

Editorial Policy for Jefferson Westside Neighborhood Association Publications

Adopted by the JWN Executive Board, July 22, 2022

Purpose of Neighborhood Association Publications

The purpose of outreach efforts by Neighborhood Association (NHA) is to inform and engage neighbors on matters of concern or interest and to encourage them to get involved in the NHA and neighborhood development and projects.

Who is a Member of a Neighborhood Association?

While neighborhood associations represent defined geographic areas, unlike a City Council Ward, they do not automatically represent everyone within those areas. An NHA is a framework for public engagement and interaction and conduit for disseminating information by the city, supported by city resources, for those who choose to acknowledge the legitimacy and participate in the NHA.

Public Forum

Public forums offer valuable insights into the community; provide a database for guiding and explaining actions; and offer valuable information for developing and ensuring services that meet community needs. Historically, public forums are typically physical publicly owned/controlled spaces (e.g., streets, parks, sidewalks). All public forums have restrictions on time, manner, place, and narrow categories of content. While NHAs traditionally follow open public meetings rules, since an NHA is not part of government, it is not required to do so.

The primary public forum (in-person or Zoom) for an NHA is its general and board meetings in that there is time set aside for any member to express their opinions and concerns. NHA publications are restricted by space and costs so are not public forums per se, other than providing a space where matters of public concern are presented and discussed.

Because NHA publications are created by unpaid volunteers and government funding for printing and mailing is greatly limited, it is not feasible to allow any and all expression and opinions by members of the NHA or other entities to express themselves as they wish. Further, adjudicating submissions is simply beyond the capacity of most NHAs.

Because of the limited nature of NHA publications, and due to the wide availability of other sorts of communication and dissemination, there is no “right” for any individual or entity to demand their viewpoints or information be included outside the confines of an NHA’s editorial policy.

Editorial Discretion

The elected Boards of NHAs and/or their designated volunteers hold editorial discretion over content that appears in NHA media (social media, websites, mailed materials, electronic materials). As they are elected by members of the NHA, NHA Boards have the sole authority to determine the content of the NHA's publications if they are not objectively arbitrary or capricious and follow the rules and procedures laid out in their editorial policy.

Free Speech and Viewpoint Neutrality

NHAs are not state organizations and hold no public authority, so there is no right to free speech in the technical sense within NHA gatherings or media, but an NHA should provide deference toward free speech in concept. Toward that end, decisions on the inclusion or exclusion of information in NHA publications or media should be viewpoint neutral as much as is feasible. This means an NHA cannot discriminate against a particular position on a topic *within the bounds of the editorial policy*. Examples include:

- If an NHA accepts events from one church in the neighborhood, it must accept events from all churches.
- An NHA may not exclude any information on a candidate running for office, or not post campaign events, based on ideology, party affiliation, or preference.

The Position of Neighborhood Association Boards vs Neighborhood Associations as a Whole

NHA Boards are the elected representatives of a NHA and are thus empowered to speak as a NHA Board as its own entity.

- An NHA Board may speak on behalf of itself if that body has voted to do so within the confines of its bylaws but must be clear that the position is that of the Board and not the NHA itself.
- In the case of independently elected Chairs, Chairs may express their opinions as a Chair, but must be clear that they are not speaking for the Board.
- An NHA Board or independently elected Chair may speak on behalf of the NHA if that position is firmly based on past positions voted on by the membership.
- An NHA Board or independently elected Chair MAY NOT take a public position on an issue if it conflicts with a position that members have approved via a vote.

Positions taken by Neighborhood Associations based on a vote of the membership are represented as the position of the NHA. This includes the ability to defend provisions of policies and the purview of an NHA or all NHAs.

Alternative Positions and Recourse

Members of an NHA or other entities are not entitled to inclusion of their position, opposition, or opinion in NHA publications if it conflicts with policies and position expressed by the membership via a vote.

Members of an NHA or other entities are not entitled to inclusion of their position, opposition, or opinion in NHA publications, but may be included based on the editorial discretion of the

NHA Board or its designees. Such inclusion may be subject to editorial policies based on accuracy, pejorative or inflammatory language, or other concerns outside of intended viewpoint.

Due to space limitations, NHAs have the option of providing space for alternative viewpoints on an NHA webpage and directing readers to that page via a URL with a publication.

Members may compel inclusion in an NHA publication (within space restrictions and subject to editorial policies based on accuracy, prerogative or inflammatory language, or other concerns outside of intended viewpoint) by submitting that position with the names of 20 verified (via name, address, and contact information) member neighbors. The submission will be included in the next like publication.

Members who disagree with the editorial position of the NHA's Board or its designees, member voted policy, or anything expressed in an NHA publication may:

- Request inclusion of the opinion in publications
- Organize to remove Board members via the electoral process
- Act within the bylaws to hold a vote of the membership to compel inclusion
- Act within the bylaws to hold a vote of the membership to overturn or modify a previously member approved position.

Accuracy, Prerogative or Inflammatory Language, or other Concerns Outside of Intended Viewpoint

Accuracy

NHA publications will contain accurate and factual information based on the best available expert sources. If facts are contested, then they should be presented as such. Information should be presented in context and express the intent of the source.

NHA publication will not:

- Include ad hominem attacks, question, or imply the motivations of an individual or organization, or otherwise disparage an individual or organization's character.
- Include language that generalizes or disparages any race, gender, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or calls for, or endorsement of, illegal activity. Although this does not preclude discussion of a matter under consideration by the state, or of public concern, that may apply to any of these groups.
- Will not, outside of the above conditions, change the viewpoint expressed by an author. Any submissions must be approved as they will run by the submitting author. This does not include positions or information in the public domain.