

July 11, 2019

Honorable Councilmember Mike Bonin  
200 N. Spring St. #475  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

At the Governmental Affairs Committee meeting on May 20, 2019, board members heard testimony from Eddie Chavez, Division Manager in Community Services from the Bureau of Street Lighting (BSL), regarding the city's policy for obtaining streetlights on residential streets. This agenda item was suggested by a board member who tried unsuccessfully to obtain lights on his street and wanted to know more about the process.

Currently, residents who are interested in obtaining residential streetlights must go through a three-step process consisting of a petition, a questionnaire and a Prop. 218 vote. BSL must receive signatures from 70% of homeowners during the petition process to proceed to the next two phases which require a simple majority to create a new street lighting district. If all three levels are passed, homeowners are assessed a one-time fee of between \$4,000-8,000 that allows BSL to install the lights and then an annual maintenance fee on their property tax bill of about \$100.

In addition to the length of time, the major problem with the current process is that it represents an "all-or-nothing" approach with a high barrier to success. If residents on the street are unable to meet the threshold on any of these three steps (one of which requires a supermajority), then there is no other recourse to obtain street lighting.

A cursory examination of a map of Westchester shows that many streets lack streetlights. Subsequent correspondence with Mr. Chavez revealed that only two-thirds of the streets in the City of Los Angeles have streetlights serviced by BSL. Thus, an alternative to the current system is needed to enable residents who want better street lighting but are unable to convince a supermajority of their neighbors to assess themselves. As well-lit streets are important to public safety and neighborhood character, anything the City can do on a regulatory end to make it easier to allow residents to install streetlights outside of the "all or nothing" system would be welcome.

During the GAC meeting, board members brainstormed alternatives. For example, some cities have experimented with installing solar streetlights. Might residents obtain a permit from the city to install solar streetlights on the parkway? Many companies are selling affordable solar streetlights that can be permanently attached to the ground and do not require being connected to an electric grid.

A suggested action item at the end of the meeting was to request that staff from BSL research the issue and create a staff report that can be discussed at either a public works committee meeting or a city council study session. This report would discuss all of the following:

- What types of streetlights (solar or electric) would be feasible to be installed in parkway by individual homeowners?
- What would be the potential permit issues?
- Are there alternative means of financing available (i.e. local/state/federal grants) to finance conventional electric streetlights?
- What zoning and/or changes to the municipal code would be needed to allow residents to install solar streetlights?

We are formally requesting that the Board of the Neighborhood Council ask the Councilmember's office to submit this request to BLS.

Sincerely,