

Olympic Park Neighborhood Council

Revised Board of Directors Meeting
March 4th, 2019

*Note: There were not enough Olympic Park Neighborhood Council Members present for a quorum so **the meeting was canceled**. However, the Candidate Forum scheduled to take place before the meeting went forward. What follows is the minutes of that forum:*

The Forum began at 7:09 p.m.

OPNC President Mitch Edelson: Welcomed the members of the community and invited candidates for the upcoming April NC elections to come forward to introduce themselves.

Candidate Arturo Ibarra: He has lived on the east side of Crenshaw for 20 years, going on 21. He lived all over southern California growing up, but settled down in Los Angeles when he was 15. He wants to become more civically engaged in the neighborhood. He wants to impact change. Besides from voting in the general elections, he feels that serving on the Neighborhood Council is the closest thing you can do at the local level to impact change, share ideas and get to know your neighbors.

Mitch Edelson: noted that the east side had a non-competitive election so all the certified candidates are automatically on the board. He said that he looked forward to serving with Arturo and the other candidates as well.

A member of a local neighborhood association on the East Side asked about the borders of Olympic Park, **Treasurer Milton Gaines** explained the boundaries of the neighborhood. Arturo Ibarra mentioned that he lives on Bronson.

Candidate Ramsey Goyal: He is currently a junior at Loyal Highschool and is running for the Student Representative seat. He has lived in Country Club Park, at St Andrews and Country Club, his whole life. He is 16. He is interested in public policy which is why he wants to be part of the board. In college he wants to study urban planning or some kind of land use major. He thought this was a good start to learn about his neighborhood, have an impact on it and learn about what he eventually plans to study in college.

Mitch Edelson: Noted that there are no other candidates for the Student Rep seat, so Ramsey automatically wins that election and will be on the board.

Milton Gaines: Noted that Ramsey will be their first youth representative in 14 years.

Candidate Sarah Song: She lives near the country club area, on Victoria. She was born and raised in Los Angeles. She has never been in politics before, so this will be her first time involved with the community in this way. She wants to make a direct impact on the people she lives close to because they are pretty far away from Washington. She saw this opportunity and wanted to learn more about the issues that affecting our streets, students, the elderly population and everyone in between.

Candidate Matthew Devadas: He was born and raised in Maryland, just outside of Washington DC. But, he has been living in LA for over 10 years, the last five of which have been at a house on the NW corner of Pico and Crenshaw. He lives in a house with three roommates, and for a long time they all assumed they were in Mid City district. They realized recently that their area falls in Olympic Park. Pico and Crenshaw are his big concern. These two major thoroughfares in LA that three different districts come together at, which is why he thinks the intersection does not get as much attention as he thinks it should. In the last year he has been active in collecting trash near his home every weekend. He is often on the phone with 311 to try to get them come pick up trash. There are routine trash stops on Pico that he believes are not being picked up regularly. There are also a lot of car accidents at his intersection. They are often little fender benders, but every month or so there is a bad accident. Often it is someone speeding South down Crenshaw who hits someone turning onto Pico. It has been his ongoing goal to clean up and make the intersection more functional. He heard about the election from a flier. Unfortunately, he recently learned that will probably being moving away from the city at the end of this summer so he has to withdraw from the election. But he does plan to come to meetings and be active in the community until he leaves.

Officer Harry Cho: Commented that a lot of people who are not on the board can be on committees and can be active in those.

Mitch Edelson: The OPNC has a few standing committees and you do not have to be on the board to be on a committee. After the election, the new board can appoint people to committees. Also, he encouraged people who are not candidates to still come to board meetings to get involved. The board meets at the first Monday of every month.

Candidate Nathan Freeman: In 1984 he was teaching school in Jackson TN and he came to Los Angeles to see if he could get into any of the Olympic events happening that summer. He visited his uncle, Los Angeles Councilman David Cunningham, Jr., who helped him get in to the events. At the end of the summer his uncle hired him to work for him as a planning deputy. He met Milton Gaines and his mother when they were fighting a group home on Citrus. In 1988 he started working for Councilman Bob Farrell. He coordinated block clubs in council district 8. He then worked at some consulting firms before Councilman Holden asked him to join his staff to work on economic development. He was the planning/economic development deputy who created Wilshire-Center Koreatown redevelopment area and the Mid-City redevelopment area. He currently serves on a number of boards including National Action Network, an organization headed by Al Sharpton. He is on the board of directors for the Black Business Association of Los Angeles and BAPAC, the Black American Political Association of California. He has been active in this community for a number years. Several years ago while he was representing BFI, a landfill/waste hauler, he was cleaning up with Danny Bakewell and the Brother Crusade in CD8 and CD9 almost every weekend. He got BFI to donate dumpsters for those cleanups. He is seeking to represent the West side. He also worked on what is now known as the Mid-City Crossings.

Candidate Jackie Agustin: She Candidate for the east side. She lives on South Western Ave. She doesn't know much about politics, and was not engaged before. But, being a recent college

grad, she recently decided she wanted to get more involved. She was born and raised in LA and now lives in KTown. She is excited to learn and join the board.

Candidate Dimitrina Gotzeva: She is a candidate for the west side. She is a teacher at Los Angeles Senior High school. She is an immigrant from Bulgaria. In 1992 she came to the US as a Fulbright scholar at UCLA. She liked it here and wanted to stay. In 2004 she started working as a teacher at LA Highschool and 15 years later she's still here. She has spent 11 years in the classroom and for the last 4 years she has been an instructional literacy coach. She graduated from the CSUN education administration program. One of her homework assignments was to come to a neighborhood council meeting, so that is how she got to know the board many years ago. She kept getting the emails so that's how she knows about this election. Currently she is a doctorate student at Pepperdine in educational administration. She is all about education. She is member of Wilshire Rotary club and through them and her school she has been involved with many activities in the neighborhood. She has wanted to buy property in the neighborhood for many years but the prices keep going up. But maybe this year she will try to buy in this neighborhood. If she is elected maybe she could get her school and other schools in the area involved. She lives at Cloverdale and Wilshire.

Candidate Mikey Latner: He just moved to Orange and Olympic this past September. He is a candidate for the West Side. He grew up in Torrance. He has a friend on the NC in Palms. She got him interested in getting involved with his own neighborhood council. He went to an Empower LA event that explained how neighborhood councils worked two weeks ago. He got an interesting perspective from that meeting – for example Olympic Park seems like a large neighborhood but compared to other LA neighborhoods it is actually quite small. He got a good perspective on this neighborhood. He likes how NCs can make a part of a huge city like LA feel like a smaller neighborhood. So, for him, being a new resident, this is his way of getting to know his community. He is excited to get engaged. Even if he is not elected, he would love to be involved with the council in some way.

Milton Gaines: Commented that Olympic Park Neighborhood Council represents 26 thousand residents, which is considered small.

Candidate Mitch Edelson: He is currently the president of the OPNC. Before he was the president he secretary and a regular board member. He has been on the board for three and a half years. Three and half years ago he purchased this beautiful building (4067 W Pico Blvd) and revitalized it into Jewel's Catch One night club. He loves this neighborhood – the diversity, the great businesses, and the extremely nice and welcoming people who live here. His priority as the president has been to help with outreach. Before, people had felt unwelcome at the meetings – either they were too verbose or too combative. So, his goal was to make it as welcoming and approachable as possible. He wants to fill the board with people who really want to be active. He is on the east side. He sees a lot of promise in the candidates he's seen today.

Milton Gaines: Commented that he was a Junior Councilman back in the 80s for the area. He has lived on Longwood Avenue for 49 years. He is very happy to see the OPNC in its 15th year. He helped found the OPNC, was its first president, and was one of the people to sign before the board of neighborhood commissioners to get this council started. He took an 8-year hiatus and

came back a year ago and now serves as the treasurer. It warmed his heart to see the room so full and the first youth member in 14 years. It is a testament to neighborhood councils. When LA voted to change the charter 1999, neighborhood councils were an experiment. The whole state and country looked to LA to see how this would work. It has made a large city feel smaller. The OPNC also works with neighborhood associations to help bring resources into the community. The OPNC gets a stipend from the city and the board decides how that money will be allocated into both operations and projects in the community. "This council is about you." The constituency says you can live, work or own property here. Someone who is paying rent is just as affected as someone who pays property tax. In terms of the traffic issues, Olympic and Highland is one of the second worst intersections in the city. When he was a kid, there was an accident there every other weekend. A friend of his had a Toyota in her living room. He urges the community to bring things they see happening in the neighborhood to the attention of the board so that they can work on it, including any developments they may hear about. In terms of crime, two great LAPD officers regularly come to OPNC meeting to give updates what crimes are happening and to hear from the community. This is all about allocations in resources. This neighborhood is going up in value. "This is your neighborhood council. It is nothing without you."

A member of the community asks the present members of the board to introduce themselves:

Board Member Peter Wilson: He introduced himself to the community. He lives on the west side and has owned his place there for five and a half years. He is an architect, so he is involved with the PLUM committee. He has been on the board for two years.

Board Member Hank Williams: he has been on the board for a year. His background is business management.

Milton Gaines: He is the current treasurer. He has lived on Longwood for 49 years. He is a math teacher and an accountant. He has been doing community work since he was 13, for 37 years.

Nathan Freeman: He was recently appointed to the board. He has been involved with the community in the area for nearly 40 years. In 2008 he shut down Wilshire blvd between Western and Normandie with the support of the Councilor's office, for 2008 Earth Day "No Car Day" Celebration.

Mitch Edelson: the elections are April 4th. He and Milton Gaines encourages everyone to spread the word and get others involved. He also asks Officer Harry Cho to give his crime report for the area.

Officer Harry Cho: He is a senior lead officer for the Olympic Division. His area of responsibility is between Normandie and Western. He goes from Pico to San Marino. Between Western and Arlington, he goes from Pico to Wilshire. Between Arlington and Crenshaw he goes from Country Club to Wilshire. He has multiple neighborhood associations including Country Club Park, Country Club Heights, Wilshire Park and West Normandie Heights. Has been police officer for 22 years. When he first immigrated to the US in 1976 he grew up in LA and went LA unified school district. He went to UC Irvine – he studied biology at first but found it boring. But

it was a childhood dream of his to become a police officer. As a little kid the LAPD gave him baseball cards. He was very glad when they brought the baseball card program several years ago, since it is a great way to connect to neighborhood kids. He had opportunity to apply to the LAPD, it took him a year and 22 years later he is still doing it. He plans to retire in 8 years, after which he will be “Mr. Mom” to his kids. He reports that crime in the area is the same. Elderly people are being targeted with robberies. Recently, there were 3 victims who were 66 and 70. One was on Norton and Olympic. At 4am, a 66-year-old man heading to the airport was putting a suitcase in his car when a suspect came up and demanded that the man hand over his money and phone. When the man refused the suspect started to punch him. In another occasion, on Bronson, the organist at St Gregory’s, an elderly woman, was walking to mass when someone tried to steal her purse and knocked her down. Luckily, she held on and they did not get her purse. But the trend is that criminals come into the neighborhood and target the elderly who may have bad vision and trouble remembering faces. Cars are also getting stolen – on average around 3 or 4 a week. Mostly for joy riding luckily, so often the police can recover the cars. They may use those stolen cars to commit other crimes. Burglaries have also started happening here, mostly perpetrated by the same crews. A taskforce recently followed a crew up to the valley and got some of them into custody. Unfortunately, three of them got out at a local bank on Wilshire and Virgil and the police did not catch those three. The police also suspect that they follow people home from the bank. They used to do fender bender robberies. Now, they may follow you to your destination and then break into your car to try to get valuables. There is also a crew that comes here from Texas. So, he urges the community to be aware of their surroundings at the bank. They target for people with zippered money bags. He suggests never carrying those around.

Arturo Ibarra: He asks what the police suggest to the community protect themselves from robberies.

Officer Cho: The vast majority of cars that get broken into have been left unlocked. Thieves will just check doors in the middle of the night at 3am. They will also look in car windows to see what is inside, so Cho recommends not leaving any gym bags in the back seat or anything in the coin cup. Do not leave anything valuable in your car. He also says that walking alone can make you a target, so he urges members of the community to walk together in groups. Also, make eye contact with people you see on the street as it may deter a thief from robbing you since you may be able to identify them later.

Ramsey Goyal: He knows that it is illegal to not wear a helmet on electric scooters. Is there any way for the police to enforce that? **Cho:** Unfortunately, the police do not have the man power to enforce that. But if you let him know about problem locations he can make sure there are officers near those areas to keep an eye out.

Sarah Song: She heard about recent activity with gangs throwing eggs at cars in the middle of the night. **Cho:** He had not heard about that. A lot of eggings are put on NextDoor but are not actually reported to the police. The police cannot monitor NextDoor. So if you see something on NextDoor that you think the police should know about, please contact the police directly.

Matt Devadas: He asks if the Police track graffiti tags. He has seen a lot of the same ones around the neighborhood. **Cho:** the gang unit tracks gang-affiliated graffiti but they do not track regular taggers typically. He recommends that people get cameras, especially businesses. **Matt:** He has heard that installing brighter lights outside is also a deterrent.

Cho: The city once installed 13 cameras for a three-year project and it cost \$600,000. So,

the city installing cameras becomes a very costly process. A regular home owner camera system is much cheaper than cameras for the city. So, he really recommends that members of the community install cameras which the police can later use to track down criminals in the area if a crime is committed in the area.

Milton Gaines: He encouraged the community to learn more about the Purple Line Expansion Plan. The Metro is having workshops throughout the area regarding the plan. This will affect the Wilshire Plan which determines what type of development can go in certain areas. He stated that the “R1 designation is under attack city-wide.” The R1 designation is for single-family residences. With Measure JJJ, TOCs and other projects going on, the community needs to pay attention before a huge development they do not want gets built in their neighborhood. So he encouraged members of the community to go to the workshops, do the webinars or leave comments to let city officials know that the neighborhood is watching what they are doing. There is currently a by-rights project under construction at San Vicente and La Brea, which will be a Sprouts and a City Target. Also, west of Rimpau, coyotes are rampant in the community right now. Coyotes are protected, so no agency will move them. But, if you find a coyote den in around your property you must immediately call the county sheriff so they can come out and assess the situation. It is also currently mating season for coyotes; they are very protective of their young and will attack if you get too close. Be mindful and check NextDoor for sightings. They like to eat small pets.

Arturo Ibarra: He asked about a development at Crenshaw and Country Club. **Mitch Edelson:** That project was put into motion before he was even on the board. All he knew was that it would be townhouses. He thought Virginia may know something about it. **Virginia (community member):** She said that project was a major problem because city planners are lying on documents sent to the state, saying that the building would not be in a flood zone when it is in a flood zone. So, she was seriously concerned. She also went to the Metro purple line extension plan workshops and one of the presenters “let slip” is that they are planning to rezone up and down Wilshire Blvd to allow for the mixed commercial residential development. She initially thought this was a good idea, but typically when cities plan they keep businesses and residences separate for safety reasons. Also, the development would result in a lot of congestion, traffic wise, on Wilshire Blvd. She is also concerned about members of the community that live in Single-Family Homes getting pushed out of the neighborhood and the loss of open space. She went to the city planners she asked what the population estimate was for the area after the development and none of them knew. She is also worried about earthquakes and the flow of traffic. She urged both the community and the OPNC to pay attention to these developments. **Arturo Ibarra:** He asked, in terms of the potential rezoning, if the OPNC thought it would look like the Wilshire/Western or Wilshire/Vermont areas? The traffic there is highly congested. **Mitch Edelson:** From what he has heard the Purple Line extension line development will not be coming down Pico. **Peter Wilson:** The area in the Olympic Park neighborhood that will be affected by the Purple Line development will be the Olympic and Crenshaw intersection. The development areas will be within a half mile of the new purple line transit stops.

A member of a local neighborhood association on the East Side said that often new multi-family complexes are supposed to have a certain percentage of affordable and/or low-income units. She asked who oversaw that and made sure the project had the correct number of affordable units. **Mitch Edelson:** His understanding was that it got recorded on the property and it is a 55-year covenant that a certain percentage of units will be affordable for a certain amount of time. If that covenant is broken then there are serious consequences, such as the authorities taking the property. The LA City housing department and planning department oversees and enforces that that. **Sarah Song:** Said that the housing and urban development departments have satellite offices. And there are also small housing agencies that can help with mortgage counseling and low-income housing. There are also non-profits that are sponsored by the fed. But the community was more concerned about the new developments being monitored. She said that there are six properties in the area that have already started building. **Arturo Ibarra:** He said that there is a hearing for a 230 unit building on Olympic between Serrano and Hobart. The city council said they would approve it because it is supposed to have 35% affordable housing. **Mitch Edelson:** There are usually different tiers of affordable housing such as very low income, low income, etc. He thought there were maybe three or four different tiers.

Sarah Song: Asked if anyone has every figured out what to do about the homeless population in the area. She knew it was a sensitive topic. **Mitch Edelson:** Some boards have a homelessness liason. OPNC does not have one right now but if Ms. Song makes it onto the board and she is interested in that, he would love to have a homelessness liason on the board. **Sarah Song:** She wondered if there was any sort of organization, such as the satellite offices or non-profit organizations she mentioned. **Milton Gaines:** Something to consider in this area is that there are many that are homeless by choice, which are a set of individuals that you won't be able to reach because it is a lifestyle that they have chosen. But there are several organizations that do want to help with the homeless. And as a council, the OPNC needs to look at the crime side of that issue too. **Edelson:** there is a lot of balance with that. It's a complex issue. **Minute Taker:** There was a Homelessness Resource Fair on March 2nd that was announced at several NC board meetings recently. **Edelson:** That event may have been canceled because of the rain, so it may have been rescheduled. He said he would check his email and forward it to Ms. Song.

Matthew Devadas: Asked if they knew about the development on the SW corner of Pico and Crenshaw where there is currently a big lot. **Mitch Edelson:** Yes, there was just an email in Curbed about it and the developers have contacted the OPNC and want to present at the next meeting. It is technically outside of OPNC's district but the developers still want to come present. It is supposed to be senior housing.

Arturo Ibarra: He asked about parking in the area. **Mitch Edelson:** Country Club Park is currently trying to get permit parking. You need to get 80% of the residents on the block to sign a petition which you submit to the DOT. The DOT studies the feasibility of the request, then the City Council has to vote to approve it. Minimum, it takes 6 months but often it takes longer. It can be a difficult process. **Ibarra:** He said other neighborhood have diagonal parking. He wondered if they could try to have that in Olympic Park. **Edelson:** Said he thought that would be a great idea. He has also seen that in a lot of neighborhoods. He didn't know what the

requirements were, but they could look into how that works. **Peter Wilson:** He said it is all about how wide the streets are.

Mitch Edelson: The election is April 4th at LA High School from 2 to 8 pm. He thanked everyone for coming.

The forum ended at 8:20 pm.