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Enacting reform up to, gulp, council

By Bill Weinberger

THE public's resounding approval for the charter reform proposal on the June 8 ballot showed the breadth and depth of the need for changing how city government operates.

The continuing vigilance of all of these elements in Los Angeles is imperative to assure that the people's will for reform is carried out by the City Council as it debates and adopts the ordinances needed to implement many important provisions of the Los Angeles City Charter.

Although the new charter was adopted on June 8, most of its provisions do not become operative until July 1, 2000, by which time the ordinances implementing the charter must be enacted.

By these ordinances, the City Council may either support or frustrate the will of the voters for a change. It can either foster decentralization of decision-making or continue the monopoly of what many view as a distant downtown, making decisions without regard to the needs and concerns of the neighborhoods.

It can either foster greater accountability by granting the executive branch the authority for management of the government desired by voters or continue the dispersion of authority that has led to finger-pointing but no one acknowledging where the buck stops.

The council can either acknowledge

removed from the old charter to be placed in the City Administrative Code; (2) establishment or reorganization of departments and positions; and (3) implementation of charter provisions that cannot become effective without the detailed criteria or procedures fleshed out by ordinance.

Two of the most striking ways in which the charter brings city government closer to the people are the provisions for neighborhood councils and the Area Planning Commissions.

The council, with the approval of the mayor, will play a major role in establishing those local planning commissions, as well as the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment and

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SOCIAL SECURITY

REFORM: Several presidential candidates have distinguished themselves by calling for a change in Social Security that a majority of the public already

Ordinance process will reveal council plan

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the seven-member Board of Neighborhood Commissioners.

The ordinances that will implement these two decentralizing provisions will either leave most power in the hands of downtown administrators or devolve to the city's diverse areas decisions that should be in their hands.

It will be DONE's responsibility to "develop (through regulations) a plan for a citywide system of neighborhood councils."

The City Council will play a crucial role in the development of these regulations because the charter gives the council six months to consider the regulations proposed by DONE and to implement or alter the regulations by ordinance.

DONE—and ultimately the council—must also establish how to adequately notify the neighborhood councils of issues so that their input can be effective.

These regulations will either show a true interest in neighborhood input by assuring adequate notice or they will pay lip service to neighborhood empowerment by a weak notice provision.

Just as with neighborhood councils, the number of Area Planning Commissions and the powers granted to them will be established by ordinance.

The City Council will determine what types of development projects are deemed local and thus within the jurisdiction of Area Planning Commissions and what projects have a citywide

local input into city government is by providing for one seat on the Harbor Commission for a Harbor area resident, and by expanding the Airport Commission to seven members and setting aside one seat for a resident of the Van Nuys Airport area. The areas from which these commission seats will be appointed will be defined by ordinance.

One of the ways in which the charter should improve the city's use of taxpayer dollars is through the new procedures for handling monetary claims filed against the city.

The charter provides for the establishment of a claims board comprising the mayor, as chair, the president of the City Council and the city attorney or their delegates.

The City Council could seek to continue to squeeze the mayor out of decisions critical to managing the city's operations by granting virtually no authority to the mayor to decide on settlements of claims against the city and leaving the bulk of claims-settling authority to the City Council, where it currently resides.

Such a decision, again, would be contrary to the public's desire for reform.

The charter should make operation of city government smoother and less costly in several other ways, such as transferring funds to a city department and the bidding process for city contracts, pursuant to criteria that will be set by ordinance.

The process for purchases of supplies and equipment is now left to ordinance. In enacting these ordinances, the City Council could, again,

Officials make habit of betraying public

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What the mayor did in 1978 was to allow the voters to decide whether to decentralize city government. He provided for a commission to draft a charter for the city. The commission was to be made up of representatives from the city's diverse areas. The commission was to be appointed by the City Council. The commission was to be given six months to complete its work. The commission was to be given the authority to recommend to the City Council any changes to the charter that it deemed necessary.

Meanwhile, the City Council was to be given the authority to recommend to the voters any changes to the charter that it deemed necessary. The City Council was to be given the authority to recommend to the voters any changes to the charter that it deemed necessary. The City Council was to be given the authority to recommend to the voters any changes to the charter that it deemed necessary.

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missions as an outright double cross. The council reversed gears and decided to wage war on the new charter, claiming they had never agreed to anything, despite the fact they had been given these charter changes they had asked for some sleight of hand.

The city's employee unions then dutifully reversed course and joined the council in its opposition, which was not surprising considering the anti-labor relationship between the unions and the council. When either seek support from the other, ship is rowed in the same direction. It has become a celebrated life of strain in city government. That is what the council

bestows its benevolence on the unions in the city's annual budget deliberations while biannually receiving union support when City Council elections roll around. A cozy arrangement, indeed.

Asked for not the final charter, now the sole hostage of a City Council that has fought charter reform tooth and nail from the very beginning. To those who think the new charter will bring about reforms they voted for, all