[EDITORIAL]

GGPNC: Appointed Members Breed Cronyism
By Tomas O’Grady

My son, Dylan Tyler O’Grady, was born the morning I wrote this. He’s an American by birth, something I can never be. While growing up in Ireland, I dreamt of America, a place where limitations are based on talent and determination, and where everyone has a chance to try to be anything. America was “...life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” and “domestic tranquility” and a dozen other guiding principles placing freedom above all things. America was “Democracy.”

I love Los Feliz. My sense of community is rooted in Ireland but right here in L.A., just east of Western. I love this country, and its sense of fairness. America has been good to my family and me. That’s why I ran for and won—a seat on the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNC) last summer.

Neighborhood Councils were formed to bring government closer to the people and to fully represent them at City Hall. Of the 89 neighborhood councils across Los Angeles, a large majority of their boards are chosen—with all the joy and frustration that goes with it—by popular vote. Winston Churchill got it right when he said: “Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms.”

However, this is not the case with the GGPNC. Comprised of 19 people, neighborhood “stakeholders” do elect 10 District Representatives, but the other nine board members are “appointed.” An Appointed Board member is given an equal vote and can use it to appoint other appointees. And appointees also can vote to reappoint themselves.

According to the website of the city’s neighborhood council oversight agency (http://done.lacity.org/ncdatabase%5Fpublic/), only a handful of neighborhood councils even have appointed positions. The GGPNC, however, has, by far, the most appointed board members—a total of nine, (47% of its board). For the other rare boards that also have appointed positions, most, unlike the GGPNC, do not allow appointed board members to vote on council business.

The GGPNC has been set up this way since the first governing board wrote and ratified these rules in 2002. This violates one of the tenets of American Democracy: “By the people, for the people,” and to me it sets up a system for cultivating cronyism. Think about it. Your taxes fund these neighborhood councils. In the GGPNC’s case, this means not taxation without representation—but rather, taxation with about 53% representation. We can do better.

Nine appointments are up this August. I believe the people should decide who holds those offices. I have asked the Council to consider changing these rules—to have the courage to give back the board’s power to the people. The only true way for any governing body to focus on the issues YOU care about is if the people elect that body—the entire body. Stakeholders can make their opinions known by writing GGPNC@ggpnc.org, or calling (323) 908-6054.

Tomas O’Grady is a member of the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council.

[OPEN MIKE]

CD 13? CD 4?
Passing the Buck On Reservoir Sidewalk Lighting
By Greg Patak

During the first phase of the installation of the Silver Lake Reservoir Master Plan, a sidewalk was constructed along the west side of Armstrong Ave., from Silver Lake Blvd. to Edge-water Terrace and a bit beyond — about 300 feet. The sidewalk was badly needed, since that stretch of Armstrong is a very steep hill.

But, no one ever installed lighting, so at night it’s pitch black. Walking such a steep grade, without the benefit of any artificial lighting, is an accident waiting to happen. There is also potential for a crime along the sidewalk, which is obscured from view by shade trees.

None of this is the fault of the firm that created the Master Plan. It calls for lighting there. So why hasn’t it been installed after more than a year? Here’s what I found after calling the Silver Lake depu-