After Dispute, Barrio Logan Planning Group Will Vote Again On New Members

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By Claire Trageser

Credit: San Diego Community College District

Above: The Barrio Logan community sign near the Cesar Chavez Campus, Oct. 28, 2015.

The group that would help draft a new zoning plan for the southern San Diego neighborhood of Barrio Logan will redo its election for new members after a dispute about how the election last month was run.

The Barrio Logan Planning Group voted 7-4 Wednesday night to invalidate the election and vote again on April 18.

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The group would have a say in Barrio Logan's community plan, which has not been updated in 40 years. Currently, there is no zoning in Barrio Logan, which means homes can be built right next to industrial facilities like welding shops that can emit toxic fumes. The group has no official authority, but community planning groups in other neighborhoods can be influential, making recommendations to the City Council and city staff that are often followed.

The issue is that in the original Barrio Logan Planning Group election in March, members of the nonprofit Environmental Health Coalition handed out flyers in hopes to sway voters.

Mark Steele, the chair of the planning group, said members of the coalition stood less than 100 feet away from where voting took place. There is no 100-foot rule in the group's bylaws or in City Council policy governing community planning groups.

But Brian Schoenfisch, a program manager with the city's planning department, said that does not matter and the group can vote to redo its election anyway.

Diane Takvorian, the director of the Environmental Health Coalition, said she was disappointed in the decision Wednesday night because her staff had not broken any official rules. She also said she will ask the city to release the results of the March election.

"We think it's a shame because this community has been disrespected in so many ways throughout history and the community really came out to fight for the right to vote and is being shut down again," Takvorian said.

But, she said, community members have told her they will come vote again on April 18.