Introduction to Meet the Candidates Forum by Gloria Ferris

"Informed citizens are engaged citizens and engaged citizens are informed citizens."

- Gloria Ferris, Meet the Candidates Forum Organizer

"I'd like to call this the first of two, By the People For the People Community Forums. A little background on why we are here tonight. From the beginning of this election cycle, I waited to hear if and when there would be a community forum with the Ward 14 Council candidates. In conversations, many people would ask me, "Have you heard? Are there any forums?" I hadn't.

I knew the candidates were making block club rounds. I waited and waited to hear about an upcoming forum. Four weeks ago, I stopped waiting. I called block leaders I knew and others to see what they thought about having a community-wide forum. They all liked the idea but thought there should be two because of the large area Ward 14 now encompasses. And, there are two. Our next one will be next Thursday, August 22, 2013 at Simpson United Methodist Church. I found a moderator, Helen Smith, who gave me two dates she was available. I then had to find venues; not one, but two which took a lot longer than I expected, and then I asked the candidates. Three enthusiastically accepted and one, respectfully declined. Promotion of the event has been a bit harder than I anticipated. Some organizations have declined to help, and although it is called a "community forum," they perceive it as being "political". In fact, that was my issue in finding a translator, which believe me, I will be working on after these forums to see that the community has access to translators. (Editor's note: Jonathan Anderson has volunteered to translate the August 22, 2013 forum.)
Is this a perfect forum? No. Is this the right forum? Yes! Because you see, we have the right to assemble, and here we are. all assembled, waiting to begin the process. So, let's do it!

Meet The Candidates Forum process is adopted from the Los Angeles League of Women Voters. Strengthen citizen engagement for informed democratic process in your neighborhood. Visit "The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy" here.