Witness statement to Grievance Nov 6, 2018

To the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment,

I confirm that the circumstances described in the grievance filed by Susan Collins regarding the nomination of Sarah Olds are valid.

In addition to Susan’s cited events, a large group of community members attended the SONC Board Meeting on November 5 specifically to oppose Ms. Olds’ nomination for the vacant board seat in area 5. Top community comments included the lack of diverse representation on the board and the board’s failure to not just hear community concerns, but actively consider alternate decisions. This lack of interest in considering alternate decisions based on the diverse needs of the community was proven as the board moved forward with the appointment of Ms. Olds despite a room full of valid opposition.

Constituents asked for a delay in the appointment of Ms. Olds so that we could be fairly involved in an application process that would include diverse choices in representation of our community. The seat had been vacant since 2016; what was the harm in waiting a little longer so the community members who were actually showing up felt represented? Why now? Mr. Ziff mentioned in the meeting that two other candidates applied for the same seat Olds’ was nominated to fill; however, there was a complete lack of transparency as to who these people were and what public interests they represented. We should have been given a chance to weigh in more than one choice.

The board insists that they possess diversity in opinions, but we have not seen that sentiment reflected in their decision making. If the purpose of SONC is “To promote public participation in City governance and decision-making processes so that government is more responsive to local needs”, then our grievance with this board appointment is valid.

Sincerely,

Hilary Pickles

Sherman Oaks Constituent