



Why Shipbuilders Are Still Collecting Barrio Logan Signatures

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A view of the NASSCO shipyards from Barrio Logan.

Go to a grocery store in San Diego, and there's a good chance you'll bump into a signature-gatherer trying to get you to agree to put Barrio Logan's new community plan to a citywide vote.

More than two weeks after holding a "Mission Accomplished" press conference, with boxes of signed petitions stacked as props, the city's shipbuilding industry is still gathering signatures to force a referendum on the issue.

So why are signature-gatherers are still out there, even though the people paying them already declared the effort a success?

Because lawyers are sadists and governance is complicated.

Kidding. (Kind of.)

Really, it's because when the City Council approved the first updated community plan since 2006, which it hoped would eventually separate homes and industrial operations in Barrio Logan, its 5-4 vote applied to a series of decisions.

Some of those decisions, like adopting the new community plan, were done through a resolution. That meant the vote was official once the City Clerk certified it.

But the vote also included approving ordinances, such as new zoning measures, and those weren't official until the Council

completed a second reading – with a second vote – a few weeks later.

The shipbuilding industry wants to overturn the whole thing, and because there were two votes, that means they need two signature-gathering efforts – one to overturn the resolutions, and one to overturn the ordinances.

In each case, they must collect enough signatures to equal 5 percent of the electorate from the most recent election to qualify the issue for the ballot. In each case, they had 30 days from when the decision became official to turn in those signatures.

So to overturn the community plan, opponents had 30 days to collect nearly 40,000 signatures. They turned those in on Halloween, but a few days later needed to start collecting signatures to overturn the ordinance the City Council approved on the second reading of the new Barrio Logan plan, which had a 30-day time limit of its own, and required another nearly 40,000 signatures.

The ordinances approved by the City Council didn't secure final passage until Oct. 29, said City Clerk Liz Maland, so the shipbuilding industry has 30 days from then to turn in its signatures petitioning to put the item to a citywide vote, making them due just before the end of November.

Once the signatures are in, the registrar of voters checks them. If there's enough legally valid signatures, Maland submits the item to

the City Council to be docketed. The City Council then has 10 days to decide whether to reverse its decision, or to put the item to a citywide vote. In this case, that will mean the scheduled June election, not the presumed February runoff between whichever two mayoral candidates receive the most votes in next week's special election to replace Mayor Bob Filner.

Maland says she'll push for the City Council to have a single discussion on the Barrio Logan referendum, rather than continue treating the resolutions and ordinances approved within the same Council vote as separate items.

"I'm going to be trying to have the substantive conversation on ordinances and (resolutions) at the same meeting, because ultimately it really is the same item," she said.

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