

MAR 25 2009

MOTION RULES & GOVERNMENT

In April of 1997 the voters of the City of Los Angeles, urged by then Mayor Richard Riordan, voted to create an elected civilian commission whose mandate was to draft a new City Charter. The City Council had moved to form its own appointed commission the year before for the same purpose. The two rival groups eventually came together, culminating in the passage of a new Charter on June 8, 1999, the first comprehensive update of the document in 74 years.

As part of the commissions' efforts, dozens of community meetings were held, hundreds of experts on civic government gave testimony and tens of thousands of pages of reports were written on subjects ranging from the delivery of City services to the role of the Mayor and Council. A few issues were left unresolved, most noticeably the ideal size of the City Council, and therefore were not included in the body of the revised Charter that was passed by the voters.

Considering that nearly all of the members of these commissions, as well as their staffs, still live in the Los Angeles area and are easily reachable, it would not require much effort to bring those who were most responsible for drafting the new Charter back together to revisit their work. With the ten year anniversary of the Charter coming up this June and the 2010 Census around the corner, now would be the time to set the wheels in motion on such an exercise.

Five years after the publication of the landmark "Report on the Beating of Rodney King," some of the key members of the "Christopher Commission," including Merrick Bobb and Mark Epstein, were asked to produce a follow-up analysis of their original work. Their report provided an invaluable road map for future reforms and greatly focused the somewhat vague suggestions of the Christopher Commission into a package of tangible, traceable reforms.

We should use this report as a model for how to build off the work of our Charter Reform commissions. The 2004 book The City at Stake: Secession, Reform and the Battle for Los Angeles, by former appointed Reform Commission Executive Director Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, provides an excellent history of the Charter reform issues and the many issues that call for further analysis. These were either new to the 1999 Charter or were left out of it due to disagreement.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council invite the Chairs and Executive Directors of the Elected and appointed Charter Reform Commissions to produce a follow-up report to their work developing the new City Charter, reviewing what changes were made and suggesting any further reforms that they believe are needed in order to make Los Angeles City government function more efficiently and effectively.

I FURTHER MOVE that the Council create a Charter & Municipal and Administrative Code Review Task Force to consider any recommendation for Charter changes made by the Chairs and Executive Directors and possible revisions to the Municipal and Administrative codes that could be made in order to bring them up to date. Meetings of the Task Force would be held publicly and led by the Chief Legislative Analyst, with participation from the City Attorney, CAO and interested Council offices.

PRESENTED BY: Jose Huizar
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E.G.
ERIC GARCETTI
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SECONDED BY: Richard Alarcon
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