

[post to the eList and D6NLG (District 6 Neighborhood Leader's Group),  
May 9, 2011, by L. Ames]

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Hi,

This post is about the May General meeting of the Willow Glen Neighborhood Association. I know that only a small portion of the eList community are WGNA members, but even the Board President recognizes that the eList is the best means of reaching its membership.

It truly pains me to write this, but I am aghast at the Board's behavior regarding the upcoming Board election. The WGNA newsletter you got this weekend thanks "all the members of the Nominating Committee", and it lists me as a member, but it does not give the true report from the Nominating Committee. I do not endorse the report or ballot published in the newsletter.

WGNA has served the Willow Glen community for well over three decades. Its membership votes annually for a Board for the upcoming year, and also for five members who, as the Nominating Committee, are tasked with developing the slate of candidates for the following year. The Nominating Committee is, by tradition, comprised of past WGNA Presidents and Officers: folks who know Willow Glen but are no longer directly involved in Board activities and who can take the long view and have a vision for WGNA's future. About a year ago, a contentious Board tried to change the Bylaws so as to put the Nominating Committee under direct control of the Board, but they retreated under strong public pressure.

I am one of the five members the WGNA membership elected last year to serve on this year's Nominating Committee. Over the year, three of the Committee members moved out-of-town or resigned. As per Bylaws, the Board appointed replacements. However, rather than honoring tradition and appointing experienced past Officers, they quickly appointed three of their own to be on the Committee, thus accomplishing *de facto* what they had failed to accomplish *de jure*.

We worked to fulfill our function as the Nominating Committee. We held weekly meetings this past month, but the meetings consisted of only the two remaining elected Committee members, past WGNA President Suzy Phillips and me: the three appointed members all chose not to participate. We developed an excellent slate for next year's Nominating Committee comprised of five past WGNA Presidents, including a former City Councilmember and one of the original WGNA Founders. We also tried contacting current Boardmembers to ascertain their interests and abilities, but virtually all declined to participate in even a short 15-minute phone conversation: they may well be worthy candidates, but we felt we could not recommend anyone to a Board position if they wouldn't even talk with us. (Our report is available on-line at <http://www.wgbackfence.net/observations.htm>.)

The three appointed Boardmembers on the Nominating Committee met on their own; they then nominated themselves to be Officers on the upcoming Board; and they chose to nominate themselves to also serve on next year's Nominating Committee. Insult upon injury: this "group-of-three" lists Suzy and me as participants in their process, and they even include me on their

slate for next year, as if hoping that having my name on the roster will somehow hide the travesty beneath.

This is more than a concern with the nuances of procedures: this is about the future of the Association. Is it going to continue as a legitimate organization that represents its membership, or is the Board becoming a closed, self-selecting, self-perpetuating clique? The same group that tried to take over the eList last summer is now taking over the Association.

Since the WGNA President and Board have refused to include our report and have also refused to include our slate of five past WGNA Presidents for the Nominating Committee, I hereby publicly withdraw my name from the slate for the 2011-12 Nominating Committee. (Note: the printed ballot has a blank line for the fifth member: they had also included former Councilmember Nancy Ianni: she withdrew her name in protest before they printed the ballot, whereas I delayed in the futile hope that the Board might show some integrity.)

I call on all WGNA members who are concerned about the future of the Association to cast a vote of no confidence: write "NO" across your ballot when you cast it on May 18th. I suspect the Board will still claim to have been elected, even if they get only their own votes, but this would at least be a concrete way of putting them on notice that their actions are not acceptable.

I served on the WGNA Board for twenty years. The Association once had an excellent reputation as a well-run organization, one that would collect the community's inputs and concerns and could work with developers and city planners to broker honest solutions for the betterment of all involved; one that "represent[ed] its members on issues of neighborhood enhancement and preservation". That reputation is now in tatters, and it can not be regained with the current gang on the Board. I have no desire to return to the Board -- I've served my time! -- but I can not idly sit back and watch all the good be destroyed. Willow Glen deserves better! I call for a vote of "No Confidence", and for a group of past WGNA Presidents to be empanelled to develop a "clean slate" for the future of the Association.

Vote "NO" on May 18th!

~Larry Ames  
elected member of the 2010-11 WGNA Nominating Committee.