Let us first address the Department's lack of Due process and its failure to follow the plan for Neighborhood Councils. You state that many complaints have been filed against us.

According to the Plan for Neighborhood Councils:

"Complaints against a Certified Neighborhood Council of any nature shall be filed with DONE, on a form prescribed by DONE. A copy of the complaint shall be delivered by DONE to the affected Certified Neighborhood Council against which the complaint is made within five business days of receipt of the complaint. Exhaustive efforts to remedy all complaints shall be taken by DONE. In the case where a complaint is in regards to a violation of this Plan

and a remedy cannot be reached, the process prescribed in Article VI, Section 5 shall be followed.”

Since our Board did not receive any of the aforementioned complaints it is obvious the Department is in violation of Due Process. **IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT THE DEPARTMENT, ITSELF, DID NOT FEEL THE COMPLAINTS ROSE TO THE LEVEL OF ACTIONABLE COMPLAINTS.** We would also like to state that over half of the complaints were filed against the previous Neighborhood Council Board. It is unprofessional for the Department to make accusations against people who were not even on the Board and try to punish them for it. Many on this board have no idea of what they are being accused of nor were they given an opportunity to respond to the complaints.

In the letter you try to tell us we should change our Bylaws and Standing Rules.

Let us please review The Plan for Neighborhood Councils:

Item 4 Plan for Neighborhood Councils:

“Certified Neighborhood Councils shall be as independent, self-governing, and self-directed as possible. The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) shall assist Certified Neighborhood Councils to pursue options, including, but not limited to, tax-exempt status and/or non-profit incorporation, to strengthen their independence. Tax exempt status and/or non-profit incorporation will have no effect on a Certified Neighborhood Council's eligibility for assistance, monetary or otherwise, from DONE.”

Instead of the Department being in a supportive role your Department has supported, instead, over a long period of time, those attacking us and has ignored this Neighborhood Council when we have asked for DONE's help.

The truth of this whole situation is we have a small group of people in our community who have been assaulting and attacking our Board members to the point that many fear for our safety. The Department has refused to speak to the LAPD Sergeant who is concerned for the safety and welfare of our Board members. Many complaints have been filed by the Board Members which have been ignored by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and other city departments .

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment has harassed and discriminated against many of our Board Members based on Race, Religion, Political Opinion and Disability, by ignoring these things which have been

perpetrated against our Board Members and instead of the Department providing support, the Department has supported those committing these atrocities and The Department further acted on multiple occasions to try to stop the board from being able to act against some of this abuse. We will no longer allow the Department to continue to treat us in this manner. We have the right to not support people for our Board and Committees that will create an even more hostile environment than the one we are currently working under. Our refusal to vote in favor of the hostility, is our right as Neighborhood Council Board Members. The Department does not have the right to dictate to us how we fill our Board Seat when we are following the Bylaws.

The Department needs to remember that all “workers” (including volunteers) are protected under California State Law against discrimination.

In case the Department is not aware harassment becomes unlawful when the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile , or abusive. We feel that the level is beyond this point.

The State of California Law- Fair Employment and Housing Act. Is where you will find all of the rules and protections for Volunteers and that are to be provided under California State Law.

We ask the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment Administration and Staff to cease this behavior against our Board as it is adding to the hostile environment and adding undue stress to many of our Board Members , including those that are disabled with issues that are exacerbated by relentless attacks against them. This Board is not here to serve a political agenda, we are here to serve our community as the Stakeholders in this community elected us to do. We also ask again for the ability to have Security at meetings when they go back to in-person. This has been requested multiple times and has been ignored. We have the right to do this work without the Department adding to an already hostile environment.

Sincerely,