

Q+A FOR NEW AND PROSPECTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

Q: What are the responsibilities of a board member?

A: To attend board meetings and retreats as well as serve on at least one committee. Those members elected to an issue-based seat (renters, business, education, etc.) are expected to serve on the related policy committee.

Q: How many meetings will I have to go to?

A: Board meetings are held once a month and average around 2-3 hours. Committees are once a month, many paired together on the same night. They usually run 1-2 hours each. Retreats are held by board bimonthly.

Q: How do committee meetings work?

A: 3-4 Board members are appointed to a committee. They come up with the topics they want to discuss a week before the meeting and run the agenda. Members of the public are invited to take part fully in meetings.

Q: Who gets to vote?

A: At committees, everyone gets to participate in discussions and votes. This is because committees make recommendations to the board only. The board makes all official decisions, in most cases by a majority vote.

Q: What else are board members expected to do?

A: Geographic based board members should try to follow issues that fall within their area of responsibility, including attending any meetings that relate to any developments or important projects within their areas.

Q: What role does the neighborhood council play in decisions made by the City Council and other public agencies?

A: The Council members from the area (LaBonge and Garcetti) send staff to our meetings and frequently check in with HUNC on issues that they are considering. The NC also has the ability to lobby government groups.

Q: Does the neighborhood council actually get things done or is it just a “debate society” where people talk but nothing really happens?

A: Our NC has been able to blend a desire to take positions on a lot of issues of importance to the community with hands on projects like tree plantings and cleanup efforts. Our positions do make an impact on many decisions.

Q: What kinds of rules will I have to follow as a board member and how will I know what to do? Can I get into any trouble if I don't follow instructions?

New board members will have a chance to attend a briefing by DONE, the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, where documents will be provided explaining the duties and responsibilities of board members. Most are easy to comply with. One important law to learn about is the Brown Act.

Few board members have ever been prosecuted or removed for wrongdoing. As long as you are open about your potential conflicts of interest (saying when you have a financial or other interest in a decision) you should be fine.

Q: Who in the City can help me if I have any questions about serving on the board? What is the process for getting legal advice from the City?

A: Our DONE project advocate can assist with most basic questions about process that other board members cannot answer. We also have access to a City Attorney who advises our group. Just include our President in e-mails.

Q: What is the best thing about serving on a neighborhood council?

A: Being able to take an issue you feel passionately about (beautification, public safety, transportation, etc.) making a proposal and seeing it happen. We have the ability to pay for goods and services, influence decisions made by the City and other levels of government and organize events for the area.

Q: If I run for the neighborhood council who is eligible to vote for me?

A: Anyone that is deemed a “stakeholder.” This can be a resident, worker or property owner within our boundaries, or someone who belongs to a church or nonprofit that is active in the area. Elections are held NC-wide.

Good luck and hope that you decide to take part in our group in some way!