

### **Item #1 Cardenas and Company**

On December 15<sup>th</sup> I sat down with L.A. City Council Member Tony Cardenas whose District 6 office oversees much of our West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council Area. Also in that meeting were Field Deputy Lynda Levitan and Cardenas' Chief of Staff Jose Cornejo. I had a short list of five concerns with specific goals to improve life in our district and I'd like to share those with you now;

- 1) Woodley Avenue Park Safety; Those of you familiar with my last few month's reports know my story and the research I've done to date on trying to get better response from our Park Rangers on not only criminal activity within their jurisdiction but better communication between the rangers and Park & Rec. We already know that there are currently four or five rangers that cover more than 400 L.A. City parks on a daily basis. We also know that is simply not enough and that lower priority 911 cell calls are getting dropped in the process. Those lower priority calls have included a family waiting in the park for hours after being accosted by gang members and the rangers never showing up to take a report. My proposal is that all 911 cell phone calls thru CHP for park issues be directed to LAPD for first response and that LAPD should secure the area until the Rangers, rather, "Ranger," arrives to take over jurisdiction. The council member agreed to look into it and the next day I received a phone call from the Park Rangers Commander (who already owed me one, anyway!) and we discussed the proposed changes the rangers will be going through as they are melded into General Services. In a nutshell, the current plan is to have two sets of two armed rangers patrolling the valley parks – still more than 100 parks - on a 24-hour basis. The Commander told me that LAPD probably would not be agreeable to a Memorandum Of Understanding to be first responders. Considering that LAPD is 1,000 cops short already, I can understand that, but the ratio of park rangers to parks is worse given the number of parks that could actually demand service at any given time and the distance from point A in the Valley to point B. I was informed that changes could be implemented as early as January 9<sup>th</sup> and the commander and I agreed to keep in touch on this issue. However, I also asked that he work with the CHP and his own division on better identifying need and jurisdiction on 911 cell phone calls. In my opinion, the disconnect still happens when a 911 cell phone caller uses phrases like "in the park," "at the park," when illegal activity may actually be happening on the street outside the park -- as was my case with the 125 plus motorcyclists gathered on Woodley Avenue without a permit. In a time when all law enforcement is severely understaffed, and in order for the CHP/Ranger emergency call system to work at its highest level, the need is to better discern and better define the "where" of any given incident to make sure the proper agency with jurisdiction shows up to handle the situation. This is still a "wait and see" issue for

me and that is why I still cannot recommend Woodley Avenue Park as a safe place for families in our district.

- 2) Tillman Plant Odors; The problem: musty odors from the open-air secondary aeration tank remain in residential areas during a low hanging marine layer or “still” times when there is no movement in the air. The Tillman plant, which was never designed for odor control – everything has to be retrofitted - has made promises in the past that were not kept and home prices in the area are going for almost \$600,000. Our goal; no expansion of Tillman unless a retrofit of the secondary aeration tank is a part of the plan. Cardenas and Company were on board with this. Will follow up.
- 3) Illegal Vendors at elementary schools; The problem is several divisions of the city and some county come together to “sweep” these areas of illegal vendors selling matches, cigarettes, cap guns, BB guns, and foods kept in unhealthy and possibly contaminated containers being sold to our schoolchildren before and after school. Once a sweep occurs, within a few weeks, the vendors are back. Our goal; schedule vendor sweeps every five weeks plus a day until the problem stops. Council member Cardenas told me that he has set aside money in the new city budget specifically for this purpose for our district and is hoping that his request is approved by the council. As this appropriation wouldn’t happen until July, I asked that we keep up the vendor sweeps on a monthly basis. He was very receptive to this idea and I have it from one of my sources that another vendor sweep will take place later this month.
- 4) Street Racing; If I solicit a prostitute on the street from my car, my car can get taken away. If I race that same car down Victory Blvd. at 95 mph, I can get a ticket. Cars and motorcycles of street racers are currently not being impounded for reasons I am not privy to, but Council member Cardenas, who was a little surprised at this news that came to me courtesy of SLO Kopunic, agreed to speak with Rocky Delgadillo – again - on the matter. Will follow up.
- 5) Prostitution; It has come to my attention that oftentimes; a prostitute is out and on the street before an arresting officer can finish the paperwork. Prostitution’s impact on Van Nuys is severe and we need to continue to look for ways to slow down the prostitutes and help out our officers. Here is the current policy courtesy of the council member’s office: “It depends on the individuals arrest record and details of the report. Typically, on a 1st time prostitution (PC 647(b)) offense the male or female would receive probation, fine or jail/cal trans, aids test and program and stay away from the location of arrest. On a 2nd time offense for prostitution (PC 647(b): probation, mandatory jail time of at least 45 days county jail, aids test and program and stay away from the location of arrest. On a 3rd time offense for prostitution (PC 647(b): probation, mandatory jail time of at least 90 days county jail, aids test and program and stay away from the location of arrest. I would have to evaluate the entire report and circumstances of the arrest, and individuals criminal history. If the individual is on probation for another offense, the sentence may be increased \* it all depends on the

circumstances.” Now, this all works for me, but it is an answer to a question I wasn’t asking. My question is how to find a fairer balance between the detaining of a prostitute and the time our law enforcement has to spend on paperwork. According to the response, a convicted prostitute is required to take an AIDS test. But if an alleged drunk driver can be held and given a breath test, could it not be within our laws to give an alleged prostitute an AIDS test? Will follow up.

Altogether, I really enjoyed my experience in the council member’s office. He and his staff were very responsive and open. I definitely felt like I was being heard and that my thoughts were carefully being considered. In my mind, the issues that resonated most with the council member seemed to be the Tillman, Illegal Vendors and Street Racing. So hooray for us, we will continue to pursue those issues with the council member and work toward other solutions perhaps with other NC’s on the Park Rangers issue and prostitution.

### **Item #2 Close Encounters with The Lake Balboa Neighborhood Association**

I was stunned to receive an early morning call on December 28 from Tony Cardenas’ office that a letter from the Lake Balboa Neighborhood Association – actually a second letter requesting documents – had been circulated and copied to 16 different government officials and employees – uhm, basically sent to everybody except the guy it had been intended for... me.... Of course, when I was informed of this, I immediately called the (818) 997-8674 number of the association and received an answering machine. The next morning, I was in possession of a copy of the letter, and thus began this chain of correspondence:

(REQUEST FOR DOCUMENTS)

Sent: Wednesday, December 28, 2005 12:21 PM

Subject: Request for Documents

I am in receipt of the Lake Balboa Neighborhood Association's December 23, 2005 request for documents. It arrived via the courtesy of Linda Levitan, Field Deputy for Councilmember Tony Cardenas, who knows me to be very responsive -- possibly over-responsive -- to stakeholders in our WVNLBNC district of 43,000.

The reason that both of your written requests of December 4 and 23 never reached me personally (until now) is that, unfortunately, the mailing address you used is outdated. Manuel Durazo, project coordinator, and the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment (DONE) moved from that location Back in September 2005. But

take heart, when our NC Board was seated, we each received extremely large white binders from DONE with 146 pages of city services phone numbers that were outdated by two years!

It is an honor to comply with your request for documents. The neighborhood council system needs checks and balances and the city – particularly DONE -- simply does not have the budget or staff to do so in a timely manner. It is up to neighborhood associations, neighborhood watches, local businesses and charities to assure that all NCs are transparent and representative bodies.

Regarding item (1) of your request; posting locations are in the first paragraph of each agenda. I have been doing the posting personally for the last six months. The WVNLBNC recently approved new locations geared toward more high traffic areas. Please refer to the attached agendas.

Regarding item (2); The WVNLBNC was officially chartered and seated on March 30, 2005. As chair, I can supply all documentation from that date on, but I am unable to comply with your request for documents for five months prior to that date (beginning October 2004) because the WVNLBNC did not yet exist. I would have to assume that the official governing body and holder of whatever documents you are seeking would be DONE and your request would have to go through them. Good luck and Godspeed on that one.

In the meantime, attached please find all president's reports and agendas of the WVNLBNC to date. One thing you will most assuredly note is that for the November meeting, there were five month's worth of minutes that still had to be approved. This is due both to an AWOL Secretary who we recently had to dismiss from the Board and the fact that we sometimes do not have a quorum in the early part of the evening. As you know, board business cannot be conducted unless there is a quorum. In August, we did not have a quorum, so, aside from the presentations, no business was transacted. Mark Bower is the new Communications Officer and Scott Taylor is the newly appointed Secretary who, along with myself are rectifying that situation so that the minutes are submitted in a timely manner and are an accurate reflection of the board's business.

I am also requesting that all written reports -- including financial – be sent to me via email immediately from board members so that I may forward to you and your organization. Typically, the financial report is the bank statement, so I am asking Yves Chery, our Treasurer, to make hard copies for your organization's perusal.

If you wish copies of electronic general board communications, I can also forward those to you. Per the Brown Act, these communications must be very limited in scope. Board members are not allowed to advocate any position in a general electronic communication to other board members. This year, I, as chair, ruled on three violations. In order for our board to "regain" compliance with the Brown Act, either the chair or the board

members must read the written email comments into the public record, typically during the public debate and discussion of the agenda item in question. On each occasion, it was also the ruling of the chair that those written email comments would be used as one of two ten-minute opportunities a board member has to speak on any item.

In closing, I hope that you and the Lake Balboa Neighborhood Association see fit to start using the neighborhood council system as a way to improve our community. I am content with my ignorance of whatever friction there was in the past between organizing forces because, truly, the issues of the present are of the greatest importance and deserve our focus. Our next meeting takes place Wednesday, January 4th at 7:30 p.m. at Lake Balboa Studios 7412 Balboa Blvd. Please let me know when your next meeting is so I can attend.

One last request, a personal one, is that you take the necessary steps to restore my credibility, good name and reputation within the city government community by sending a note to each one of the sixteen people you copied with your second request reporting my assumed delinquency and simply state that you sent both requests to the wrong address and that you are now in contact with me and the WVNLBNC. This action would be most appreciated.

If you have any other requests, questions or comments, I can always be reached at (818) 780-8240 or via email.

Looking forward to working with you and a great 2006 for the West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa Community.

Sincerely yours,

Bill Haller  
President, West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa Neighborhood Council  
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P.O. Box 7720  
Van Nuys, CA 91409

Home address:  
6551 Densmore Avenue  
Van Nuys, CA 91406

The official Lake Balboa Neighborhood Association response was:

Lake Balboa Neighborhood Association hereby acknowledges receipt of this email and attachments. Be advised that the "incorrect" mailing address was obtained from DONE's website. It is DONE's responsibility to keep contact information updated and accurate.

It is my understanding that you will be providing all documents requested on a monthly basis, or as soon as such documents are available. We accept your justification for not responding with documents effective 10/04. We look forward to receiving documentation on a regular basis.

My last correspondence on Wednesday December 28th:

Thank you for your quick response.

Just to be clear, and in all fairness, my name and home phone number are listed in the telephone directory and available by dialing information. Anybody can contact me or the neighborhood council via email through [www.wvnlbnc.org](http://www.wvnlbnc.org)

I only wish that the Lake Balboa Neighborhood Association had taken one of the aforementioned steps before going through the time, effort and expense of copying sixteen different government employees to wrongly imply that I was purposefully ignoring anyone. Regardless, it is still my personal hope that your association will do what it can to rehabilitate my (and your) credibility in this matter. If DONE is to blame, then, please, let those government entities know that also.

I also need to be clear with you that we do not have an understanding that I will be supplying documentation to you on a monthly basis. There is nothing in my letter to you that indicates such. The better idea is to have the webmaster archive all documents so that all stakeholders have the same opportunity to review the business of the board. This is a request I have already made. It is my hope that within the next month, all committee reports, agendas, minutes and other documentation will be archived on our website.

Have a happy new year and please let me know when your next meeting is so I can attend.

Bill Haller  
(818) 780-8240

As of this date, I am still waiting to hear of the date, place and time of the next Lake Balboa Neighborhood Association meeting.

### **Item #3 Takin' It To The Streets**

The Ad Hoc Street Committee has a success to report. Balboa Place (near the Home Depot) has been put on the Bureau of Street Services list for a reconstruct. Per Brian Davis, the cost will be \$39,000. We have \$61,000 left on account to spend! The chair will gladly take more suggestions for more street resurfacing or reconstructs. Please let me know in the next two weeks so we can research and submit the new streets in a timely manner.

### **Item #4 Our Community on New Year's Day**

On New Year's Day, I was posting agendas in the rain. Brown Act says we have to post 72 hours in advance. That was New Year's Day. And it was raining. My first stop was to the Sports Center which should have been closed, but wasn't. Adam, an employee who typically works on Sundays asked his boss if he could open the place for some friends so they could play basketball. I posted our agenda there. Over at Tam's Pet Food, they too should have been closed, but the owners were there -- in their dark shop, just cleaning up for the new year. I knocked on the door, they let me in to post our agenda. At Faith Bible church in the afternoon, people were still coming out of the church when I walked in to post. At the Shell station, the door was locked so as not to let the heat out -- I knocked on the door and the attendant let me in. Ralph's and Food 4 Less were both open.

Our posting locations are indicative of the people in our community of West Van Nuys/Lake Balboa. They work hard, they play hard -- even on holidays -- when it's raining -- they continue to work hard and play hard. Happy 2006, everyone. May we all have a healthy, happy, safe, peaceful and prosperous year.