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January 27, 2023

Honorable Chairmember Eunisses Hernandez
Members of the Neighborhoods and Community Enrichment Committee

c/o Office of the City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90012

SUBJECT: REPORT REGARDING COUNCIL FILE NO. 22-1070 (LEE/BUSCAINO):
Neighborhood Council Meetings/EmpowerLA Virtual Governance (EVG)
System/In-Person/Emergency Declarations

BACKGROUND

At its September 14, 2022 meeting, the City Council instructed “*the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment [Department/EmpowerLA], with assistance from the City Attorney, to report on viable options for conducting Neighborhood Council meetings in the future, such as the use of virtual/EVG system meetings, the return to in-person meetings, or a hybrid meeting option; including any related legal implications, and how these approaches relate to emergency declarations.*” The City Council further requested the Department to “review [and] assess if individual Neighborhood Councils may be granted the flexibility to select a preferred meeting option that meets their needs.”

Separately, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC) requested the Department’s EVG-h Workgroup of neighborhood council leaders (formed in 2021) to explore the best method for administering a hybrid governance system.

The Department partnered with Cal State LA’s Social Equity Engagement geo-Data (SEED) Scholars program to survey neighborhood council leaders about how personally and organizationally prepared they are to return to in-person or hybrid meetings. This

dashboard shares the results of the [EmpowerLA Readiness Survey](#).¹ After extensive deliberation, the Workgroup determined that the COVID-19 pandemic had compromised and continues to impede the ability of the Neighborhood Council System (System) to uniformly return to in-person meetings. As a result, the administration of a hybrid meeting pilot program was recommended after a thorough review of all of the issues.

After the Commission's action, three unanticipated amendments to the State's open meeting law, the [Ralph M. Brown Act](#) (1953), were signed into law by Governor Newsom in September 2022 ([AB 2449](#) (Rubio), [AB 2647](#) (Levine), [SB 1100](#) (Cortese)). Although the statutes do not authorize the administration of virtual-only meetings, they enable the administration of hybrid meetings, modify public access to records requirements, and remove individuals from meetings based on precisely defined behavior that disrupts the administration of the meeting.

The State's action has created an urgent need to seek legislative relief from the legislations' constrictive requirements and resources that will support the administration of hybrid meetings. Without a formal, adequately resourced governance framework and infrastructure, it is uncertain if the Neighborhood Council System will operate with consistency, clarity, and equity.

Recently, Governor Newsom announced his intention to lift the State declaration of COVID emergency effective February 28, 2023. Therefore, effective March 1, 2023, the City's Brown Act bodies will be required to administer in-person meetings. Alternatively, Brown Act bodies may choose to administer hybrid meetings under conditions specified in the Brown Act as amended by [AB 2449](#) (Rubio). But, again, until another amendment in State law is realized, Brown Act bodies, such as neighborhood councils, may not administer virtual-only meetings.

Therefore, the administration of a hybrid pilot program with a small subset of neighborhood councils (NCs) is recommended. Fourteen neighborhood councils have been identified to participate. The attachments to this report detail the Department's efforts to manage the many governance changes to the City's System of Neighborhood Councils.

RECOMMENDATION

1. REQUEST the Chief Legislative Analyst return with a report on proposed amendments to [Government Code Section 54953](#), the Ralph M. Brown Act

¹ Beltrán, Raquel, et al. "Neighborhood Council Return to In-Person Readiness Survey." *ArcGIS StoryMaps*, edited by Montiel Ayala and Dr. Dawn Dennis, Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, 1 Sept. 2022, storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/c9bbd63bb8fc4f03927bad2ca28fb9a8.

(1953), authorizing the Los Angeles City Council to approve exemptions to the Law to support the variable continuance of neighborhood council meetings. Said amendments may include:

- a. Enabling neighborhood councils to host virtual-only board and committee meetings;
 - b. Authorizing the City of Los Angeles to exempt activities and meetings hosted by the City of Los Angeles from the Brown Act as deemed necessary, such as workshops, info sessions, and retreats;
 - c. Authorizing the City of Los Angeles to make local determinations related to the need for remote governance and participation by the public in neighborhood council meetings without a declaration of emergency;
 - d. Authorizing the City of Los Angeles to waive or determine the circumstances under which a member could seek to join virtually beyond those specified in [AB 2449](#) (Rubio);
 - e. Waive the posting requirements in [Section 54953 \(b\) \(3\)](#) requiring the advance posting of remote meeting attendance by board members joining virtually.
 - f. Authorizing the City of Los Angeles to make determinations related to the scheduling of neighborhood council board and committee meetings.
2. REQUEST the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners return with a report on governance policies that would be necessary to administer hybrid meetings in the neighborhood council system to include consideration of race, equity, language, accessibility, safety, dysfunctional engagement practices, and compliance.
 3. REQUEST the Chief Administrative Officer return with a report on the feasibility of funding a hybrid meeting pilot program with the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment;
 4. REQUEST that the Mayor include adequate funding to enable the administration of Empowered Virtual Governance-Hybrid meetings in the Neighborhood Council System, based on the findings and recommended best practices evolving from the hybrid pilot program;
 5. REQUEST the City Attorney return with an amendment to the Los Angeles Administrative Code authorizing the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment to promulgate rules and regulations relative to the scheduling of neighborhood council board and committee meetings.

FISCAL IMPACT

Neither the City Administrative Officer nor the Chief Legislative Analyst has completed a financial analysis of this report. It would be necessary to assess the increased staff cost associated with a variable governance system where each NC determines its governance model.

NCS AND THE RALPH M. BROWN ACT (1953) IN THE COVID PANDEMIC ERA

The System was designed to increase local participation in City government. NC board members are elected volunteers. They are legislative bodies who administer their meetings under the Ralph M. Brown Act (1953) requirements. Once certified, the burden of Brown Act compliance became the individual NC's responsibility. The City Charter assigns oversight responsibilities to the Department.

However, when the System was created by the framers of the Los Angeles City Charter, adding Article IX, which authorized the creation of the System, the challenges the Brown Act posed NCs were not fully considered or resolved. One consequence is that the System evolved into an inequitable system in several ways.

The Covid Pandemic changed the System's governance model from a 100% in-person meeting system to a 100% virtual governance system. The Brown Act has been partially suspended during the pandemic (State and City Declarations of Emergency, [AB 361](#) (Rivas)). In response, the Department developed meeting protocols and Zoom settings tailored to Brown Act's requirements and Zoom functionality.

Additionally, [AB 2449](#) (Rubio), provides alternative teleconference procedures:

- At least a quorum of the members of the legislative body must participate in person from a singular physical location identified on the agenda, which location will be open to the public and within the boundaries of the local agency;
- A member may only teleconference for publicly disclosed "just cause" or in "emergency circumstances" approved by the legislative body; and
- A member may only teleconference for a limited number of meetings.

The new provisions are in addition to those allowed by [AB 361](#) (Rivas) (so long as there is a state of emergency) and those allowed by traditional teleconferencing rules.

The new provisions are likely so onerous that they may not be a practical alternative for most local agency officials or for agencies that would like to meet virtually as a matter of practice.

In anticipation of the 2023 Brown Act amendments, namely [AB 2449](#) (Rubio), the Department's virtual governance protocols and Zoom settings have been updated and

are under review with the City Attorney's office for conformity with City rules and regulations.

Amending the Brown Act (Recommendation #1) would enable the City Council to advocate for legislative relief from the aspects of the Brown Act that jeopardize the ability of many NCs to continue to function. In addition, the proposed amendments in that recommendation authorize the City Council to make local determinations about the law's applicability to NCs, without compromising the spirit of the Brown Act.

The attached reports from the EVG-h Workgroup show that although some NCs are ready to return to in-person meetings, many NCs still need to prepare to return to in-person meetings. Those still preparing to require various types of support from the City. Far more preparations are needed for hybrid meetings. Therefore, piloting hybrid meetings in the System seemed the best approach. A proposed pilot program post February 28, 2023, would still need to follow either the traditional teleconferencing rules under the Brown Act or those under [AB 2449](#) (Rubio). Unless a state of emergency or social distancing measures are in place. A pilot program would allow the Department to assess how the new changes to the Brown Act and the draft protocols could be implemented with a select number of NCs and evaluate the results.

The following reports on current efforts to transition the Neighborhood Council System to the new methods proscribed in the new laws, which took effect January 1, 2023.

EMPOWERED VIRTUAL GOVERNANCE (EVG) PILOT PROGRAM

In collaboration with the EVG-h Workgroup, the Department developed recommendations on the best approach to the looming return to in-person and [AB 2449](#) (Rubio) hybrid meetings. The reports detail real-time challenges faced by NCs in their meeting governance.

The essential elements of the pilot program were produced in the attached report by the EVG-h Workgroup. The report considers a 14 NC-sized pilot program as the ideal number to ensure a balanced representation across the City. Factors determining the selection of 14 neighborhood councils included community demographics and the Department's operational capacity to support the new governance requirements as a System. The proposed pilot program for City Council support is projected to run for at least six months and no longer than 12 months. In addition, two hybrid meeting program models were studied and developed.

Option #1 (equipment purchase for the NC, technical support, and security services) - estimated cost is **\$199,000 for a 6-month pilot program**.

Equipment Purchase

An estimated **\$10,000 - \$15,000 per NC** in equipment purchases is required with this option. This equipment would need to be purchased by the City and assigned to the participating NC. However, if the NC chooses not to continue to administer hybrid meetings for any reason, a decision regarding the disposition of the equipment would need to be made. This cost is approximately **\$140,000** for a 6-month pilot program.

Audio Visual Support

Additionally, there would be a monthly cost for an audio/visual (AV) technical specialist with this option. AV support is essential to ensure operational equity in the NC System. This option would require retaining professional services firms similar to those supporting the City Council’s IT/audio functions (council audio). The recommendation is for the City to issue a Request For Proposal (RFP) to find suitable vendors to support the technical administration of this model of hybrid meetings (to be considered in recommendation #3).

Six months of AV support is approximately \$500 per NC meeting (\$3,000 for six months per NC). Therefore, the estimated cost of AV support for 14 NCs is roughly **\$42,000**.

Security Services Support

The *EmpowerLA Readiness Survey* shows NC leaders have substantial concerns about pandemic health and safety and physical safety at in-person NC meetings. As a result, the Department consulted with LAPD on the costs of providing security services at NC meetings. There are three options available. The most expensive option is contracting an LAPD Sworn Officer at the NC meeting. The least costly option involves contracting with an LAPD-approved private security guard service.

Using the least expensive option to estimate costs, we calculated the six-month cost to be **\$17,000 for security**.

The estimated cost of a 6-month pilot program is as follows for Option #1*:

Description	Per NC Cost one-time or monthly cost	6-month Cost per NC	Cost for 14 NCs (rounded)
Equipment (one-time)	\$10,000	n/a	\$140,000
AV Support (When equipment is purchased)	\$500	\$3,000	\$42,000
Security	\$200	\$1,200	\$17,000

(Minimum of 4 billing hours per meeting)			
Total Cost	\$10,700	\$4,200	\$199,000

**This cost estimate does not include the additional costs of storing the equipment at a City approved facility and transportation costs. It also does not cover the cost for the impact on the Office of the City Clerk Funding Division for the management of NC equipment inventory controls and reports.*

Option #2 (vendor managed + security) - estimated cost of **\$59,000** for a **6-month pilot program**.

This option would require the retention of an AV professional services firm(s) similar to those supporting the City Council’s IT/audio functions (i.e., Council Audio). For a six-month pilot program where no equipment is purchased and an audio-visual specialist manages equipment needs and logistics, the cost estimate is **\$42,000**. Providing security continues to be recommended.

The estimated cost of a 6-month pilot program is as follows for Option #2:

Description	Per NC Cost one-time or monthly cost	6-month Cost per NC	Cost for 14 NCs (rounded)
AV Support	\$500	\$3,000	\$42,000
Security (Minimum of 4 billing hours per meeting)	\$200	\$1,200	\$17,000
Total Cost	\$700	\$4,200	\$59,000

ADDITIONAL REQUESTS FROM CITY COUNCIL

As part of its motion, the City Council requested information on several additional aspects of EmpowerLA's virtual governance system for neighborhood councils.

Neighborhood Council Viable Meeting Options

Effective March 1, 2023, all State Brown Act bodies are required to meet in person. However, they may administer hybrid meetings under the requirements in [AB 2449](#) (Rubio).

NC Virtual Only Meetings

Currently, NCs are holding their Board and Committee meetings virtually, per the Declaration of Emergency that the [State](#) and [City](#) issued in 2020. Additionally, the BONC Resolution for Temporary Continuation of Virtual Neighborhood Council Meetings ([Resolution #2021-1](#); Adopted 6-21-21 and continued as long as legally permissible) requires NCs to meet virtually with the support of the Department's EVG [Plan](#) and [Protocols](#).

However, this virtual-only meeting option will most likely be eliminated barring circumstances that would warrant extending the State of Emergency or imposed social distancing/safety measures. This is due to the changes in the Brown Act under [AB 2449](#) (Rubio), the end of the Governor's State of Emergency, the absence of social distancing, and other safety measures from the State and City jurisdictions. While on December 13, 2022, the Los Angeles City Council took official action ([Council File #20-0291](#)) on setting February 1, 2023, as the date to terminate the State of local emergency. The legal implications of these changes in declared emergencies are discussed further below.

NC In-Person Only Meetings

When NCs only meet in person and elect not to use teleconferencing or hybrid as an option for their Board Members or the public to access their meetings, the physical location of their meetings will be necessary. When meeting in person, the NC must consider how they will utilize the meeting space to conduct an orderly Board meeting and the requirements for bringing copies of the agenda as well as supplemental materials. There will be other non-Brown Act related concerns that NCs will have to manage and address, such as parking, language, and food.

With this option, the Board has chosen to hold their meetings without hybrid or teleconferencing as an option for other Board Members who may wish to join the meeting but might not be able to attend. This ties into how the Board defines an absence in their bylaws and its associated effects when a Board Member misses enough meetings to trigger a removal.

Additionally, NC committee meeting locations are also subject to ADA compliance requirements. Although efforts have been underway to complete inspections of the NCs' primary meeting locations for board meetings, approximately 25% remain to be completed. Also, the vaccination requirements for City employees and volunteers apply to NC Board Members, at this time.

For the reasons mentioned earlier, the Department believes that pursuing amendments to the Brown Act authorizing the City of Los Angeles to make local determinations about

the feasibility of implementing specific elements of this open meeting law with the City's system of neighborhood councils is paramount (Refer to Recommendation #1).

NC Hybrid Meetings

Regarding hybrid meetings, there are approximately three types of hybrid meeting possibilities.

1. In-person only for the Board. In-person and teleconferencing for the public.

In this option, the Board has elected to use a limited teleconferencing hybrid, where the public can attend via a two-way audiovisual platform or using a two-way non-internet dependent telephonic service combined with a live webcasting of the meeting. Here, the Board is choosing to participate in meetings in person only. They would likely be choosing this option to provide the public more flexibility in attending meetings by eliminating participation barriers. In addition, this possible meeting option is permissible under the [AB 2449](#) (Rubio) changes to the Brown Act since the limit to remote meetings does not apply to stakeholders.

2. In-person and teleconferencing for both the Board and the public.

In this option, the Board would allow its Board Members and the public to attend their meetings via teleconference as defined in the law. Under [AB 2449](#) (Rubio), Board Members are limited in the method and frequency of teleconference participation. A Board Member may only attend a meeting remotely no more than three (3) times in a calendar year. It still offers the public the flexibility to participate in person or remotely.

3. In-person for the Board, and remote public comment locations (and viewing) for the public (satellite locations).

In this option, the Brown Act allows for limited use of remote meeting engagement. The option enables the Brown Act body to arrange for the public to participate from a broadcasted alternate meeting location within the NCs boundaries. Members of the public may address the Body from the alternate location. Though this option does not allow the Board Members to attend remotely, the Board would need to maintain a quorum in-person at a primary physical location where the meeting is being held.

Question from City Council: What are the related legal implications? Where do the authorities lie?

The City Charter ([Section 101](#)) defines the Powers of the City as having "...all powers possible for a charter City to have under the constitution and laws of this state as fully and completely as though they were specifically enumerated in the Charter...".

Under the Brown Act, California Government Code Section 54950, failure to adhere to the rules for meetings and teleconferencing could result in rendering decisions made by boards and committees void and result in civil and in some instances criminal penalties.

Question from City Council: How do these approaches relate to emergency declarations?

If the emergency is lifted, [AB 2449](#) (Rubio) takes effect. If it is not lifted, the social distancing pursuant to [AB 361](#) (Rivas) remains in effect.

[AB 361](#) (Rivas) enables the State's Brown Act bodies to determine that social distancing is necessary based on local conditions. [AB 361](#) (Rivas) expires in 2024 and requires a State declaration of emergency to be in effect before a municipality, in this case, makes such a determination.

BONC is the only body that can make the findings under [AB 361](#) (Rivas). Only a legislative body can make this finding.

Question from City Council: Can Neighborhood Councils be granted individual flexibility to select a preferred meeting option that meets their needs?

So long as the NC does not expand beyond what is permissible in either [AB 361](#) (Rivas) (under declared emergency), or [AB 2449](#) (Rubio) (lifted declared emergency/updated Brown Act), the NC should be able to implement what fits their needs best.

However, if there is not one consistent policy for the entire NC system, it will arguably render disparate results. For example, if in-person meetings are the only option offered in one area, but many people cannot get to the in-person meeting every month, this will decrease participation for that specific NC.

The best approach would probably be to have one consistent policy for the entire NC system (See Recommendation #2).

As currently written, the Brown Act does not allow NCs to hold all virtual meetings. Instead, [AB 2449](#) (Rubio) grants the authority to either choose to hold meetings in-person only (as was the case before the pandemic) or to take action to hold hybrid meetings according to the restrictions defined in the legislation described earlier. Approval of revised meeting protocols and BONC policies is in process and under review.

CONCLUSION

In consultation with NC leaders and the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC), the Department has administered a virtual governance system unlike any other system in the State and the nation. Now that the State Legislature has taken steps to

amend the Brown Act and modify the teleconferencing laws, the Department believes it is necessary to aggressively pursue amendments to the Government Code to enable neighborhood councils to function and serve their communities more effectively. In the interim, piloting the hybrid meeting governance enabled in 2023 and pre-existing should take place with a report to City Council on lessons learned presented as soon as feasible.

COMMUNITY IMPACT STATEMENTS

Statements were filed by: **Hollywood United NC** (FOR - 10/10/22), **Mid City West NC** (FOR - 10/11/22), **Tarzana NC** (FOR - 10/25/22), **North Hills West NC** (FOR - 10/26/22), **NC Valley Village** (FOR - 10/26/22), **Palms NC** (FOR - 11/02/22), **NoHo NC** (FOR - 11/09/22), **Del Rey NC** (FOR - 11/10/22), **Sherman Oaks NC** (FOR - 1/09/23).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raquel Beltran". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line under the name.

Raquel Beltran, General Manager
Department of Neighborhood Empowerment

*****List of Attachments at the end of this report is offered for reference and support starting on page 12.***

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ATTACHMENT 'A'

EVG-h Workgroup - Pilot Program Selections

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EVG-h Workgroup - Pilot Program Selections

The EVG-h Workgroup has worked very hard with the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners and the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment to arrive at a point where a list of Neighborhood Councils (NCs) can be set forth for entry into the pilot program for Hybrid Governance. It is important to know the process on how this decision was made:

- EVG-h Workgroup collectively wrote and approved a report detailing the need for a pilot program for the Hybrid Governance System
- The Mayor's Office provided a team of scholars to do a survey of the NC System for the NC's desire to be in the pilot program and several other key demographics
- 40% of Board Members responded, providing statistical significance
- The EVG-h Workgroup selected criteria they deemed important for the selection process: NC Size, City Wide representation, a healthy balance of NCs needing translation, balancing between "homeowner" vs "renter" NCs, Age of Board Members
- The Commissioners asked for two choices apiece and this list contains three NCs per commissioner, two choices and one backup
- This list was made with the data from the accompanying spreadsheet for the EVG-h Workgroup to vote on to send to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners for their approval and inclusion in their presentation of the EVG-h Proposal to the LA City Council

The list of Neighborhood Councils to be recommended for the pilot program are:

NORTH VALLEY: Panorama City & Chatsworth (Backup: Sunland-Tujunga)

SOUTH VALLEY: Woodland Hills-Warner Center & Sherman Oaks (Backup: Reseda)

CENTRAL LOS ANGELES: Historic Cultural North & Wilshire Center Koreatown (Backup: Mid City West)

EAST LOS ANGELES: Rampart Village & Greater Cypress Park (Backup: Lincoln Heights)

SOUTH LOS ANGELES: Empowerment Congress Southwest & Empowerment Congress North (Backup: Zapata King)

WEST LOS ANGELES: Westchester/Playa & Bel Air-Beverly Crest (Backup: Palms)

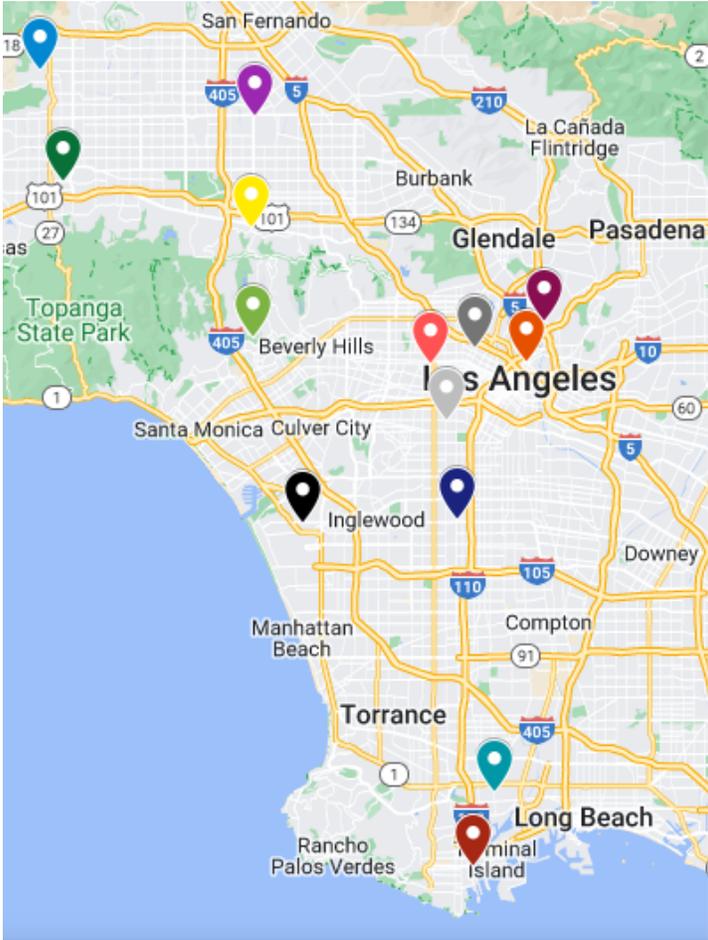
HARBOR: Wilmington & Northwest San Pedro (Backup: Central San Pedro)

This list of 14 Neighborhood Councils includes:

- 3 of the largest Neighborhood Councils
- 4 of the smallest Neighborhood Councils
- 6 require the use of translation (28 translation needed : 71 not needed overall)
- 5 are "homeowner" majority, while 9 are "renter majority" (26 owner : 73 Renter overall)
- 1 each was selected to add "youngest NC" & "older NC" from the data set
- Contains all 12 regions, with doubles in West Los Angeles & the Harbor

NEXT STEPS: Approve this list, then work with the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners & Department of Neighborhood Empowerment on a unified presentation to the LA City Council

Proposed Map



-  Panorama City NC
-  Chatsworth NC
-  Woodland Hills NC
-  Sherman Oaks NC
-  Historic Cultural North NC
-  Wilshire Center-Koreatown NC
-  Rampart Village NC
-  Greater Cypress Park NC
-  Southwest NC
-  ECNANDC
-  Westchester / Playa NC
-  BABCNC
-  Wilmington NC
-  Northwest San Pedro NC

ATTACHMENT 'B'

Empowered Virtual Governance – Hybrid (EVG-h) Workgroup Status Report

[\(BACK TO LIST OF ATTACHMENTS\)](#)

Empowered Virtual Governance – Hybrid (EVG-h) Workgroup Status Report
(October 18, 2021)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1gyjmIYY9osw-c4b9QsBRePCpclcRgJF0/view>

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RAQUEL BELTRÁN
GENERAL MANAGER

October 18, 2021

TO: President Eli Lipmen, Members of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners

FROM: Raquel Beltrán, General Manager

SUBJECT: Empowered Virtual Governance – Hybrid (EVG-*h*) Workgroup Status Report

BACKGROUND: On March 4, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom and correspondingly Mayor Eric Garcetti adopted emergency declarations due to the coronavirus's (COVID-19) accelerated spread into a global pandemic. The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment responded by designing an Empowered Virtual Governance System for the 99 Neighborhood Councils in Los Angeles. Since May 1, 2020, NCs have led the region as skilled administrators of virtual meetings on volunteer-run advisory boards.

Since May 2020, the pandemic's troubling and unstable evolution has required state legislators to propagate numerous changes to the open meeting laws governing local meetings. As a result, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners also adopted the [Temporary Continuation of Virtual Neighborhood Council Meetings \(06-21-21\)](#) resolution requiring Councils to meet virtually through December 2021.

The relative success of virtual meetings throughout the state is often measured by the reported increase in attendance at public meetings. This reported increase in attendance has generated interest to enable jurisdictions to meet in a hybrid format (in-person and virtually). As a result, discussion amongst neighborhood councils on the subject has increased as well. In July 2021, the Commission accepted a Department recommendation to form an exploratory EVG-*h* Workgroup.

FISCAL IMPACT: No fiscal impact at this time. However, a substantial fiscal impact is anticipated if hybrid meetings come into fruition in the future.

REQUESTED ACTION: Review the EVG-h Status Report and determine if future action should be taken.

PUBLIC COMMENT(S): Comments and Community Impact Statements filed are posted on the Commission's website. A link to the resources folder containing these items is available on the Commission's agenda. No public comment was filed as of the writing of this report.

SUMMARY:

The Department prepared a project description and scope of work for the EVG-h Workgroup. The project description described the composition of the Workgroup, selection process, resource requirements, and anticipated meeting schedule. A twenty-four-member Workgroup was formed. The participants consisted of fourteen members appointed by the Commission and the remaining members appointed by the Department. The EVG-h scope of work called for a workgroup series of 5 meetings to be concluded by October. The meeting dates and times were selected by the members and considered the various work schedules and Neighborhood Council meeting schedules as well. The Workgroup appointments were made with an effort to achieve the greatest possible balance of regional perspectives, gender balance, ethnicity, language needs, and experiences with accessibility accommodations. Meeting notes for these meetings, the roster of participants, and meeting materials are available using the EVG-h link to a digital folder. The Workgroup status report is attached to this memo.

CONCLUSION:

The Department thanks the neighborhood councils leaders serving on the EVG-h Workgroup. Their were invigorating, straightforward, and thorough. Special thanks are expressed to Human Resource Advocate for the Economic and Workforce Development Department, Gary de La Rosa. Mr. de La Rosa's facilitation of the five meetings were greatly appreciated by the members of the Workgroup. We were fortunate to have his services available to us. Additional appreciate is expressed to the EmpowerLA Leadership Team and staff supporting this effort. We appreciate the Commission's support of this process and are available to answer questions. Thank you.

Respectfully,



Raquel Beltran, General Manager
Department of Neighborhood
Empowerment

Attachment: EVG-h Workgroup Report
EVG-h Roster
EVG-h Workgroup Status Report
EVG-h Presentation

Board of Neighborhood Commissioners Empowered Virtual Governance-Hybrid Workgroup Status Report

10/18/21

I. Background

The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (Department) supports the operation of the 99 Neighborhood Councils (NCs) in accordance with the City Council-approved [Plan for a Citywide System of Neighborhood Councils \(Plan\)](#). The Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (Commission) sets policy for the NC System. Additionally, the Department provides operational, administrative, and legal support to the NC System.

Before the pandemic, all NC meetings, consisting of General Assembly and Committee meetings, were administered live and in person, with no possibility of electronic meetings or board members and others participating virtually. On April 17, 2020, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (EmpowerLA) released its EmpowerLA Virtual Governance Plan: A Plan for Digital Success in the Era of COVID-19. EmpowerLA's goals during this initial period of the COVID-19 pandemic were to help Neighborhood Councils SEEK accurate information about the emergency, provide Neighborhood Councils with tools that they could SHARE with their communities, and, by following the Mayor's March 4, 2020, STAY SAFE (Safer at Home) executive orders.

Now 18-months later, the pandemic's continued evolution requires changes the EVG's operations. In June 2021, BONC adopted the [Temporary Continuation of Virtual Neighborhood Council Meetings](#) resolution to require the continuation of neighborhood council virtual meetings through December 2021, as permitted by law.

On June 6, 2021, the Department requested and received support from the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC) to assemble a workgroup to provide recommendations on extending and making permanent the EVG System (see attached work plan). The work plan describes extending virtual meetings in the neighborhood council system and expanding the System to embrace hybrid meetings (virtual and in-person meetings). The inclusion of a hybrid system in the EVG work plan was deemed timely and relevant given the increase in legislation seeking to amend the State's open meeting law (the Brown Act) to enable hybrid meetings for state and local legislative jurisdictions.

A twenty-four-member Empowered Virtual Governance (EVG) Workgroup was formed and began meeting in September 2021. The appointees represent a diverse pool of experienced and knowledgeable neighborhood council board members who have implemented EVG for over a year and a half. Fourteen members were selected by the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (two nominees per Commissioner). The remaining members were appointed by the Department.

Currently, the rules governing virtual meetings were temporarily modified with the September 16, 2021 adoption of Assembly Bill 361 (AB361) (Rivas). AB361, which took effect October 1, 2021, allows jurisdictions to hold virtual public meetings via teleconferencing channels like Zoom during a state of declared emergency if certain conditions are met.

Unless State Laws change in the future or an exemption for the virtual meeting is granted, all meetings will return to “in person required” status once the emergency declaration (State or local) is no longer in effect. Many NCs have grown accustomed to this new reality of virtual meetings and have found that it benefits their community, while others long for a return to the days of in-person meetings. The Department led EVG-Hybrid Workgroup (EVG-h) presents this status report with their findings and considerations.

II. Overall EVG-Hybrid Considerations

The EVG Workgroup reached agreement on the following recommended actions. However, the workgroup did not reach consensus on numerous issues. Topics agreed upon are noted and presented to the Commission for consideration.

- 1) Suspend the implementation of neighborhood council hybrid meetings until a formal plan can be developed.
- 2) The Department should administer hybrid meetings on a piloted basis. The process could be initiated by surveying Neighborhood Councils to assess their interest, readiness, and equipment needs for hybrid meetings. This process recognizes that some Councils have equipment in their current inventory.
- 3) NC participation in the pilot project can be achieved by recruiting neighborhood councils interested in participating voluntarily. Targeted recruitment in the System will be necessary to achieve equity and diverse experiences in the sample group.
- 4) To enable the administration of hybrid neighborhood council meetings on a pilot basis, developing an EVG-hybrid plan would be necessary. The plan could address important points required implement a hybrid system such as an average budget, equipment requirements and associated costs, Brown Act requirements, and administrative support implications for the Department.
- 5) An EVG-h Workgroup could continue serve to support the development of an EVG-h Plan. Its purpose could be to develop the plan and work with the Department to guide its implementation process. Workgroup membership could be a sub-group of the existing workgroup adjusted based on interest, time, and regional focus.
- 6) A review of the proposed EVG-h plan by the Office of the City Attorney and City Clerk would be necessary.

III. Fiscal Impact of Considered Items

The financial questions are substantial and caused hesitancy for some Workgroup members. The costs for the EVG equipment (as detailed in Section III) range from approximately \$4,600 for the smallest Boards (7 people) to \$11,000 for the largest board (35 people). Considering that NC budgets are currently \$32,000, funding hybrid meetings might represent a significant portion of a yearly NC budget. Options 3 & 4 were the only options introduced that considers a method for minimizing a financial hardship on Neighborhood Council System. *However, this is an estimate of a range of possibilities, and the Workgroup acknowledges that there may be more options to consider that was not possible due to time constraints.* The following is a preliminary summary of the different financial models were brought forward:

1. Requiring NCs to pay the total price.
2. Sharing the equipment amongst multiple NCs to lower cost for each NC.

3. Considering creative methods for resourcing an EVG-hybrid System. For example, a formal proposal to local Big Tech firms (Apple, Amazon, Google, Netflix, and several more).
4. The City Council could be asked to support a pilot project by enabling the advancing of necessary resources by, for example, allowing a 0% loan to NCs with favorable payback terms to invest in the System.
5. The City could purchase equipment and hire a company with the logistics experience to coordinate, manage, and set up Neighborhood Council meetings throughout the City.
6. Getting an exemption to providing hybrid meetings (in person only by default).
 - Option 1 is likely a non-starter because of the steep cost (15-33% of the yearly NC budget).
 - Option 2 allows for significant cost-saving but requires greater coordination and cooperation among NCs.
 - Option 3 provides for purchase of all the needed equipment without NCs having to pay the full upfront cost. However, NCs would still have to bear the full burden over time.
 - Option 4 potentially provides for all, or part of the cost being funded by sponsors, but would require the involvement of the Office of the City Clerk to confirm current or needed funding policies.
 - Option 5 does not seem like a viable option because of equity issues for stakeholders; it would be very unfair for stakeholders of certain NCs to be denied the same rights and benefits as stakeholders from other NCs. It is unclear what the equity issue is if the city bears the responsibility.
 - Option 6 raises questions of equity if NCs cannot provide equal access options to stakeholders.

Undefined and intangible costs related to the cost of connectivity and broadband access must be considered. Other costs include storage, the cost of transporting equipment, and overall operational expenses. Equipment operator during meetings is one example. Much of this could be done by volunteers, but for NCs unable to find those willing to do this work for free, they would presumably be required to pay for these services.

EVG-h costs will vary throughout the System. It is crucial to consider the financial ramifications for NCs in this process.

IV. Technical and Logistical Considerations

Connectivity issues are a bit more nuanced and far more challenging to address. The Workgroup concluded that every facility that would hold an in-person meeting would need to have Wi-Fi (Internet) connectivity. However, a reasonable number of NCs would struggle to find a meeting location that is ADA compliant and has the necessary internet infrastructure. Therefore, discussion included a review of several options to overcome facilities obstacles and solve this problem, including finding a new meeting space in the NC's boundaries, finding a new meeting space just outside the NC's boundaries, purchasing a mobile hot spot to provide internet or some solution coming from the LA City Government.

There were a host of logistical questions that were raised and considered. They are shared here to show the range of discussion embraced by the Workgroup. *A list of Workgroup questions and*

tentative responses is available in the digital folder for this project. Some of the more prominent questions requiring further examination included:

Storage Questions – Who will manage it? Where will it be stored? What about NCs that do not have storage right facilities now? Who has financial responsibility for it?

Sanitation and health protocols – Who will sanitize the equipment between meetings? What can be done during meetings to minimize disease pressure?

Replacement – Who will pay for replacements? Will substitute equipment be available?

Meeting Locations – What if our location does not have Wi-Fi?

Brown Act & Legal Issues – How will public comment work? What about the technical requirements like posting of meeting locations for Board Members participating virtually? What about ADA compliance?

Staffing & Trainings – Who will be running the equipment? Board Members, stakeholders, or paid professionals? Will DONE be providing training? Who is designing the protocols?

Meeting Considerations – Will these changes only be for General Assembly meetings? Can committee meetings continue to be virtual? Can exemptions be gotten on this topic?

Safety Considerations – The Workgroup recognized that safety considerations of in-person meetings during the pandemic are quite distinct from in-person meetings with no pandemic in effect. It was recognized that NCs are limited in their capacity to, during a pandemic, manage safe social distancing practices, minimize the time of exposure, enforce personal protective equipment rules (i.e., masks), and create safety barriers, as a few examples.

Security Considerations – The Workgroup discussed broadly the need to recognize the divisive climate in which civil discourse unfolded locally and nationally. Should there be a screening for weapons, for example? One thought was to decide on the best practices for security matters and consider the potential liabilities for the City. Providing guidance, protocols, and resources to NC board members was considered necessary before in-person meetings are resumed.

Pilot Project Considerations – Which NCs would get selected? What is the process? Who will pay for the equipment if the pilot project suggests hybrids are not feasible? When will it start? How long will it run? What would be the goals and metrics?

Should all meetings be required to be recorded? Workgroup vote: eleven yes, one no

Should it be required that NCs should use Department-issued Zoom licenses? Workgroup vote: eight yes, four no.

Should NCs reduce their NPG awards to facilitate the cost of hybrid meetings? Workgroup vote: Poll: six yes, six no

V. Brown Act Considerations

There are several Brown Act considerations. First is the reality that the current state and local emergency declarations that allow Empowered Virtual Governance will eventually be lifted, and any virtual meetings may become limited.

The next issue is the administration of public comment. Assuming that EVG-h is permissible, the question of how to equitably manage public comment is substantial. The workgroup explored several options, including writing protocols calling for taking in-person comments first and all virtual comments second. A system of alternating comments and creating a queue system integrating both in-person and virtual participation was another option. Any of the choices *might* be valid if the Neighborhood Councils follow the same process throughout the System. Each NC could incorporate this process in their “Standing Rules” rather than “Bylaws” because it is a consistency issue and not a compliance issue. No consensus on this topic was achieved.

The next issue was whether committee meetings should be subjected to the same rules as General Assembly meetings. The Workgroup came to a nearly unanimous decision that Committee meetings should not be hybrid meetings. They were divided into “all virtual because it allows for greater participation” and “all in person because meetings are more efficient and have a better flow.” There are merits to both arguments, and this is a policy matter for BONC and the Department to continue to deliberate.

VI. Summary and Moving Forward

The Workgroup considered many options. It is hard to express how many choices were thought about, everything from all in-person, all virtual (including asking for an exemption to the Brown Act), and various kinds of Hybrid options. However, the Workgroup had more agreements than disagreements. **For example, there was agreement that hybrid meetings during the pandemic are very different from those when there is no pandemic. They are essentially different programs.**

There was agreement that a “one size fits all” approach to determining governance for all 99 Neighborhood Council System was not acceptable. The significant issues seemed to fall into different areas: finances and connectivity issues. It was realized early in the process that nearly all NCs would struggle to pay for any hardware if said purchase needed to be done in the current Fiscal Year (July 2021 – June 2022) because all their funds were already allocated. There was unanimity that any new hybrid project endeavors should start next fiscal year and be structured and measured. Having a second EVG Workgroup to work on the Pilot Project right away would be advisable.

No pilot project should begin during the pandemic and the end of the declarations of emergency. Although a minimum of two NCs per election region would be optimal, it may not be feasible. The project should seek to recruit a sampling of Councils and administer an adequate evaluation of the experience for future planning purposes. This timeline is a sample of what might be possible. It requires further examination to ensure the preparation for the pilot project is realistic.

Possible Next Steps

A) Encouraged Items:

- 1) Form EVG-Hybrid Pilot Project Workgroup.
- 2) Workgroup should create a pilot project implementation plan.
- 3) More informational sessions might be needed to explain the concept.
- 4) Explore various means of financing equipment including sponsorship and LA City 2% loans.
- 5) Explore potential operational costs for those NCs unable to provide volunteer operators.
- 6) Conduct a survey to assess Neighborhood Council readiness to implement a pilot project and select Neighborhood Councils to participate.
- 7) Start a pilot project when emergency pandemic orders end to see the system in motion.

B) Sample Implementation Trainings and Marketing Items.

- 1) create a new set of trainings for the “EVG Meeting Moderator.”
- 2) create a new set of trainings for Board Members to be aware of the various rules and provisions.
- 3) create a series of “How To” videos for stakeholders to learn about the new EVG style of meetings and how they can best participate in local government.

C) Sample Accelerated Timeline:

December 2021 – Assemble EVG-h Workgroup to develop the plan.

February 2022 – Present plan to the BONC for review. Host info sessions with Neighborhood Councils.

March 2022 – Request resource support from City Council.

April 2022 – Begin recruitment of NCs to join the Pilot Program.

April thru July – The Department will be marketing the July rollout the entire time.

May 2022 – Report on the Pilot Project Implementation Plan

July 2022 – Rollout of the EVG-h to Neighborhood Council

July 2022 thru December 2022 – administer EVG-h pilot project.

January thru February - complete evaluations and related report

Conclusion

The EVG-h Workgroup thanks the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners for creating the EVG-h Workgroup and for the opportunity to serve. The Workgroup thanks Mayor Garcetti’s Legislative Office, Gary de La Rosa, and the Department for their support.



EVG-h Workgroup Roster

Name (Last Name, First Name)	Neighborhood Council
Brostoff, Bob	West Hills
Lewis, Suzanne	Greater Valley Glen
Bonsell, Terri	Arroyo Seco
Davalos, Karin	Glassell Park
Rosales, Moises	Emp. Congress Southeast
Guyton, Kathy	Emp. Congress West
Nadel, Josh	Palms
De La Cruz, Adriana	Del Rey
Schneider, Michael	Mid City West
Labrecque, Melanie	Northwest SP
Epperhart, Doug	Coastal SP NC
Beck, Elvina	Central Hollywood
Alexander, Linda	Central San Pedro
Digregorio, John	Panarama City
Alcala, Celia	Harbor Gateway South
Ling, Phyllis	Historic Cultural North
Taylor, Tanesha	Watts
Yap, Nancy	Arts District/ Little Tokyo
Martinez, Gina	Wilmington
Valdivia, Brenda	Echo Park
Waters, Keren	Granada Hills North
Aguirre, Eduardo	Westlake South
Halfon, Sam	n/a
Bailey, Glenn	Northridge East
Mason, Thryeris	Emp. Congress North
Ortega, George	Sylmar
Carrillo, Jennifer	Central Alameda

EVG Working Group

Board of Neighborhood Commissioners
EVG-Hybrid Workgroup
Status Report
10/18/21



What is the EVG-Hybrid Working Group?

- The Executive Order for Electronic Virtual Governance (EVG) expired on 9/30/2021.
- In June 2021, BONC adopted the *Temporary Continuation of Virtual Neighborhood Council Meetings* resolution.
- Assembly Bill 361(Rivas) enables jurisdictions to continue to meet virtually under specified conditions during declared emergencies.
- The Department anticipates the possibility that in-person and virtual (hybrid) meetings may be authorized in the future.

What is the EVG-Hybrid Working Group?

- A **Workgroup represented** by NC leaders was formed in June 2021 to discuss how and when an EVG-Hybrid System might function in the NC Systems.
- **Fourteen members** were selected by the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (two nominees per Commissioner). The remaining members were **appointed by the Department**.
- The Workgroup meetings were facilitated by Gary de La Rosa, Human Resource Advocate for the Economic and Workforce Development Department.

Summary

- Hybrid meetings are cost prohibitive, especially during a state of declared emergency.
- A hybrid system should be piloted with selected NCs who would volunteer to serve in a structured and measured project.
- A EVG-Hybrid Plan should be first developed as part of the pilot project preparations and vetted with the Offices of the City Attorney and City Clerk.
- An EVG-Hybrid pilot project, if approved, should begin no sooner than July of 2022.
- Even if piloted in the next fiscal year, there would be challenges given it is an election year and Departments have been instructed to present FY2021-2022 with net zero increase budget proposals.

Overall Considerations

- Timeline – Planning, Prepping, Project administration, and Evaluation
- Equipment – What equipment is needed? Should it be standardized?
- Financial – Who pays for this? What Funding Guidelines are Needed?
- Operational – Who will help implement the technical details? Will NCs received Training?
- Legal/Regulatory – What about the Brown Act?
- Communication & Outreach Considerations – How will this be communicated to Board Members & Stakeholders?

Possible Next Steps

- There was agreement that a “one size fits all” approach to determining governance for all 99 Neighborhood Council System was not realistic.
- Form EVG-Hybrid Pilot Project Workgroup.
- Workgroup should create a pilot project implementation plan.
- More informational sessions might be needed to explain the concept.
- Conduct a survey to assess Neighborhood Council readiness to implement a pilot project and select Neighborhood Councils to participate.

Sample Accelerated Timeline

December 2021 – Assemble EVG-*b* Workgroup to develop the plan.

February 2022 – Present plan to the BONC for review. Host info sessions with Neighborhood Councils.

March 2022 – Request resource support from City Council.

April 2022 – Begin recruitment of NCs to join the Pilot Program.

April *thru* July – The Department will be marketing the July rollout the entire time.

May 2022 – Report on the Pilot Project Implementation Plan

Sample Accelerated Timeline (Cont'd)

May 2022 – Report on the Pilot Project Implementation Plan

July 2022 – Rollout of the EVG-*b* to Neighborhood Council

April *thru* July – The Department will be marketing the July rollout the entire time.

July 2022 *thru* December 2022 – Administer EVG-*b* pilot project.

January *thru* February - Complete evaluations and related report

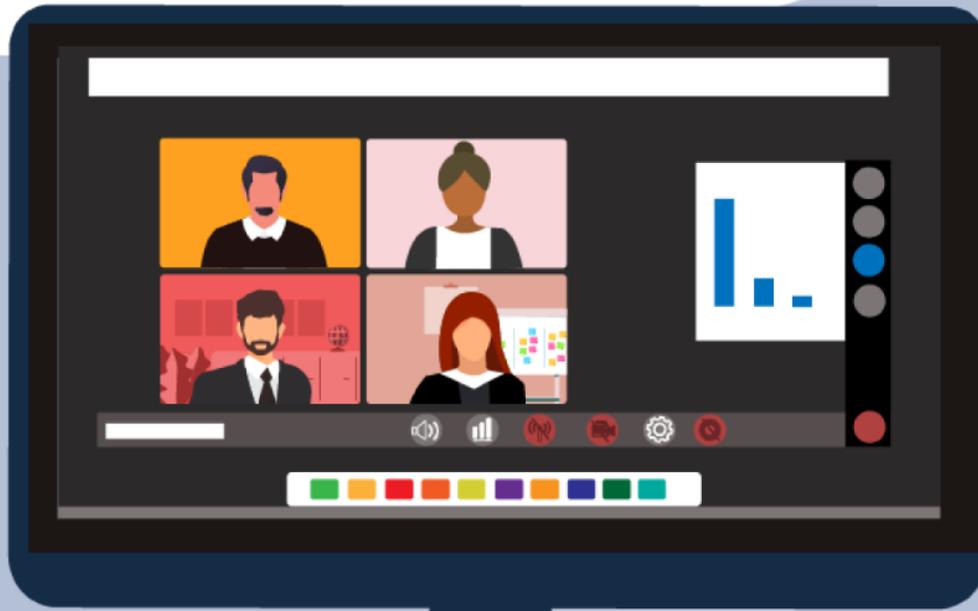
Thank You and Questions

Office of Mayor Garcetti
EVG-Hybrid Workgroup Members
Gary de La Rosa
EmpowerLA Staff

ATTACHMENT 'C'

2022 EVG-Hybrid Working Group - Phase 1 Report

[\(BACK TO LIST OF ATTACHMENTS\)](#)



2022 EVG-Hybrid Working Group

Phase 1 Report

July 18, 2022

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Goals of the EVG-h Working Group

Summary

The EVG-Hybrid (EVG-h) Workgroup has an ambitious set of goals that are nonetheless achievable. Local government is at the heart of making any city function well. This working group aims to lower the barriers to entry for attending meetings to allow for greater participation by neighborhood council board members and stakeholders. Achieving this goal will require the purchase of specialized equipment and provision of meeting facilitators.

Desired Goals For EVG-h Working Group

- Help EmpowerLA determine the readiness of the Neighborhood Council System for in-person meetings.
- Create protocols and procedures for managing hybrid meetings.
- Develop recommendations for COVID safety guidelines.
- Develop recommendations for addressing public safety and security concerns.
- Outline funding models to support the cost of hybrid meetings, including one-time equipment purchases and ongoing administrative costs.
- Design a 14 neighborhood council-sized pilot program to test the concepts of hybrid governance.
- Establish a plan for promoting the pilot program and hybrid governance.
- Select neighborhood councils in a fair manner for the pilot program.
- Recommended changes to the Brown Act that would support the implementation of hybrid meetings.
- Obtain a memorandum of understanding from the Los Angeles City Council to execute one or more of the funding models.
- Establish a reasonable timeline for the entire project.

- Find a solution for WiFi access issues within participating neighborhood councils.
- Develop recommendations that address the differences between general board meetings and committee meetings.

Obstacles

The Current Situation

The Covid-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered the way the government works on every level from the Neighborhood Council system all the way to the state capital and Congress. New rules and procedures regarding legislative processes, including quorums, remote attendance by legislators, meeting platforms, and other foundational pieces of governance have changed. While the pandemic presented numerous challenges, some good emerged, including the use of virtual online governance. By using online platforms such as Zoom, elected officials were able to keep government operations functioning at, or near, their previous standards.

Online meetings were not typically used prior to the pandemic, even though the Brown Act was amended in 1998 to allow for video teleconferencing during government meetings. Many agencies viewed these provisions as onerous and did not utilize the teleconferencing option. In an effort to maintain maximum transparency, the amendments state that video teleconferencing is allowed, but that the full address of each video teleconferencing site must be listed on each publicly-posted agenda and that these locations must be accessible to the public. This rule was further complicated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which mandates that every public meeting space be ADA-compliant, so that every member of the public may attend.

When the pandemic rules are lifted, the Brown Act (unless amended) would require that any board member attending remotely from their home would have that address published in the agenda and be forced to open their home to the public. The net effect of these amendments would mean that, in a non-pandemic rules environment, to have any sort of video teleconferencing meeting, like a standard Zoom meeting for a Neighborhood Council, City Council, or any of their committees, they would have to put the home addresses and names of each member that was attending virtually from their home. This presumes that their home is ADA-compliant, which is unlikely for many residences. This also means that all of these board members would have to be comfortable having members of the public in their homes providing public comments.

Another significant concern is the threat of violence at government meetings. Many issues on agendas may include controversial aspects that can cause emotions to run high. There have been neighborhood council meetings where a pause was required or a meeting ended abruptly. In some cases, law enforcement officers had to be called.

This is compounded by the fact that there have been many issues of gun violence and mass shootings all across the nation at increasing rates since the start of the pandemic. Local government meetings should be considered “high risk” because of the ability of policy and policymakers to inflame the emotions of the populace. Considerations towards amending the Brown Act to allow more online meetings solely to mitigate against potential violence at meetings would be important enough to change things purely on the merits of this issue.

Another major challenge in amending the Brown Act for implementing online or hybrid meetings is: How do we best design a robust system that allows for public comment and participation? A protocols and procedures checklist should be used at government meetings of all levels in allowing public comment. There should be a formalized system for getting comments from both the in-person and online attendees equally, with neither being prioritized over the other. The Brown Act was designed to increase the public’s ability to participate in government meetings. The modern online tools that we have access to should allow us to create a more robust system than ever

before to allow more people to participate than at any time since the act's initial passing in 1953.

One of the major challenges to public comment is a new version of an old phenomenon, the local meeting disruptions by stakeholders. In a 100% in-person environment, like pre-pandemic, it was difficult for individuals to attend many meetings because of the physical distances involved in the various meetings across the City. With the advent of online meetings, and their ease of use, there has grown an ever-increasing number of agitators who are looking to exploit the comment portions of meeting with expletives in the hopes that some agitated meeting facilitator makes an error and opens the possibility of a lawsuit. Amendments to the Brown Act should include some portions about public comments on individual items to have to be germane to the topic if expletives are being used repeatedly.

Even general public comment should have a new standard about not using expletives in combination with members of a board, committee, or the public. Free speech should 100% be allowed but attacks on individuals should actually always be processed as "intent to commit harm" and are violations of the penal code. The reason this change should be made is relative to the threat listed before of physical violence. Meeting attendees should not have to be concerned for their physical safety if another attendee starts a fight because of their expletive-filled ranting.

Recommendations

- Conduct a readiness survey to find out how prevalent these problems of physical threats, public safety, and meeting disruptions are across the entire neighborhood council system.
- The working group should consult with the City Attorney on possible solutions for disruptions.

EVG-h Working Group Pilot Plan

Summary

The EVG-h Working Group believes that establishing an NC Pilot Program would be the most cost-effective and transparent way to test the concepts of the hybrid meeting system and get feedback from NC members and Stakeholders. The Program will consist of a small representative group of NCs that will use the processes, procedures, and protocols for the first time. This will allow EmpowerLA and the Working Group to assess its recommendations and make any necessary changes before the Program is rolled out to all 99 Neighborhood Councils.

The selection process utilizes a simple survey plus geographic and demographic information to create a ranking system from which Neighborhood Councils would be selected for the Pilot Program. A weighted value for each question has been determined to produce a “score” for each response, as not every question has an equal value relative to others.

Forming a Pilot Program is a critical step in successfully launching a Hybrid-Meeting environment and is necessary to test the feasibility of a system-wide rollout and flesh out best practices.

Pilot Program Description

The Pilot Program begins with the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners (BONC) approving a preliminary survey that will be distributed to the president or chair of each neighborhood council. The survey is designed to take a high-level read on the desire and ability of an NC to participate in this Pilot Program. The survey will compare neighborhood councils quantitatively via a ranking system. All responses, however, will also be reviewed qualitatively to ensure the Pilot Program utilizes a representative sample of the NC system.

Following the collation and review of survey responses, the working group will prepare a summary for presentation to BONC. The commissioners would select up to 14 neighborhood councils for participation in the Pilot Program. This sample size would allow multiple NCs to be selected from each of the City's Planning Areas.

The survey includes the following questions, which are the priority factors deemed critical by the working group, to set a baseline for participation:

- Does the neighborhood council have a confirmed meeting venue?
- Has the City confirmed that the meeting venue is ADA compliant through an inspection by the Department of Disability?
- Does the meeting place have Wi-Fi capabilities?
- Does the meeting place have published health and safety protocols?
- Does the neighborhood council already have any of the needed hybrid meeting equipment (cameras, microphones, speakers, etc.)?

Additionally, there will be a cost associated with the launch and operation of the Pilot Program. Funding proposals will be included in a

separate report for a more in-depth discussion. However, at an average cost of \$10,000 to \$15,000 per neighborhood council, the cost of the pilot is estimated at 14% of the final projected cost since 14 of 99 neighborhood councils will be represented. The estimated direct cost of the Pilot Program is \$165,000 to \$260,000. Another recommendation from the security section advocates for the option of LAPD officers providing coverage for up to three hours per neighborhood council board meeting. The indirect cost for the Pilot Program is estimated to be \$16,000 to \$32,000.

SCORING THE RESPONSES

A scoring system was designed to establish a benchmark and initial ranking to ensure objectivity in reviewing responses.

Hybrid Meeting Pilot Program Initial Survey Scoring	
Response	Score
Yes	5
No	0
Maybe	3

Question	Weight
A confirmed venue for in-person meetings as of 7/1/22	100%
Do you have interest in your NC participating in a Pilot Program for Hybrid meetings?	100%
Confirmation from the City that the venue is ADA compliant	90%
Health and Safety protocols in place for the venue	70%
Wi-fi access (or mobile hotspot) in the venue	60%
Video Conferencing Equipment (Cameras, microphones, speakers, etc.)	40%

Beyond these objective scores, there will be a discussion on the demographics of each NC. Factors that will be considered include board size, geography, interpretation needs, and the total population of the NC. The working group feels these elements should be carefully considered to ensure the Pilot Program is genuinely representative of the NC system. For example, it will be essential to see how NCs of varying sizes perform, including those with greater than 30 members

and those with fewer than ten members. Neighborhood councils that require interpretation or those with consistently strong stakeholder attendance may face different challenges. Geography will also be a critical factor to consider, as access and quality of internet services vary widely across the city and drive significant inequity concerns.

The working group and EmpowerLA will use these criteria to make a final recommendation to the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners as to which neighborhood councils make the best .

DURATION OF PILOT PROGRAM

The Pilot Program should run for no less than six months and no longer than 12 months, which should be sufficient for reviewing and modifying the process before a full rollout to all 99 neighborhood councils. The commissioners should coordinate with the department on the Pilot Program's duration . There should be regular updates and progress reports on the process and any difficulties that may arise as the pilot moves along. It is also recommended that another iteration of the working group be formed to assist the commissioners and department in facilitating meetings and reporting results to BONC.

Recommendations

- Fund the Pilot Program in full right away to take advantage of the favorable administrative environment, in terms of a particular law allowing for increased zoom usage during the pandemic
- Include 14 neighborhood councils in the Pilot Program, two from each Planning Area.
- Have the 14 neighborhood councils represent the various sizes of boards, including one council with fewer than 10 board members and one council with more than 30 board members.
- Approve a fair and equitable process to compare neighborhood councils for selection.
- Run this Pilot Program for no less than six months but no greater than 12 months.
- Create a series of documents to help track the progress of the Pilot Program participants.

Meeting Options

SUMMARY

There are two scenarios for meetings when the pandemic rules finally conclude. This is an unknown amount of time away from the present; it could be a month, the end of the year, or even multiple years from now. Regardless of when that will occur, the Neighborhood Council System needs to be prepared for the options that will be present then. That may involve making changes before that point to get the preferable outcome.

The two scenarios are “In-Person meetings only” and “Hybrid meetings,” meaning some combination of in-person and online meetings simultaneously. Currently, the Brown Act and other limiting forces would effectively only allow the in-person only option. This Working Group aims to help enact the needed changes to gain the second option as a viable choice.

MEETING OPTION CHOICES

Currently, the Neighborhood Council system is operating under Pandemic rules. This means that all Board & Committee meetings are being held virtually. This is being done to help limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus, which is highly contagious and transmissible in small enclosed spaces, like meeting places. These rules are in place for all Legislative bodies in the State of California, meaning every level of governance, from the State Houses in Sacramento down to the Neighborhood Council, has this same rule right now.

It turns out that having meetings being held virtually is a game changer for participation rates in some locales. Some stakeholders have various issues (work, childcare, health, & age) that make attending face-to-face meetings more difficult or even impossible. The goal of the Neighborhood Council System is to maximize participation from stakeholders, so many thought of

creating a body like the EVG-h Workgroup to find a way to continue with virtual meetings.

Something like the EVG-h Working Group would be required because currently, when the pandemic rules end, the Neighborhood Council system MUST return to the status quo from before the pandemic. That would mean in-person meetings exclusively. Some may ask, “why MUST there be a return to the status quo even if many people like the current (pandemic rules) better?”. One of the main reasons why is the Brown Act itself. When it was modified in 1998 to allow teleconferencing, the assumption was that it would be done in other public settings. A hypothetical example would be the LA City Council having an in-person meeting in City Hall and setting up a video conference in the Van Nuys government building for participants at that location to join.

While the Brown Act is an excellent example of a “transparency in government” law by demanding open and accessible government meetings, it has a few crucial flaws. One is that every location where a Board or Committee is attending the conference virtually must be published on the agendas that are publicly posted, meaning a person’s home and/or work address would be listed, which is quite dangerous. Additionally, these sites must be ADA-compliant, and many personal residences do not meet this standard. Lastly, these locations must be ADA-compliant because the public needs to be able to have free access inside to make public comments.

These rules are untenable. There is no way for virtual meetings to continue at Board or Committee Members’ homes if they have to publicly identify the location and be forced into letting members of the public inside. Assuming the site is ADA compliant would already rule out many people. So unless there are changes, the only viable option is In-Person Meetings only.

But this is precisely why the EVG-h Working Group was formed! One of the goals of the Working Group is to help create an environment where the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners can advise the LA City Council on how they can most effectively advocate for changes in Sacramento. The chief goal is to provide

a second viable option for meetings after the pandemic rules end. The unknown time frame means we must act as soon as possible.

Recommendations

- Support the 14 neighborhood council-sized pilot program
- Support the Brown Act changes the EVG-h working group proposes
- Craft a letter stating that the current Brown Act rules are untenable from the Commissioners' perspective

Readiness to Returning to In-Person Meetings

Summary

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic fundamentally changed the format of Neighborhood Council meetings. Before the pandemic, all meetings were held in person. After a two-month break from the pandemic's start, it has been 100% virtual. It has been nearly 2.5 years since the beginning of the pandemic. There are a host of issues to address regarding the readiness of all 99 Neighborhood Councils for in-person meetings.

This EVG-h Working Group has been positioned to answer that question and has a small team prepared to create a survey for the nearly 1,700 Neighborhood Council Board Members. Mayor Garcetti has kindly offered the use of two SEED Scholars and their faculty members to assist in this project. They have a 10-week work plan and will conclude their internship on August 10, 2022.

CHALLENGES OF RETURNING TO IN-PERSON MEETINGS

There are many challenges for Neighborhood Councils in returning to in-person meetings. The first significant challenge is ensuring a confirmed venue that allows Neighborhood Council meetings. After 2.5 years, there are a variety of risks in assuming the previous venues are still viable. Some buildings may no longer exist, others may begin charging rent where none was due, and others may have new restrictions limiting the ability to conduct a lawful meeting or any other factors. This is the most significant obstacle because having a meeting venue is the basis of several other upcoming concerns.

The next challenge is that any meeting venue must be confirmed as “ADA Compliant” by LA City’s Department of Disability (DOD). At the time of this writing, approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ of all Neighborhood Councils have had their preferred (or only) choice approved by DOD. That is a significant factor in having a lawful meeting.

Another challenge is confirming that a quorum of Board Members will return to in-person meetings. It is not unreasonable to assume that some percentage of Board Members will not be willing to return to in-person meetings for a variety of factors, including immune system deficient individuals, those at high risk for contracting Covid-19, those with child care limitations, those with work issues and a host of other reasons. Every Board must confirm they can have a quorum in person, which may not be achievable.

Social Equity Engagement Geo-Data (SEED) SCHOLARS

Mayor Garcetti’s office realized the need for information on this matter and kindly provided EmpowerLA and the EVG-h Working Group access to two SEED Scholars from Cal State LA to work on a 10-week-long survey. This survey will deal with “The Readiness of the Neighborhood Council System to return to In-Person Meetings.” The SEED Scholars attended almost every subgroup meeting and nearly all of the general sessions.

The significant areas of interest that the survey will investigate include Covid, Public Safety, Venue issues, Accessibility (physically and digitally), Technical Skills of existing Board Members, and standard

demographics. It will be essential to determine if there are any inequities and to arrive at solutions to help mitigate or eliminate those inequities. This survey is expected to go to every Neighborhood Council Board member in each of the 99 Neighborhood Councils, meaning nearly 2,000 results are hoped for.

Recommendations

- Follow the data that comes from the survey to have a better understanding of the issues that affect the various Neighborhood Councils.
- Compare the Neighborhood Council results against others in their respective regions to see whether issues are local or regional.
- Compare the various Neighborhood Council results against others with the same Neighborhood Empowerment Advocate (NEA) to see if issues can be addressed through NEAs.

Equipment

In 2021, the Department introduced a report detailing a sample floor plan and estimated cost for administering a hybrid NC meeting. The reports prepared include [EVG-h Protocols Specificities](#) and [hybrid meeting protocols](#). The protocols continue to be applicable to the current circumstances for neighborhood councils. The protocols

include meeting layout configurations, role of a moderator, technical requirements, challenges, items for further consideration, and a checklist.

Staffing

The Department is assessing the operational direct neighborhood council support that would be required to bolster in-person meetings during the pandemic. Additionally, an assessment is necessary to determine operational direct neighborhood council support for hybrid neighborhood council meetings. Some of the elements of supporting these two distinct governance structures are listed below:

1. What is the level of support neighborhood councils will require?
2. How will the City Council be moving forward with hybrid governance or in-person meetings (during the pandemic)?
3. What will the technical recommendations be from the Information Technology Agency for Brown Act bodies of the City of Los Angeles?
4. Is the level of support required the same for all neighborhood councils?
5. What special accommodations will the public and board members need and do they know how to request and access them?
6. What are the socioeconomic conditions of the communities served by neighborhood councils?
7. What are the implications of in-person and hybrid meetings for our triad partners, the Offices of the City Clerk and City Attorney?
8. Should the Department create a team of staff dedicated to assisting neighborhood councils as needed?
9. Should support workshops be created to support neighborhood councils?

The Department will review the findings from the Neighborhood Council Readiness Survey to inform our staffing related decisions. This survey project was led by Cal State LA Social Equity Engagement geo-Data Scholars (SEED) scholars. The SEED scholar program partnership was made possible by Mayor Erica Garcetti's Office Data Officer, Eva Pereira.

EVG-h Meeting Protocols and Procedures

INTRODUCTION

The following is based on common-sense procedures such as checking that equipment and connections are functioning correctly and that processes required by law and policy are followed. These protocols also include those things contemplated by pending legislation (AB 1944 and AB 2449). These rules are subject to change based on the outcome of legislation and any rules or policies adopted by the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners and/or the city council.

It is important to note that when the current emergency ends, neighborhood councils will be required to hold in-person meetings for the board and all standing committees and that a quorum must be present in person.

The proposed Brown Act amendments do not require that teleconferencing be provided. That decision is left to each legislative body (individual neighborhood councils unless the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners or city council mandates that teleconferencing be required).

The proposed Brown Act amendments anticipate that remote attendance by legislative members will occur in rare and exceptional circumstances and not as a usual practice by members of the legislative body.

The Brown Act requires that the location of board members attending remotely be disclosed and made accessible to the public. AB 1944 would allow a legislative body, by majority vote, to not reveal the location of members attending remotely or make that location accessible to the public, unless that location is a public place.

AB 2449 does not allow body members to attend remotely for more than three months.

AB 2449 also requires that members of the body participate using video and audio technology, meaning that the member's camera must be turned on.

AB 2449 also requires that members attending remotely announce the identities of others "present with the member" who are at least 18 years old and the nature of their relationship with those individuals.

The proposed Brown Act legislation does not require recording meetings if teleconferencing is made available. However, policy or ordinance may be adopted to require recording.

RECOMMENDED PROTOCOLS FOR CONDUCTING HYBRID MEETINGS

BEFORE THE MEETING

Seven to four days prior:

Remind board members to notify the secretary or a designated person of their intention to attend remotely and provide the reason for doing so.

Determine that a quorum will present at the in-person meeting. A quorum of the board is required in person for the meeting to occur. If teleconferencing is used, board members attending remotely do not count toward the quorum.

Three days prior:

Remind board members to notify the secretary or other designated person in the event they will attend remotely, so that the agenda may be updated, if necessary subject to quorum requirements.

One day prior:

Remind board members attending remotely to check in 15 minutes before ensuring their connection is good and the equipment is working correctly.

At least 60 minutes prior:

Equipment arrives at the meeting location, and set-up begins.

Equipment is checked to ensure that all of it is present and working correctly.

The wireless connection is checked to ensure it is working correctly.

At least 15 minutes prior:

Board members attending remotely are asked to test connections and equipment. Public members are encouraged to check audio if they want to comment publicly.

DURING THE MEETING

At the time of convening the meeting:

The presiding officer announces any specific procedures regarding remote accessibility, i.e., video streaming available throughout the meeting; in the event of technical malfunction, the meeting will be suspended, etc.;

Presiding officer announces procedure for making public comment remotely;

The presiding officer announces the names of those board members attending remotely, the reasons why they are attending remotely, and others present 18 years of age and older.

Throughout the meeting:

All standard parliamentary procedures should be observed regardless of whether board members and attendees attend remotely.

Public comment should not be divided between those attending in person and remotely. In other words, the public comment period time is available to all equally. The same practice should apply to board members.

All votes must be taken by roll call.

If the video stream and/or ability to attend remotely is interrupted, the meeting must be suspended until the problem is corrected. This does not apply to individuals' equipment or connections beyond the board's control. If, for example, a board member or stakeholder loses their connection or experiences an equipment malfunction, the meeting does not have to be suspended.

In the event of a technical malfunction, the presiding officer shall announce a suspension of the meeting, explain its reason, and inform the audience that the meeting will be adjourned if the malfunction is not corrected within 30 minutes. The presiding officer shall also announce that the remaining action items will be taken up at a special meeting or the next regular meeting, depending on the circumstances and urgency of the remainder.

After the meeting:

The presiding officer announces when and where the meeting recording will be available.

AFTER THE MEETING

Following the conclusion of the meeting:

A check is made that all equipment is accounted for.

Equipment is packed and returned to secure storage.

Any equipment maintenance issues are noted for action before the next meeting.

If the loss of a quorum or technical issue results in a meeting adjournment, the board should be prepared to determine whether a special meeting is needed and schedule that meeting.

Recommendations

- Councils should use Zoom as the platform for video streaming.
- Meetings should be recorded.
- The presiding officer should be present at the in-person meeting.
- Board members attending remotely should be required to leave the video on during the meeting unless equipment or connectivity issues are preventing an adequate video link.
- Board members should receive training in hybrid meeting rules and procedures and proper use of equipment.

Brown Act Modifications Requested

SUMMARY OF CURRENT LEGISLATION

Two bills (AB 1944 and AB 2449) are now before the State Legislature proposing to amend the Brown Act to allow legislative bodies to

provide a teleconferencing option for public meetings. This would be in addition to, and not in place of, in-person meetings. If a legislative body chooses to provide teleconferencing, the bills specify the number of rules the bodies must follow. These rules are intended to ensure that members of the body and attendees are treated equally regardless of whether they are at the meeting location or attending remotely.

Some of these proposed rules challenge neighborhood councils, which are not sufficiently supported by an administrative staff that enables most other legislative bodies to function under a stringent set of operational requirements. The EVG-h Working Group proposes the following changes to the proposed legislation that would amend the Brown Act:

1. The requirement that members of a legislative body participating remotely must provide a video, as well as audio, the link should allow for an exception if a member does not have access to the equipment necessary to provide video, or if the equipment is not functioning due to a malfunction or if there are issues related to connectivity (e.g., insufficient bandwidth).
2. A legislative body should be allowed the right to designate members experiencing ongoing health or safety issues, and the ability to attend meetings remotely without regard to the proposed rule disallowing remote attendance for no more than three consecutive meetings.

Recommendations

- Neighborhood Commissioners should consider legislation for bodies like Neighborhood Councils to be exempt from Brown Act provisions if the LA City adopts a municipal “sunshine” ordinance governing operations of neighborhood councils concerning public notification and access.
- Neighborhood Commissioners should consider legislation that Neighborhood Council Committee Meetings should be exempted from Brown Act Provisions so that they can have the option of “100% online meetings” if that is more convenient.

COVID Protocols

SUMMARY

The EVG-h Workgroup realizes that Health & Safety protocols are critical in the Covid-19 environment. Neighborhood Councils should have procedures before, during, and after meetings to minimize unnecessary Health and Safety risks.

BEFORE MEETINGS

The NC should include language on the agenda stating *“If you have symptoms of COVID-19 or have had long-lasting symptoms for the past ten days and/or recently tested positive within the last five days, in compliance with LA County DHS recommendations, we ask that you not attend in person. We wish you a speedy recovery and look forward to your future attendance.”* EmpowerLA should work with the City Attorney to devise the best language for the circumstance.

Post language that describes your COVID-19 safety policies to attendees on each Neighborhood Council website, including your venue’s policies related to masking and vaccination/test verification. Use your online platforms to communicate your COVID-19 safety policies to the public. Ensure all guests know and follow the Los Angeles County Department of Health.

Post Signage at your meeting about Social Distancing, Sanitizing, and Masking.

DURING MEETINGS

Limited attendance in person, depending on the size of each venue. A table at the entrance should be available for hand sanitizing and masks. The chairs for attendees should be set up to have approx. Give 3 ft space per attendee. There should be a 6 ft distance between the audience and Board. The Board seats should also have a distance from each other.

Masks are strongly recommended but not mandated. Indoor masking prevents virus transmission, particularly to persons with prolonged, cumulative exposures (attendees) and persons with a higher risk of illness. Venues may choose to continue to require universal indoor masking. Vaccination is unnecessary at this time, but some city media may also need it.

Ventilation is essential, and when weather and working conditions allow, when safe to do so, increase fresh outdoor air by opening windows and doors. Consider using fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows – position window fans on one side of the room and direct them to blow air outward, not inward. Decrease indoor occupancy in areas where ventilation cannot be increased. You can also have your board purchase Air purifiers or make the DIY Corsi/Rosenthal Air Purifier design at a cheaper cost.

Food at the meeting must be sealed by vendors, such as individually boxed items. Water must be in individual bottles or bring their own.

All Microphones must be sanitized between uses if they are shared.

REMAINING QUESTIONS

Who will enforce this? It seems dangerous for Board Members to handle, but not exactly in the job description of the LAPD.

How should Neighborhood Councils determine whether they can add extra Covid precautions to whatever the venue has?

Recommendations

- Neighborhood Councils should be able to enforce their own meeting rules at venues.
- The City, BONC Commissioners, & EmpowerLA should have a meeting to determine how to enforce Covid protocols and issue clear written guidelines that can be shown at a meeting.
- The City should pay for an LAPD officer to deal with insubordination at all Hybrid Board Meetings. This should also be the LAPD reporting to the Neighborhood Council with the “Police Report.” They should NOT be enforcing Covid standards but instead dealing with anyone making a “public nuisance” at the meeting, which would include disregarding written Covid protocols

Security For Meetings

SUMMARY

Any meeting of a public body presents the potential for safety concerns. Often, feelings run high among board members and attendees who have significant interests in matters the body considers. Safety concerns may be a particular issue for neighborhood councils since they do not have security staff available to ensure the civil behavior of meeting attendees.

There may be physical and verbal confrontations. These may involve expletives, slurs, hate speech triggered by misogyny, racism, age discrimination, LGBTQ+-related bigotry, or other issues. Sometimes, neighborhood council meetings must be stopped or delayed due to altercations.

Because of many laws governing public meetings, including requiring access and participation, Some individuals can manipulate these

well-intentioned rules and twist them for their purposes. Also, these problems are not consistently endemic systemwide, but all neighborhood councils are vulnerable to the vagaries of human emotion and should be prepared to deal with these situations. Additional resources may be required for councils that experience problems more frequently.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Running a safe meeting in the current era of not-so-civil public discourse and post-COVID concerns raises many issues. First, there are the possibilities of physical violence and verbal abuse. Second, the case of internal threats and bullying among board members) and external threats (meeting attendees). Third, specific kinds of verbal abuse target certain segments of the population, including those protected by the law.

The threat of physical violence is an ever-increasing problem for public meetings. Political polarization has never been higher, and some use the threat of physical violence to intimidate others. Meetings can be physically disrupted. Board members have been threatened with violence and even physically assaulted. Neighborhood councils face a unique problem: they do not possess the funds or authority to have law enforcement act as access control and site security during public meetings. While not every neighborhood council needs this level of protection at meetings, there are occasions when it is necessary. A program for councils to have access to required security should be established.

Verbal abuse is a more pervasive problem across the neighborhood council system. Verbal abuse (ad hominem attacks) by council members is never acceptable. Still, it frequently occurs due to board members being unaware of the rules or the inability of the chair to maintain order. It is the responsibility of all board members to know and follow the rules of civility. Board members engaging in verbal abuse pose a significant challenge for boards, and the best way to deal with them is a knowledgeable and fair presiding officer. Merely punishing or removing the offender does not necessarily provide a long-term solution. A program to properly train the board and chairs in the correct use of parliamentary procedure and how to deal with situations of verbal abuse is needed.

Verbal abuse can also come from meeting attendees. Some attend meetings of neighborhood councils, the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, and the Los Angeles City Council to use general public comment and agenda item comments to abuse board members verbally. The words may be only marginally germane to the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body. Still, a fear of legal action compels those legislative bodies to allow stakeholders a vast amount of latitude.

Board members of protected classes (racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+, minors, religious faiths, and women, among other groups) are often subjected to verbal abuse. The open format of public meetings allows individuals to leverage verbal abuse against board members with whom they take issues (. These are often flashpoints on the general topic of “security” because of the sheer volume of requests for solving a related crisis.

Recommendations

- Neighborhood councils may request LAPD officers attend their meetings. A program should be established to provide councils access to security services.
- Neighborhood council board members and chairs should receive training in the use of parliamentary rules and conduct board meetings and techniques for handling those who engage in improper behavior. This training should highlight disruptions that neighborhood councils have previously encountered.
- Anti-bias training should be tailored to neighborhood councils and provided in person.
- Code of Conduct is enforced more rigorously
- Anti-bias training is enforced more stringently
- Meeting chairs should be informed that those making public comments on agenda items shall only make comments that are “germane to the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body” and “can not direct comments at individuals” and maybe not be allowed to finish their comment if it is not germane or directed at an individual.
- The Brown Act should be amended to allow exemptions for attending meetings remotely if a board member has experienced ongoing physical or verbal abuse.

- The Brown Act should be amended to allow neighborhood councils to conduct committee meetings virtually to minimize the risk of physical or verbal abuse in small, in-person settings.

EVG-h & Pilot Program Promotion

SUMMARY

Developing a comprehensive package for promotion will be the pivotal step in ensuring the successful rollout of the Los Angeles' Hybrid Meeting Environment. The EVG-h Workgroup has determined the best way to approach promotion is to implement a strategically phased marketing plan, expanding the target population within each phase before culminating with a full-scale rollout to all Neighborhood Council Boards, City Meetings, and Angelenos at large. A successful launch could be the blueprint for the Country, another accomplishment from the City of Los Angeles.

Clear phases should be established to ensure the program remains "agile", adapting to new information and nuances as they arise, and allowing a chance to recalibrate messaging, if necessary, prior to the City-wide rollout. Working with this scaled-growth approach", marketing and instructional materials can be edited for more general audiences as the system is tested and adapted. This will help to keep costs down by avoiding the creation of an inventory with obsolete/outdated information. Materials would be reassessed at each phase to fit each audience.

The EVG-h Workgroup would like to assist the Department, Board of Neighborhood Commissioners, and City Council in the creation of the materials at each phase in the rollout. Having the members assist

along the way will help with transparency and create trust between City Officials/Departments and our NC Board Members, showing that we're aligned on concerns and needs.

PROMOTIONAL PHASES

X distinct phases have been designed to create maximum impact at each stage, expanding in complexity and scale as we move through the implementation of the Hybrid Meeting Environment. There should be a draft budget created to estimate the cost of each phase in the rollout.

Phase I: Promotional and Instructional Materials Development

Before launching the Pilot Program, draft instructional materials must first be created and tested. These materials should, at minimum, include structured written documents, frequently asked questions/issues in brochure/tri-fold format, and videos demonstrating "how-to" for various elements of the system. This should be done in multiple languages.

Diversity of the medium will be critical to ensuring all Angelenos, not just Neighborhood Councils, can understand and operate efficiently in a hybrid meeting environment.

A key component in any successful marketing campaign is the creation of distinct promotional materials. The Workgroup feels that the branding of the hybrid meeting environment will be nearly as important as the changes in legislation needed to accomplish our goal. Prior to the announcement of the Pilot Program and selection of NCs the hybrid meeting environment should be given an official name and have an image/logo put in place. This will ensure consistency in terminology and recognition, as well as provide a jumping-off point for printed and digital promotion.

Prior to the Pilot Program, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment should provide the NCs selected to participate with a full 'digital media promotional package'. This package should include graphics/logos, verbiage for printed/online advertisements, frequently asked questions (and responses), and links to the Central Repository.

Phase II: Creation of a Central Repository

To avoid duplication of work, stay aligned on messaging, and prevent “silos”, the Workgroup feels the Department should establish an online database, or central repository, where all promotional and instructional videos would be held. Rather than having 99 NCs, thousands of stakeholders, and each City Department attempting to do this on their own, a central approach allows for control over the information to ensure any materials being distributed are up to date.

The creation of a central repository instills operational efficiencies at the ground level. Asking each NC or department to come up with their own game plan would create an unnecessary burden on volunteers who are already spread thin. With each updated draft, a notice would be sent to NCs to download the latest and greatest, which would then be distributed among the Neighborhood Council’s channels.

Phase III: Pilot Program Kick-off

As described in previous reports, a small-scale Pilot Program is needed to begin testing the hybrid-meeting environment. However, being the City of Los Angeles, we do not feel “small-scale” is the right fit for this truly innovative, game-changing program.

The EVG-h Workgroup believes the most impactful way to promote would be to hold a true kick-off event at City Hall, complete with a hybrid meeting capacity. Hosting this event in City Council Chambers would validate the importance of this program and put the appropriate amount of spotlight on a truly collaborative achievement.

The inaugural meeting would be a live demonstration hosted by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, BONC, and the EVG-h Workgroup. These participants would serve as the “Board Members” and could include elected officials as special guests. These participants should be both in-person and virtual to demonstrate the flexibility of the hybrid meeting environment.

Invitations would also be sent to each NC Board Member among the NCs selected to participate in the Pilot Program who would all serve as “the Public” for purposes of the demonstration.

The format of the event would be a simple mock-board meeting where the various elements of the environment can be put on display. This includes having in-person and virtual Board Members and Stakeholders, taking comments from both (on and off video), and running through solutions to technical obstacles that might arise.

Promotion of this phase should be limited to the Neighborhood Councils selected to participate in the Pilot Program. As this will be the “first look” into how this environment will function, it is not recommended that this phase be inclusive of stakeholders or the media. The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment should do everything possible to ensure all Board Members from the selected NCs attend (virtually or in person).

Materials for this phase should include the preliminary technical guidance and documentation needed for Neighborhood Councils to implement the Pilot Program. This event could also be used to distribute hardware if it’s determined the equipment will be provided centrally.

Phase IV: Pilot Program NC Support

With a theme like that of the Central Repository, perpetual support from the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (or designated support team) will be necessary to help Neighborhood Councils get the message out to their stakeholders. Of course, the promotion of Board Meetings falls to NC Boards, however-there should be separate and consistent marketing of all Board Meetings from the Department during the Pilot Program.

This would entail the Department consistently alerting stakeholders to the availability of the hybrid meeting environments across the city and actively encouraging participation. With direct support, NCs will be able to focus on getting their Boards up to speed on technical requirements and meeting procedures, while attendance and stakeholder participation is championed by the Department.

Beyond the Pilot Program, we also feel the Department should have an ongoing responsibility to perform this function for all NCs once rolled out across the system.

Phase V: “Pre-Launch” Reassessment

Before rolling the Hybrid Meeting Environment out to all Neighborhood Councils, the Workgroup feels it’s critical to perform an assessment of the impact of the promotional campaign to date and revise the approach accordingly if necessary.

This recalibration will allow for the update and correction of instructional materials which will help keep costs manageable by not creating an inventory with potentially obsolete information. Additionally, there might be a need to tailor promotion by geography, size, or otherwise, which would not be fully understood prior to completion of the Pilot Program.

Phase VI: Neighborhood Council System Wide Roll-Out

Upon completion of the promotional campaign’s reassessment, the Hybrid Meeting Environment will be ready for wide-scale use by all Neighborhood Councils. To be inclusive of Los Angeles’ ~4m people, the Workgroup believes in maintaining a central approach for promotion.

This phase should include the creation of written and video testimonials from NCs and stakeholders who participated in the Pilot Program, detailing the wins and pain points the individuals experienced. These should be collated and distributed by the Department to create a true “Program Promo” which should be considered a commercial-like advertisement aimed at increasing attendance at NC meetings.

Additional live demonstrations should be planned in each of the twelve Neighborhood Council Regions, which would now be “open invitations” to all board members and stakeholders within the boundary. These events would be hosted in collaboration with the NCs who participated in the Pilot, the region’s Neighborhood Commissioner, and the Department. This should follow a similar script and style to the Pilot Program Kick-Off event.

Phase VII+: City Council, Committees, and City Departments

This will be further discussed in the Phase 2 portion of the EVG-h Workgroup.

IN CONCLUSION,

To close, the Workgroup thinks that Neighborhood Councils will not have the expertise necessary to operate and promote this truly one-of-a-kind tool at its onset. A centralized yet collaborative approach should be adopted to spread the word across the city at each phase in the project's timeline. This includes the creation of graphics/logos and written/video materials.

Successful promotion will include robust participation among each NC selected for the Pilot, robust stakeholder involvement, and clear/concise materials for instruction and marketing. NCs should not be asked to carry the burden of installing, training, and promoting themselves.

Recommendations

- Create a phased approach for promoting the Pilot Program
- Create documents and “how to” videos in advance of the Pilot Program to help those in that program be prepared for what is coming
- A complete “digital promotion” package should be developed to accompany the Pilot Program so that everyone is aware of what is happening with the involved Neighborhood Councils
- Create a central repository for Pilot Program information so that the 14 Neighborhood Councils in the Pilot Program can learn from each others' best practices
- Have a Pilot Program “Kickoff Event” where a simulated Hybrid meeting is shown to neighborhood council members from all 99 neighborhood councils in person and online. Ideally, the in-person venue should be at City Hall with a robust crowd of invitees
- The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment should have a policy created to help support the Pilot Program Neighborhood Councils

- The EVG-h Workgroup should make changes to the Hybrid Governance model with actual results from the Pilot Program before there is an entire system rollout to all 99 Neighborhood Councils
- The EVG-h Workgroup should help support the rollout of the whole program to help spread the knowledge base coming out of the Pilot Program
- The EVG-h Workgroup should help the City Council implement a similar model of Hybrid Governance for their Council & Committee Meetings

Working With City Council

SUMMARY

The EVG-h Workgroup thinks very highly of Hybrid governance systems and would like to partner with the City Council as their Citizen Advisory Board for creating such a system for the LA City Council. Los Angeles is home to almost 4 million residents and covers nearly 500 square miles. We believe that having both in-person and online access is essential for LA stakeholders to maximize their rights in the spirit and text of the Brown Act. We believe we are ideally suited to help because of the background we are developing for creating our Hybrid Governance system for the Neighborhood Council System.

CHALLENGES FOR CITY COUNCIL

There are many challenges for the LA City Council in creating a system of Hybrid Governance for themselves and their stakeholders. Those challenges mirror many of those described in this report. However, the City Council has unique issues that need to be addressed. The City Council has a large regular meeting area conducive to establishing a permanent setup of Hybrid equipment, which is something that few, if any, Neighborhood Council will do. As a result, they also do not have any storage issues for the Neighborhood

Councils. However, the City Council will also have more substantial needs for equipment than any Neighborhood Council in terms of the size and robustness of the equipment. This will manifest itself in terms of things like larger and more video screens, more sophisticated microphones, and higher-end versions of each of the necessary pieces of equipment.

The City Council also has more pronounced issues with meeting disruptions and security, including protestors at Council members' homes, which are technically legal. Indeed, it can be intimidating, especially to family members. There is a considerable need for the City Council to see changes in the Brown Act regarding a need to post the location of the online participants on public agendas because it is inherently unsafe to list the home address of anyone. We hope the City Council recognizes that we all face a similar challenge from that aspect of the Brown Act. Meeting disruptions and security/safety issues are concerns at all public meetings. By working together, we can mitigate these problems.

Determining a new set of protocols and procedures for planning, setting, and having public meetings will be necessary. Fortunately, many protocols and practices will be similar to those developed by the EVG-h Workgroup. Similar, though, does not mean the same, and there will need to be a group helping to determine what those differences should be. It will be crucial that not just the City Council and their staff are working on this matter but also stakeholders like those in the EVG-h Workgroup.

Internally, we constantly talk about "how will this affect members of the public?" on every issue. As public members, we will have different demands on the system compared to the City Council. Both perspectives must be heard simultaneously to achieve the best possible outcome.

Recommendations

- The City Council takes a vote on creating their Hybrid Governance system.
- The City Council works with the EVG-h Workgroup as their Citizen Advisory Body for their Hybrid Governance System.

Funding Models for One-Time Equipment Purchase

- City Council gives a one-time cash deposit for the Neighborhood Councils to purchase their equipment.
- City Council finds grants to pay for the equipment
- City Council uses Council Funds to pay for the Neighborhood Councils in their respective Districts
- City Council buys a list of equipment that each Neighborhood Council submits
- Neighborhood Councils purchase (or lease) and regionally share a pool of equipment
- City Council floats a 0% loan payable over 5-10 years to Neighborhood Councils
- City Council finds corporate sponsorship from a prominent local tech firm
- Neighborhood Councils pay for the total cost upfront
- No upfront purchase of Equipment - all payments through RFP variable costs

Funding Models

City Council gives a one-time cash deposit for the NCs to purchase their equipment.

Basic Premise: City Council Would restore \$10,000 on a one-time basis to each Neighborhood Council, which they took from us on our Fiscal Year Budget and let us use for the equipment purchase.

Pros: It would alleviate costs for the Neighborhood Council current budget for equipment.

Cons: For some Neighborhood Council's \$10,000 may not be enough.

City Council finds grants to pay for the equipment

Basic Premise: The City Council/ Or City takes advantage of the millions of grant programs available federally and statewide for Covid 19 relief. They could apply on behalf of all Neighborhood Councils to get covid relief money for Hybrid startup money.

Pros: This would grant money and not have to be paid back and would not put a burden on the Neighborhood Councils to come up with the money.

Cons: Grant application process time can be long, and would someone be able to act on this right away?

City Council uses Council Funds to pay for the Neighborhood Councils in their respective Districts.

Basic Premise: Each Council District Council person gets annually discretionary funds. They can use those funds at their discretion, and some use the money for 501(c)3 grants in their district. Some give Neighborhood Councils in their district "special funds" money to use for a particular project. It would be possible to ask each council district to provide special funds to each neighborhood council to buy equipment.

Pros: It would partner with the City Council, Our Council Person, and The Neighborhood Councils. It would be a great way to start better collaboration and unity.

Cons: Some Council offices may already have their special funds earmarked for their special projects.

City Council buys a list of equipment that each Neighborhood Council submits.

Basic Premise: Each Neighborhood Council has different needs. Each Neighborhood Council would submit a needs list based on the criteria model set up for equipment and specs. They would submit that to Empower LA, and then as a package would be forwarded to the City Council for purchase.

Pros: This would meet the needs of each Neighborhood Council and be equitable. Some Neighborhood Councils already have equipment but may be short of one or two items or may not be up to specifications on some things because of age. This would allow for specific purchases depending on need without financial hardship to Neighborhood Councils.

Cons: This process would take some time and could be slow based on how slow some Neighborhood Councils respond to requests.

NCs purchase (or lease) and regionally share a pool of equipment.

Basic Premise: Purchase or lease generic equipment that would be sufficient to serve 8 to 10 Neighborhood Councils within a specified geographic area, perhaps within each Service Region or similar. The Neighborhood Councils would need to have different Board meeting nights, however. The designated person(s), most likely paid, would be responsible for transporting and setting up the equipment for each Neighborhood Council. The equipment would be stored in or nearby each Region, preferably at a centralized location.

Pros: The share of equipment cost would be significantly less for each Neighborhood Council. Most Neighborhood Council do not have storage at their meeting location. Others may not wish to purchase and store expensive equipment that might only be used once a month for a Board meeting. Neighborhood Council members/volunteers would not need to set up, operate and pack up the equipment before, during, and after each meeting.

Cons: The availability of the equipment would be limited should a Neighborhood Council decide to change its meeting date or call a special meeting. An inventory would need to be taken after each use to account for all equipment.

City Council floats a 0% loan payable over 5-10 years to Neighborhood Councils

Basic Premise: The City of Los Angeles creates a loan of 0% interest annually to each Neighborhood Council to pay for their Hybrid EVG-h Equipment. The Neighborhood Councils would each have to pay this loan back at a rate of \$1,000-2,000 per year from their Neighborhood Council budget until the debt is fully paid.

Pros: The money comes upfront. The payback rate is reasonable. The City gets all its money back.

Cons: The payback period is long, and Neighborhood Council budgets could be canceled before then. How does replacement equipment get paid for?

City Council finds corporate sponsorship from a prominent local tech firm.

Basic Premise: The City of Los Angeles finds sponsored equipment and/or services for the Neighborhood Councils. This would be done through the relationships cultivated between the Mayor & The City Council to the broader business community in Los Angeles. We would suggest targeting Fortune 500 corporations (Amazon, Apple, Google, Zoom & more) who may be interested in

making a tax-preferred donation of the needed equipment and/or services from their inventories.

Pros: The equipment and/or services would be free. Increases the overall relationships between the City, Neighborhood Councils, & the Sponsor

Cons: Sponsorship placements can be visually jarring. Would we become limited on equipment or otherwise have limits from the deal?

Neighborhood Councils pay for the total cost upfront

Basic Premise: Neighborhood Councils pay the total price upfront. This would mean all equipment required and any sort of ongoing maintenance cost

Pros: It happens right away. Neighborhood Councils would have complete control over the equipment.

Cons: Neighborhood Councils do not have money to do this without a budgetary change accompanying this. This would cripple Neighborhood Councils financially for a full financial year.

No upfront purchase of Equipment - all payments through RFP variable costs

Basic Premise: EmpowerLA would help facilitate an RFP process with the City to look for vendors who can provide an all-inclusive service. This would mean the vendor owns the equipment and is paid to: bring the equipment to the meeting, set it up, handle all “Host Controller” activities, deal with any onsite technical issues, handle the equipment breakdown at the end, and return the equipment to their offices.

Pros: Minimizes upfront costs for service. It makes it easier for Board Members from a meeting logistics standpoint. Provides the most benefits of any option. It helps solve the “replacements” issue.

Cons: Not applicable for the Pilot Program and could lead to misleading information. It could have the overall highest cost. Has the longest setup time by far.

Recommendations

- Start the RFP process since it takes a long time to do and provides no guarantees on payment until services are delivered.
- Rank the Funding Models in order of preference to provide the City Council with options and flexibility
- Have the Workgroup work with EmpowerLA in Phase 2 on getting exact pricing for every funding model
- Bring some City Council staffers into Phase 2 meetings to gain their knowledge for creating the optimal model.

Funding Models for Monthly Meeting Costs

Paying Specialists from Neighborhood Council funds Board Member and/or Community Member does the job RFP Process

Paying Specialists from Neighborhood Council funds

Basic Premise: A paid Moderator – Audio Specialist to assist in managing zoom and ensuring sound and video are operating appropriately and monitored. We spent when we were meeting in person approx. \$2900 a year.

Pros: It takes it off the Neighborhood Council to manage that part of the meeting as well as the Chair can focus on running the meeting agenda and not the Technical Issues.

Cons: It will be more costs added to operational funds

Board Member and/or Community Member does the job.

Basic Premise: Neighborhood Councils find a Board Member and/or a Stakeholder present at the in-person meeting to handle the setup and other logistics involved in running a fully compliant Hybrid EVG-h Neighborhood Council Board Meeting.

Pros: The cost is free or very close to it. The Neighborhood Council should know the people involved, which should help if there are questions.

Cons: Sometimes “free” also comes with too low technical proficiency. What if there is only one person trained and happens to miss a meeting from illness or other emergencies?

RFP Process

Basic Premise: As a consideration, a vendor could be retained to provide logistics support to the Neighborhood Council System to enable hybrid meetings effectively and cost-effectively. City Clerk-approved vendors could be available to neighborhood councils as contract or professional service providers. The scope of service could include the labor cost of transporting, setting up, and breaking down the meeting(s). Additionally, the scope of work could include having the necessary equipment (as it relates to specifications) to service the Neighborhood Council’s venue of choice adequately.

Pros: Neighborhood Councils would not need to be concerned with purchasing and storing equipment. Neighborhood Councils would be relieved of the administrative responsibility of managing equipment inventories.

Cons: The City Clerk's request for a proposal process can be lengthy and may not be time sensitive if hybrid meetings are enabled in the short- or long-term, given the Brown Act amendments underway.

Recommendations

- Starting the RFP process right away because of the time it takes
- The RFP process does not apply to the Pilot Program and could mean two solutions are needed (One for Pilot Program & Another for the Full Program)
- The Neighborhood Council volunteer option needs to be explored during the Pilot Program to see what Pros & Cons emerge from that “cost free” model
- Take a survey of Neighborhood Councils that currently pay for “Meeting Specialists” to see if any of them would have the ability to help during the Pilot Program for pay

Workgroup Phase 2

The following proposes the continued existence of the Workgroup and tasks the group should perform as the pilot program is established and proceeds to its conclusion.

Pilot program participant selection

A subset of the Workgroup should be tasked with reviewing and selecting applicant neighborhood councils.

Pilot program monitoring/updates

Members of the Workgroup should monitor the pilot program, receiving regular updates on the progress of the participating councils. The Workgroup should meet every three months or as needed to discuss the program's status and provide comments on its progress.

Pilot program evaluation and recommendations

After the pilot program, the Workgroup should meet and provide a final evaluation report, including recommendations for program implementation and necessary changes to technical and operational needs. The group should also guide rules and policies relating to hybrid meetings.

Recommendations

- The EVG-h Workgroup should help select the 14 Neighborhood Councils in the Pilot Program according to the criteria the Neighborhood Commissioners recommended, including achieving diversity and representation across the City.
- The EVG-h Workgroup should monitor the various Pilot Programs to learn what needs modifications for the entire program rollout.
- The EVG-h Workgroup should make recommendations for the entire program based on what occurs in the Pilot Program.

Recommendations

Obstacles

- A readiness survey should determine how prevalent these problems are across the neighborhood council system.

Pilot Program

- The Workgroup should consult with the city attorney on possible solutions for disruptions.
- Fund the Pilot Program in full right away to take advantage of the favorable administrative environment, in terms of a particular law allowing for increased zoom usage during the pandemic
- Include 14 Neighborhood Councils in the Pilot Program, two from each Planning Area.
- Have the 14 Neighborhood Councils represent the various sizes of boards, including one council with fewer than 10 Board Members and one council with over 30 Board Members.
- Approve a fair and equitable process to compare Neighborhood Councils for selection.
- Run this Pilot Program for no less than six months but no greater than 12 months.
- Create a series of documents to help track the progress of the Pilot Program participants.

Meeting Options

- Support the 14 neighborhood council-sized pilot program
- Support the Brown Act changes the EVG-h Workgroup proposes
- Craft a letter stating that the current Brown Act rules are untenable from the Commissioners' perspective

Readiness For Returning to In-Person Meetings

- Follow the data that comes from the survey to have a better understanding of the issues that affect the various Neighborhood Councils.
- Compare the Neighborhood Council results against others in their respective regions to see whether issues are local or regional.
- Compare the Neighborhood Council results against others with the same Neighborhood Empowerment Advocate (NEA) to see if issues can be addressed through NEAs.
- Councils should use Zoom as the platform for video streaming.

EVG-h Protocols & Procedures

- Meetings should be recorded.
- The presiding officer should be present at the in-person meeting.
- Board members attending remotely should be required to leave the video on during the meeting unless equipment or connectivity issues are preventing an adequate video link.
- Board members should receive training in hybrid meeting rules and procedures and proper use of equipment.

Brown Act Modifications Requested

- Neighborhood Commissioners should consider legislation for bodies like Neighborhood Councils to be exempt from Brown Act provisions if the LA City adopts a municipal “sunshine” ordinance governing operations of neighborhood councils concerning public notification and access.
- Neighborhood Commissioners should consider legislation that Neighborhood Council Committee Meetings should be exempted from Brown Act Provisions so that they can have the option of “100% online meetings” if that is more convenient.

COVID Protocols

- Neighborhood Councils should be able to enforce their own meeting rules at venues.
- The City, BONC Commissioners, & EmpowerLA should have a meeting to determine how to enforce Covid protocols and issue clear written guidelines that can be shown at a meeting.
- The City should pay for a LAPD officer to deal with anticipated unruliness at all Hybrid Board Meetings. This should also be the LAPD reporting to the Neighborhood Council with the “Police Report.” They should NOT be enforcing Covid standards but instead dealing with anyone making a “disruption” at the meeting, which would include disregarding written Covid protocols or verbal abuse.

Security for Meetings

- Neighborhood councils should have LAPD officers attend their meetings as part of paid service hours. A program should be established to provide councils access to security services.
- Neighborhood council board members and chairs should receive training in the use of parliamentary rules and conduct board meetings and techniques for handling those who engage in improper behavior. This training should highlight disruptions that neighborhood councils have previously encountered.

- Anti-bias training should be tailored to neighborhood councils and provided in person.
- Code of Conduct is enforced more rigorously
- Anti-bias training is enforced more stringently
- Meeting chairs should be informed that those making public comments on agenda items shall only make comments that are “germane to the subject matter jurisdiction of the legislative body” and “can not direct comments at individuals” and may not be allowed to finish their comment if it is not germane or directed at an individual.
- The Brown Act should be amended to allow exemptions for attending meetings remotely if a board member has experienced ongoing physical or verbal abuse.
- The Brown Act should be amended to allow neighborhood councils to conduct committee meetings virtually to minimize the risk of physical or verbal abuse in small, in-person settings.

Pilot Program Promotion

- Create a phased approach for promoting the Pilot Program
- Create documents and “how to” videos in advance of the Pilot Program to help those in that program be prepared for what is coming
- A complete “digital promotion” package should be developed to accompany the Pilot Program so that everyone is aware of what is happening with the involved Neighborhood Councils
- Create a central repository for Pilot Program information so that the 14 Neighborhood Councils in the Pilot Program can learn from each others’ best practices
- Have a Pilot Program “Kickoff Event” where a simulated Hybrid meeting is shown to neighborhood council members from all 99 neighborhood councils in person and online. Ideally, the in-person venue should be at City Hall with a robust crowd of invitees.
- The Department of Neighborhood Empowerment should have policies created to help support the Pilot Program Neighborhood Councils.
- The EVG-h Workgroup should change the Hybrid Governance model with actual results from the Pilot Program before there is a full system rollout to all 99 Neighborhood Councils.
- The EVG-h Workgroup should help support the rollout of the full program to help spread the knowledge base coming out of

the Pilot Program.

- The EVG-h Workgroup should help the City Council implement a similar model of Hybrid Governance for their Council & Committee Meetings.

Working with LA City Council

- The City Council takes a vote on creating their Hybrid Governance system.
- The City Council works with the EVG-h Workgroup as their Citizen Advisory Body for their own Hybrid Governance System to help solve many of the same issues regarding increased transparency with a simultaneous focus on increased safety benefits.

FUNDING MODELS FOR ONE-TIME EQUIPMENT PURCHASE

- Start the RFP process since it takes a long time to do and provides no guarantees on payment until services are delivered.
- Rank the Funding Models in order of preference to provide the City Council with options and flexibility
- Have the Workgroup work with EmpowerLA in Phase 2 on getting exact pricing for every funding model
- Bring some City Council staffers into Phase 2 meetings to gain their knowledge for creating the optimal model.

FUNDING MODELS FOR ONGOING MEETING COSTS

- Starting the RFP process right away because of the time it takes
- The RFP process does not apply to the Pilot Program and could mean two solutions are needed (One for Pilot Program & Another for the Full Program)
- The Neighborhood Council volunteer option needs to be explored during the Pilot Program to see what Pros & Cons emerge from that cost-free” model.
- Take a survey of Neighborhood Councils that currently pay for “Meeting Specialists” to see if any of them would have the ability to help during the Pilot Program for pay.

PHASE 2 GOALS

- The EVG-h Workgroup should help select the 14 Neighborhood Councils in the Pilot Program according to the criteria the Neighborhood Commissioners recommended, including achieving diversity and representation across the City.

- The EVG-h Workgroup should monitor the pilot programs to learn what needs modifications for the full program rollout.
- The EVG-h Workgroup should make a set of recommendations for the full program based on what occurs in the Pilot Program.

Conclusions

The EVG-h Workgroup was formed by the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners to create a model of Hybrid Governance for their analysis. The Workgroup had several goals included in its mission upon request from the Commissioners, EmpowerLA, and the Mayor's Office. These goals included the creation of a survey of all 99 Neighborhood Council Board Members about the readiness of their Neighborhood Council to return to in person meetings.

The team had discussions about many topics and came up with ideas about how to tangibly proceed. This included developing protocols and procedures for Hybrid Meetings, best practices for Covid & Physical safety, and necessary changes to the Brown Act. Detailed information about creating and properly designing a Pilot Program was discussed, including the number of Neighborhood Council to be selected, the criteria for selection, and a plan for promoting the entire endeavor.

Since the financial cost would be a key factor, there were extensive discussions on funding models for both one time equipment purchase, as well as ongoing monthly costs. The team also went into detail about the need for involvement from the LA City Council when considering the cost components and other operational considerations.

The Workgroup looks forward to Phase 2, which will be focused primarily on the Pilot Program and the implementation/results from the readiness survey. Hybrid Governance will be the model that will become more popular as time goes on and Los Angeles is poised to be the first to implement it.

Thank You Section

We would like to thank the seven members of the Board of Neighborhood Commissioners who formed and empowered this EVG-h Workgroup.

We would like to thank the entire EmpowerLA team, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, & General Manager Raquel Beltrán for their help in planning and executing all the meetings. All of the “behind the scenes” work was critical to the team's success.

We would like to thank Mayor Garcetti for the SEED Scholars resource that his office kindly provided. They are working with the EVG-h Workgroup to create a survey going to every Neighborhood Council Board member to determine the general readiness for returning to in-person meetings.

We thank the Co-Chairs for the three different Subgroups: John DiGregorio, Doug Epperhart, Glenn Bailey, Melanie Labrecque, and Josh Nadel. They helped guide us through each of those subgroups and each of whom also contributed written work for this Phase 1 report.

We thank our Minute Takers, Hayley Geiger, and Adriana De La Cruz. Hayley wrote our General Meeting Minutes, while Adriana assisted with Subgroup minutes. These minutes were essential in creating a written account of our various meetings for posterity.

We would like to thank the writing and editing Team: John DiGregorio, Doug Epperhart, Glenn Bailey, Hayley Geiger, Phyllis Ling, Adriana De La Cruz, Jamie York, Suzanne Lewis, Lanira Murphy, and Josh Nadel. 46-page documents are not easy to write and edit. It took this whole team to get it finished.

We would like to thank all the other EVG-h Workgroup members for attending meetings, reading tons of emails, and providing invaluable discussions to assemble this document and its recommendations.

We would like to thank members of the Neighborhood Council System and other stakeholders who have commented during Board of Neighborhood Commissioners meetings because those comments were heard and acknowledged at our meetings.

This was a team effort, and we are thankful for everyone involved in making this a collegial and productive environment. We look forward to Phase 2 and beyond! Thanks once again for everything!

Lanira Murphy and Josh Nadel
EVG-h Workgroup Co-Chairs

EVG-h Workgroup Roster

First Name	Last Name	NC Service Region	NC	Commission Appointees
Sam	Halfon	N/A	N/A	
Hailey	Geiger	N/A	Youth Alliance	
Lanira	Murphy	Region 1 North East Valley	Panorama City	Lipmen
John	Di Gregorio	Region 1 North East Valley	Panorama City	
Kathy	Guyton	Region 10 - South LA 1	Empowerment Congress West	Atkinson
Josh	Nadel	Region 11 - West LA Area	Palms	Lipmen
Adriana	De La Cruz	Region 11 - West LA Area	Del Rey	Lipmen
Randell	Erving	Region 11 - West LA Area	Palms	
Doug	Epperhart	Region 12 - Harbor	Coastal San Pedro	Regalado
Linda	Alexander	Region 12 - Harbor	Central San Pedro	
Melanie	Labrecque	Region 12 - Harbor	Northwest San Pedro	Regalado
Brian	Allen	Region 2 - North West Valley	Granada Hills North	
Glenn	Bailey	Region 2 - North West Valley	Northridge East	Vo-Ramirez
Keren	Waters	Region 2 - North West Valley	Granada Hills North	
Jamie	York	Region 3 - South West Valley	Reseda	Shaffer
Suzanne	Lewis	Region 4 - South East Valley	Valley Village	Shaffer
Phyllis	Ling	Region 6 - Central 2	Historic Cultural North	
Karin	Davalos	Region 8 - North East LA	Glassell Park	
Elias	Garcia	Region 9 - South LA 2	Central Alameda	
Moises	Rosales	Region 9 - South LA 2	Empowerment Congress Southeast	Atkinson

Attachments

MEETING RECORDINGS & MINUTES

5/2 General Meeting recording (WAS NOT RECORDED)

MINUTES - ■ EVG Meeting #1 5_2_22.pdf -

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AxCEY7dc0udEkE5foLJD8ZtpQ-l671P/view?usp=sharing>

[6/1 Policy & Procedures subgroup meeting recording -](#)

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/DXW7pCH8iAwdYUwEhOF4dE_pjfRTSHb28m-yVk2-LGK43rY0NNS6SBIsaS8IBuKsF98ZyMAP_MIMqT8P.sqAQ2_qvCi3ka08Z

MINUTES - ■ EVG Subgroup 6.1.22 policy and procedures.pdf -

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/10gye7pr1DW2uxzEXqs7S2lztS9rtKGA/m/view?usp=sharing>

[6/2 Communications subgroup meeting recording -](#)

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/tBX7N0T7RSnXnYoo4BdUjAsm2zRIP4eSI07XihNlZgFAgFnXkfsvQmg6WEzfw5xZuFuXZyaB_JPo_gzj-.RSSd6gnFeAhRX41V

MINUTES - ■ EVG Subgroup 6.2.22 Communications.pdf -

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RWgLIgqwVLiU75iq9EaVgY73AIAtAtH9/view?usp=sharing>

[6/8 meeting recording -](#)

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/ODT4FwRjao1cbfdUSELTwbp4SDzh_quIVTEg3jlu7F-I--efj6PVqDg_UR97wAwXLUZazwC3yNQHiVPk.8q1b_Kb_QiZ3zXra

MINUTES - ■ 6.8.22 EVG-h Workgroup 2 meeting minutes.pdf -

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TnQSDQYM_BATEItTjUy_y8kWnNQst5x/view?usp=sharing

[6/13 Policy & Procedure Subgroup meeting recording -](#)

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/qAly8KM4qKYNj7rUi6h5hROArI_VgnI2FU8xusBTOv1MForQIX-r92b2migEk85u8L6WlwtEhyd4qFU5w.8Zf9EGiMWTZfVqrc

MINUTES -

6.13.22 EVG-h Workgroup 2.0 Meeting Minutes - Protocols Subgroup.pdf -
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1bqXFJrKnpqrLIQkh1QHy9d6ExrcAiwU8/view?usp=sharing>

[6/15 Communications subgroup meeting recording -](#)

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/09Z316fZhl3jIVXVnyAKvLqSpaFP6DZUirgpcXJ3s3ZBTVEn37fnV-HJiDFX33LfJQtRNKe-U_wsVAT5.IOK2A4-RUyJ0UNK5

MINUTES -

06.15.22 EVG-h Workgroup 2.0 Meeting Minutes - Communications Subgr...
-
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JbAv1LKdH3cZGM0bJiDWYv6GcRvfRNyX/view?usp=sharing>

[6/16 logistics subgroup meeting recording -](#)

<https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/vHVAcQ-aKyFomq7Q6YRCFNSEm2CU-Vhy42GW51WoAQma2PzYBKQMSjR1HYIkkaamQtJmr7P2K9c2SHo.q7KypX27EHBlu3VV>

MINUTES -

6.16.22 EVG-h Workgroup 2.0 Meeting Minutes - Logistics Subgrou...
-
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AeyLq7Llt0jElbDhBVTOFu3OYyJLQqvz/viaw?usp=sharing>

ATTACHMENT 'D'

Press Release - October 17, 2022 - Governor Newsom to End the COVID-19 State of Emergency

[\(BACK TO LIST OF ATTACHMENTS\)](#)

LINK:

<https://www.gov.ca.gov/2022/10/17/governor-newsom-to-end-the-covid-19-state-of-emergency/>

Governor Newsom to End the COVID-19 State of Emergency

Published: Oct 17, 2022

California's pandemic response saved tens of thousands of lives, protected the economy, distributed nation-leading financial assistance and built up an unprecedented public health infrastructure

The SMARTER Plan will maintain California's operational preparedness to support communities and quickly respond to outbreaks

SACRAMENTO – Today, Governor Gavin Newsom announced that the COVID-19 State of Emergency will end on February 28, 2023, charting the path to phasing out one of the most effective and necessary tools that California has used to combat COVID-19. This timeline gives the health care system needed flexibility to handle any potential surge that may occur after the holidays in January and February, in addition to providing state and local partners the time needed to prepare for this phaseout and set themselves up for success afterwards.

With hospitalizations and deaths dramatically reduced due to the state's vaccination and public health efforts, California has the tools needed to continue fighting COVID-19 when the State of Emergency terminates at the end of February, including vaccines and boosters, testing, treatments and other mitigation measures like masking and indoor ventilation. As the State of Emergency is phased out, the SMARTER Plan continues to guide California's strategy to best protect people from COVID-19.

[SMARTER Plan progress update](#)

“Throughout the pandemic, we've been guided by the science and data – moving quickly and strategically to save lives. The State of Emergency was an effective and necessary tool that we utilized to protect our state, and we wouldn't have

gotten to this point without it,” said Governor Newsom. “With the operational preparedness that we’ve built up and the measures that we’ll continue to employ moving forward, California is ready to phase out this tool.”

To maintain California’s COVID-19 laboratory testing and therapeutics treatment capacity, the Newsom Administration will be seeking two statutory changes immediately upon the Legislature’s return: 1) The continued ability of nurses to dispense COVID-19 therapeutics; and 2) The continued ability of laboratory workers to solely process COVID-19 tests.

“California’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic has prepared us for whatever comes next. As we move into this next phase, the infrastructure and processes we’ve invested in and built up will provide us the tools to manage any ups and downs in the future,” said Secretary of the California Health & Human Services Agency, Dr. Mark Ghaly. “While the threat of this virus is still real, our preparedness and collective work have helped turn this once crisis emergency into a manageable situation.”

Throughout the pandemic, Governor Newsom, the Legislature and state agencies have been guided by the science and data to best protect Californians and save lives – with a focus on those facing the greatest social and health inequities – remaining nimble to adapt mitigation efforts along the way as we learned more about COVID-19. The state’s efforts to support Californians resulted in:

- Administration of 81 million vaccinations, distribution of a billion units of PPE throughout the state and processing of 186 million tests.
- Allocation of billions of dollars to support hospitals, community organizations, frontline workers, schools and more throughout the pandemic.
- The nation’s largest stimulus programs to support people hardest hit by the pandemic – \$18.5 billion for direct payments to Californians, \$8 billion for rent relief, \$10 billion for small business grants and tax relief, \$2.8 billion to help with overdue utility bills, and more.

California’s pandemic response efforts have saved tens of thousands of lives, kept people out of the hospital and protected the economy:

- California's [death rate](#) is the lowest amongst large states. If California had Texas' death rate, 27,000 more people would have died here. If California had Florida's rate, that figure jumps to approximately 56,000 more deaths.
- In only the first ten months of vaccines being available, a study showed that California's efforts [saved 20,000 lives](#), kept 73,000 people out of the hospital and prevented 1.5 million infections.
- California's actions during the pandemic protected the economy and the state continues to lead the nation in creating jobs and new business starts:
 - [“'Lockdown' states like California did better economically than 'looser' states like Florida, new COVID data shows,”](#) with California's economy having contracted less than such states – economic output shrank 3.5% on average for the U.S., compared with 2.8% for California.
 - Since February 2021, California has created 1,628,300 new jobs – over 16% of the nation's jobs, by far more than any other state. By comparison, Texas created 1,133,200 jobs (11.3% of the nation's) and Florida created 787,600 jobs (7.9% of the nation's) in that same timeframe.
 - Since the beginning of 2019, data from the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) shows that over 569,000 businesses started in California, by far more than any other state.

###

ATTACHMENT 'E'

Los Angeles City Council Official Action on Council File #20-0291

[\(BACK TO LIST OF ATTACHMENTS\)](#)

LINK TO COUNCIL FILE #20-0291:

<https://cityclerk.lacity.org/lacityclerkconnect/index.cfm?fa=ccfi.viewrecord&cfnumber=20-0291>

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CITY CLERK

PETTY F. SANTOS
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

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OFFICIAL ACTION OF THE LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL

Council File No.: 20-0291
Council Meeting Date: December 13, 2022
Agenda Item No.: 19
Agenda Description: RESOLUTION relative to the Declaration of Local Emergency by the Mayor, dated March 4, 2020, wherein he declared that conditions of disaster or of extreme peril to the safety of persons and property have arisen both internationally and within the United States as a result of the introduction of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), pursuant to the provisions of the Los Angeles Administrative Code (LAAC) Section 8.27.
Council Action: RESOLUTION - ADOPTED FORTHWITH

Council Vote:

YES	Blumenfield	YES	de León	YES	Harris-Dawson
YES	Hernandez	YES	Hutt	YES	Krekorian
YES	Lee	YES	McOsker	YES	Park
YES	Price Jr.	YES	Raman	ABSENT	Rodriguez
YES	Soto-Martínez	YES	Yaroslavsky		

HOLLY L. WOLCOTT
CITY CLERK

Adopted Report(s) Title
Amending Motion (Krekorian - Blumenfield) dated 12-07-22
Resolution 11_19_2020

AN EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY – AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

32A

MOTION

On December 6, 2022, Mayor Garcetti released a Notice of Termination of the Local Emergency, effective February 1, 2023. The Mayor’s notice found that “the circumstances that existed in 2020 and 2021 ... have adjusted to a level currently manageable by the regularly constituted branches and departments of the City government.”

I therefore move that the Resolution for Item 32 regarding the March 4, 2020 Declaration of Local Emergency by the Mayor concerning COVID-19 be amended to modify the first provision to read as follows:

- a. Resolve that a local emergency continues to persist within the City of Los Angeles, within the meaning of Los Angeles Administrative Code Section 8.21, et seq., and the continuance of the Mayor’s March 4, 2020, Declaration of Local Emergency through 30 days from the adoption of this Resolution, but not beyond January 31, 2023, is therefore necessary; and that the state of local emergency shall terminate on February 1, 2023.

I further move that the City Council instruct the City Clerk to place the amended Resolution on future agendas, as appropriate, to permit the City Council’s timely consideration and continuation of the state of local emergency through January 31, 2023, and that the Clerk cease to agendize this matter thereafter.

PRESENTED BY: Paul Kerkorian
 PAUL KREKORIAN
 Councilmember, 2nd District

SECONDED BY: Ed Blum

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DEC 07 2022

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