

Motor Avenue Improvement Association
Palms Neighborhood Council Candidate Questionnaire October 2012

Candidate Name: Eli Lipmen

1. Why are you running for office?

Answer

I am running to be the next President of the Palms Neighborhood Council because I want a cleaner, safer, greener, and friendlier Palms for my 9-month old daughter, and for the whole community. I have the experience with the Neighborhood Council, the relationships in the community and at City Hall, and the ability to get things done. To learn more about why I am passionate about Palms and want to be the NC President, watch my video at eli4palms.tumblr.com

2. What is the most pressing issue facing Palms and how will you deal with it? What is the most pressing need facing Motor and how would you deal with it.

Answer

Community engagement is the most pressing issue facing Palms. Over the past two years as a member of the Palms Neighborhood Council I have created and led numerous outreach projects to engage the community – from the Palms Mural Beautification Project to our monthly clean ups. I plan to continue these projects at the next President of Palms NC and expand on them with additional outreach and volunteer projects, while working with groups like MAIA to support projects like the Farmers' Market.

The most pressing issues facing Motor Avenue are the alleys behind Motor and street safety. I will support your efforts to repave the alleys either by private developers or the City, and I will work to change the traffic patterns at Venice and National Blvds. I pushed for changes to the signals at Venice Blvd and Motor Avenue after community members like Candace Rancier at Palms Cycle showed me pictures of the horrible accidents at this corner. Our advocacy efforts resulted in this project being slated to occur in 2013 and I continue to keep it on our Councilmember's priorities. I also believe that the signal must be changed at Motor Ave and National Blvd because the businesses north of National are being adversely impacted and this hurts our community.

3. What are three to five specific tasks (e.g. specific legislation, policies, enforcement actions) you intend to accomplish if you are elected?

Answer

As President, I will prioritize:

- Safe and clean streets, alleys, and sidewalks
- Alley re-pavement, filling potholes, building bicycle lanes, trimming trees, and graffiti removal
- Beautification projects at Woodbine Park, Palms Middle Schools, & Expo Line Station
- Community empowerment & engagement through volunteerism, collaboration with community organizations, smart development, and listening to the community's needs
- Overland Avenue and Motor Avenue as more business- and pedestrian-friendly streets

4. What is your profession or current place of employment? Do you have time for this position?

Answer

I am a manager at an international nonprofit – AJC - with an office nearby. I currently serve as Secretary of the Palms Neighborhood Council, which is a very demanding position, so I expect to have the time for this position as I have already made the commitment.

Topic-Specific Questions

6. Did you support the creation of the PNC? What do you expect the Council to accomplish?

Answer

I support the Neighborhood Council system and believe the PNC can play an important role in the community to engage and empower its stakeholders. I recognize the limitations of the role and understand the importance of working collaboratively with the other NC members, community groups, City officials, and the City bureaucracy. I have a track record of getting things done from funding for crucial programs in the neighborhood like tree trimming and watering on Motor Avenue to the importance of branding the community to increase economic development and smart growth. I have seen where the Council can be most effective in its work and will find ways to expand on our mission.

7. Please describe Palms and specifically Motor Ave. What would you do to improve it?

Answer

Palms is a dynamic, diverse, distinct, and historic community. Motor Avenue is its historic and current business core. I am passionate about Palms because we have such great restaurants, businesses, residents, and community members. I created the Palms mural project to celebrate and display our diversity and history to attract new residents, businesses, and customers to the neighborhood. And I supported the tree watering and trimming effort because I knew it was impacting businesses and needed to get done. I want to partner with MAIA to improve our community, and as President, I would expand existing PNC events like the Palms Bike Rodeo, neighborhood clean ups, and Summer BBQ to engage new people, but also spearhead new events like a “Taste of Palms” where we would highlight the culinary gems in the community to draw new people into the community.

8. What steps would you take to increase the sustainability of Palms? Do you think there are environmental issues?

Answer

Absolutely. As a current board member, I have brought a number of sustainability issues to the Board. As a result, we have passed motions supporting the citywide plastic bags ban, a ban on polystyrene (Styrofoam), the America Fast Forward plan for public transit in LA, the RePower LA campaign (energy efficiency measures at LADWP), and Proposition 37 (GMO labeling). Our advocacy and support for these crucial issues has helped many of these campaigns tremendously and Palms NC has been recognized around the city for its efforts to support these sustainability efforts. In the future, we need to work with businesses to implement the citywide plastic bags and polyurethane ban so it doesn't hurt their business (it could actually save money). I also think that with the construction of the Expo Line, we need to support transit oriented developments, more bicycle parking, and more pedestrian amenities to encourage people to walk, bike and ride, rather than drive, when shopping locally or traveling somewhere

else in the City. Finally, I support the creation of a PNC Sustainability Committee and would appoint an active chair to lead this work.

9. What steps would you take to increase public participation in Palms?

Answer

Public participation has gone up during my tenure as Secretary on the Neighborhood Council. When I started, I worked with other members of the Board to completely redesign the website, email newsletter, and launched a Facebook page. These tools have increased our recognition and public participation in the community. However, there is still much work to be done, as many people have no idea what the NC does or who we are, and as the next President of Palms, I plan to focus on public participation.

There is a myth that we cannot engage many people in Palms because they live in apartment buildings. As President, I promise to meet with the three major rental companies in the neighborhood to see if we can provide resources and materials on community involvement. I also want to increase public participation by getting out the word on our current programs; when we do a neighborhood clean up, we should alert stakeholders on the street we plan to clean to increase participation. We also need to engage stakeholders at places where they gather, such as the Motor Avenue Farmers' Market, the businesses on Motor Ave at National, and faith institutions. As President, I plan to have a regular presence at the Farmers' Market, provide more event flyers and details to local businesses, and engage with faith leaders to distribute information through their networks. Finally, I would seek to amend the PNC bylaws to include a faith-based position and student position who could outreach to our communities of faith and the numerous students (and their parents) in Palms – from elementary school through college (USC and UCLA both have student housing in Palms).

10. Please describe the Park system in *Palms*. Does it need improvement? If so, what would you do to make those improvements?

Answer

Palms needs more, and better, park space. First, we need to modernize Woodbine Park to be a park for the 21st Century. I started a relationship with the LA Parks Foundation through its Chair, Barry Sanders, who is also President of the Parks & Recreation Commission. Based on this relationship, the Parks Foundation applied for a grant to give the park a facelift. Unfortunately, the application was rejected, however, I also recommended that funds from the Roz Wyman Recreation Center be donated to the Parks Foundation specifically for usage at Woodbine Park. We recently heard that they agreed to donate \$50,000 to Woodbine Park effort and during my Presidency, I want to break ground on the Woodbine Park modernization project.

I am also working with members of the Board and Palms Middle School to try and open up their quad for limited use by people in the community. This large property is a perfect place to provide green space to the residents who live in the western areas of Palms and I hope to negotiate an agreement with the school during my Presidency.

11. What steps would you take to deal with the problem of non-participation in our community?

Answer

We have to address issues of relevance to the community. As I speak with voters, I hear a plethora of issues that concern them – from alleys to graffiti, from clean streets to parking. We need to address these issues and engage the community to help us solve the challenges we face together. I also think that a regular presence at the Farmers' Market, additional Board members focused on faith institutions and students, and engagement through the property management companies can also decrease non-participation.

12. Do you support making Palms more bicycle friendly? If so how?

Answer

Absolutely. My wife and I are avid bikers and I have supported all efforts to make Palms more bicycle friendly. We have purchased all our bicycles from Palms Cycle. I will continue to support the construction of bicycle lanes in Palms and will work with businesses to install bicycle racks. I would like to install Palm tree shaped racks on certain streets to give our community a distinct character and I want to bring Cyclavia, the community cycle event, through the Palms neighborhood.

13. What measures would you propose to make the Motor Avenue Farmers Market more successful? Do you support the activities of the Motor Ave Association? If so which ones and how?

Answer

Kudos to the Motor Ave Association for doing an amazing job of organizing and administering the Farmers' Market. It is a fantastic community resource. It has also been great to see the lawn signs throughout the neighborhood promoting the market. The Farmers' Market needs to be promoted more at Charnock Elementary, Palms Elementary, Palms Middle Schools, and La Lycee Francais – it should be in the regular newsletter, added to the announcements by the principal and MAIA should explore other ways to make it a school activity such as inviting the school bands to perform at the market. Also, flyers should be distributed to the major faith institutions in the area that have a built in network of active community members.

14. Do you support mail in election ballots? Why and what if elected will you do to support your position?

Answer

Yes. I am on the record saying that it was a mistake not to have mail in ballots for this election. We need to engage as many voters as possible, particularly after the poor turnout in our previous election. Many voters were disenfranchised by not having mail in ballots – the elderly, disabled, people who work on weekends, and others. If elected President, I will support mail in ballots at the next election and allocate more resources to election outreach. Our election is important and is a barometer of the health of the NC; I think we should invest more in our elections.

15. How do you feel the PNC currently functions? If elected what would you do differently?

Answer

The current PNC functions well, but it could function much better. If elected President, I would focus on increased transparency on the Board with agenda items and notification. I would hold fewer “special” or “emergency” meetings, particularly on important topics like our budget and the elections. I would appoint an ad-hoc committee to address the budget and get additional input and proposals from the community on our budget allocations. I would also ensure that a Sustainability Committee is created and used as an outreach opportunity to environmental leaders in the community. I would also sit down with each Committee Chair and make an evaluation of whether they should continue or another person appointed to lead the Committee. Currently, the PNC does not take a strong enough position on over-development and runaway development in the neighborhood and we need a Board that keeps on top of this crucial issue.

16. What do you think about the state of transportation in Palms? On Motor Avenue?

Answer

Transportation on Motor Avenue is one of our biggest challenges. As I said earlier, I spearheaded efforts to get the funding and approval to change the lights at Venice Blvd and Motor Ave. I support efforts by MAIA and local businesses to remove the ‘no left turn’ restriction on Motor Avenue at National Blvd. I also believe that the restriping of Motor Avenue is the right decision for the community – it improves safety on the street by creating a dedicated left turn lane for problems areas like Regent, Tabor, and the US Post Office, and it completes the Motor Avenue bicycle lane to connect the two studios at either end of Motor. However, the current timing at Motor Avenue at National and the additional traffic from the two new developments on Motor will cause additional traffic to back up on Motor Avenue. We need to work together to address this issue to find solutions that benefits businesses, commuters, and residents.

I also think that we need to look at parking and traffic restrictions on Overland, which currently creates challenges for businesses, residents, and pedestrians. Additionally, I commend the efforts by MAIA to address the new Expo Line station in Palms and we need to continue to work together to look at how this station can become a hub for the community and not only provide more options for its residents but bring new consumers to our local businesses.

17. How many programs have you initiated, developed and implemented in Palms? Please list. (Please be as specific as possible)

Answer

- The Palms Mural Beautification project with the support of Council District 10, the Palms NC Board members, and LA Commons. This program hired 2 local artists and a dozen apprentices (students), and engaged hundreds of community members in development of artwork and painting of the murals - A mural “art opening” at the Museum of Jurassic Technology, fostering a new partnership with this community group - The City Club at Hamilton High School – a collaboration between SORO NC and Palms NC to empower and organize students at Hamilton High School to give back to the community through volunteerism - Created of the monthly Palms clean ups; over 20 have been held with dozens of community members. - Initiated the yearly Summer BBQ in Woodbine Park; 3 have been held - Helped organize and moderate a community forum on nonviolence with community, faith, political, and law enforcement

leaders after the tragic shooting in Arizona in 2011

- Completed the revamp of the Palms website and e-newsletter as community resources -
- Created the PNC Facebook group

18. How familiar are you with other community groups, city hall, city agencies and city departments?

Answer

I have deep and long-term relationships with community groups, city hall, city agencies and city departments which makes me ideally suited to get things done as the President of Palms. This is why many community groups are supporting my candidacy, including the IMAN Center and St. Mary's of Palms. I have worked with our Councilmember, Paul Koretz, for years on a variety of issues and have a close relationship with him and a number of his staff members. I also have relationships with the Mayor and other members of the City Council and their staff, from my two years serving as President of a Young Democrat organization. I am on a first name basis with 3 Mayoral candidates and as Secretary of the PNC, I have built a strong contact list of city agency and department staff. When a business on Overland came to me about installing bicycle racks, I was able to get them installed in a month because of my contacts at DOT. When the LAPD hadn't received a payment from the PNC for the "Clubs for Cars" program, the LAPD SLO Officer Ceja called me to follow up with our Treasurer who worked to get the check cut. I am known as an honest person and someone who wants to get problems solved, and this is why I have supporters throughout the community and at City Hall.

Campaign Activities and Structure

19. Explain your plans to incorporate a Motor Ave agenda into your campaign.

Answer

Motor Avenue is an important part of my agenda - bicycle lanes, safety on Motor, the alleys, the Farmers' Market, tree trimming and watering, traffic, are among the issues that I have discussed above and I am discussing in the campaign.

22. Who in the community supports and endorses your candidacy?

Answer

You can find endorsements on my website: <http://eli4palms.tumblr.com>. These community leaders support me:

- Dr. Sadegh Namazikah, Founder, IMAN
- Saman Namazikhah, Secretary, Board of Trustees, IMAN
- Ari Gozlan, CEO & Owner, Computech Support Services
- Len Nguyen, Founding President of the PNC
- The City Club at Hamilton High School
- Ritz Cleaners
- Candace Rancier, Palms Cycle
- NPA (National Promotions & Advertising)
- Jeanne Parker
- Joseph Zimring
- And many others!