

2 Named to Implement Charter Reform Effort

■ Appointments:

Rosalind Stewart and Yolanda Chavez will head the new city office in charge of setting up neighborhood councils.

By JEFFREY L. RABIN
and JIM NEWTON
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Mayor Richard Riordan has selected an experienced community organizer and a respected congressional aide to head the city's new Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, the mayor announced Wednesday, fulfilling an important step toward implementation of the City Charter that voters overwhelmingly approved earlier this year.

Rosalind Stewart, an aide to Councilwoman Cindy Miscikowski who has been instrumental in the effort to revitalize Van Nuys, was nominated to serve as the department's first general manager.

Yolanda Chavez, a native of Mexico who was raised in Los Angeles and has served as chief of staff to U.S. Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-Los Angeles) for seven years, is to serve as the department's second-ranking official.

Stewart's nomination is subject to council confirmation. If, as expected, she wins council approval, she said Tuesday that she intends to pick Chavez as her deputy.

Joined by council members and others, Riordan praised both officials Tuesday for their impressive track records in empowering com-

munities" and hailed their appointments as a history-making event.

The new general manager and her deputy will oversee a unique department whose mission stands at the heart of the recent charter reform campaign.

Erwin Chemerinsky, who headed the elected charter reform commission, long defined the mission of his panel as clarifying the roles of government officials, improving efficiency and strengthening representation.

The last mission was tackled mainly by creating a citywide network of neighborhood councils and a department to oversee them.

Rather than have the charter spell out the number of councils and their boundaries, Chemerinsky's commission and its appointed counterpart elected to leave that task to the new department.

What that means is that Stewart and Chavez will face a job that is enormous both in its complexity and importance. Neighborhood council district boundaries need to be drawn; qualifications for representatives need to be considered, and roles for the new councils need to be written and approved.

Particularly delicate is the question of balance. The new charter encourages community councils to play an active role in advising the government on any subject, but does not give them real management authority.

As a result, community members will need to be convinced that the councils are influential enough to be worth joining, while the City Council and others will need to be assured that the network does not pose a threat to centralized decision-making.

Los Angeles Times

it as she
nesday.

with more

ther in

and Sun

ned the

year-old