



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: October 6, 2009

To: Honorable Mayor & City Council

From: Katie Lichtig, Assistant City Manager/Chief Operating Officer

Subject: Requests to Use the Council Chamber to Conduct and Broadcast Board of Education Candidate Forum(s)

Attachments:

1. Request from the Beverly Hills SouthEast Homeowners' and Residents Association
2. Request from Southwest Beverly Hills Homeowners Association

INTRODUCTION

The City has received requests from the Beverly Hills SouthEast Homeowners' and Residents Association and the Southwest Beverly Hills Homeowners Association to host BHUSD candidate forum(s) in the Council Chamber at no cost and to re-broadcast the forum(s) on the City's Government cable channel. The Southwest Beverly Hills Homeowners Association also expressed a willingness to explore "co-hosting the forum if that is the Council's wish." Representatives of both associations are scheduled to explore this possibility before the City Council meeting on Tuesday.

The SouthEast Homeowners and Residents Association indicated that the preferred timeframe was the week of October 19, specifically October 21 or October 22. The Southwest Beverly Hills Homeowners Association prefers an earlier date, during the week of October 12. I believe this will be a topic of discussion for the representatives of the associations before your meeting. The Council Chambers are available to accommodate either option and staff is able to accommodate either or both depending on the direction of the City Council. It is my understanding that representatives of the Associations plan to attend your meeting on October 6, 2009.

DISCUSSION

The City has provided the Council Chambers and cable television capabilities in the past for non-partisan city-wide candidate forums to educate the community and promote representative governance.

These forums have been sponsored by established community organizations, including Beverly Hills homeowners' associations, local leagues (e.g., League of Women Voters and Municipal League), the Beverly Hills Chamber of Commerce, and Beverly Hills community newspapers.

In each situation, the sponsoring organization is responsible for the format and content of the event, extending invitations to the candidates, and the promotion of the forum. Sponsor organizations have withheld candidate endorsements until after the conclusion of the sponsored forum.

In 2007, the City Council granted a request by the BHUSD PTA Council to sponsor a school district candidate forum in the Council Chamber and to re-broadcast it to the community.

Staff contacted the BHUSD PTA Council to determine if that organization had an interest in sponsoring a candidate forum this year. The PTA Council indicated that they are not interested, since the number of candidates this year is less than in previous years, and residents can take advantage of frequent "coffee meetings" to learn the candidates' viewpoints.

It may be helpful to the Council's deliberations to know that during past City Council elections, a City Council Ad Hoc Committee was appointed to establish requirements or ground rules for the forums hosted in the Council Chambers. The requirements for the March 2009 City Council election were as follows:

1. No organization commercials are allowed at the beginning of the forum.
2. No organization or moderator can endorse any candidate prior to the forum.
3. All candidates are to be present at the forum together.
4. All candidates should have equal time to answer/respond to questions.
5. Questions and answers should be rotated amongst the candidates; the same candidate should not begin answering questions in the same order each time.
6. Questions from the audience must be submitted in writing to the moderator prior to the commencement of the forum. No speeches from the public are allowed from the floor.
7. Due to the number of candidates, the recommended forum time limit is up to 3 hours; not to exceed 4 hours maximum.

In addition, no campaign signage, campaign buttons or displayed election material are allowed in the Council Chambers or on City property. In anticipation of the 2007 School Board election forum, no ad hoc committee was established and no explicit ground rules were defined.

FISCAL IMPACT

If approved by the Council, City staff would manage the facility and broadcasting of the candidate forum. The cost is approximately \$500 per forum.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council provide direction to staff regarding the pending requests to sponsor BHUSD candidate forum(s) and if desired, designate the criteria for sponsorship of candidate forums conducted using City facilities.

Katie Lichtig
Approved By

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Katie Lichtig', written over a horizontal line.

Cheryl Friedling

From: Christopher Biehl [crbiehl@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, September 22, 2009 10:27 AM
To: Cheryl Friedling
Subject: Possible Use of City Hall for BHUSD Debate

Dear Ms. Friedling,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Beverly Hills SouthEast Homeowners' and Residents Association. I am the President and my name is Christopher Biehl. I have been asked by members of our association and by other members of the community if we would host a debate involving the four candidates for BHUSD School Board. Currently, I am working with the Courier to Co-host this event and am under the impression this may be the only debate between the candidates. We feel that it is very important to reach as many voters as possible to insure the greatest voter participation. This is where you come in.

As the city is already equipped with video and audio recording capabilities, I thought it might be logical to have the debate at City Hall. This insures sufficient access to the public for the event and greater access via the web if voters are not able to attend. This will allow the electorate to hear and decide the best candidates for this race. Please let me know your response as we are aiming for Week of Oct. 19th either Wed. or Thurs.

Thank you in advance,
Christopher Biehl
President BNSAHARA

Katie Lichtig

From: Goldman, Kenneth A. [KGoldman@ReedSmith.com]
Sent: Thursday, October 01, 2009 5:02 PM
To: Katie Lichtig
Subject: School Board Candidates Forum

The Southwest Beverly Hills Homeowners Association would like to host a Candidates Forum for the candidates in the upcoming Board of Education election. As you know, the Southwest Homeowners Association has sponsored and moderated candidates forums for various city elections over the past 30 years. We think it is fair to say that the forums which we have hosted and moderated have been virtually universally viewed as being fair and being of great help to the electorate.

We believe we can once again be of service to the community and ask that you allow us to host and moderate a televised Candidates Forum to take place in City Hall. We can certainly discuss co-hosting the Forum if that is the Council's wish.

Thanks for your consideration.

The Southwest Beverly Hills Homeowners Association

By: Ken Goldman

Ken Goldman

(310) 734-5234

email: kgoldman@reedsmith.com

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