

06/05/98 POLITICS: Panel OKs review of councils

By Lisa Van Proyen, Daily News

In yet another move toward empowering Los Angeles communities, a committee of the elected Charter Reform Commission voted unanimously Thursday to recommend that all ordinances be reviewed by elected community councils.

The commission on Saturday proposed creating elected councils with decision-making authority.

The commission's Committee on a More Responsive Government with an Involved Citizenry met Thursday night and voted that the community councils should be promptly notified of all ordinances, motions and reports handed to the City Council.

The 4-0 vote will go as a recommendation to the full 15-member elected Charter Reform Commission on June 13. The full commission then will make recommendations for proposed changes in the City Charter on which Los Angeles residents are scheduled to vote on April 1999.

Thursday's move would allow more people to determine conflicts and issues at an earlier stage before City Council members vote, said Geoffrey Garfield, administrative director for the elected commission.

"It's important to have the neighborhood councils in the first step of the government process," Garfield said. "This way they are informed on citywide issues."

The full elected Charter Reform Commission has tentatively agreed that each community council be given a small portion of the city budget to use for high-priority services in each area such as longer library hours and new police patrols.

The committee that met Thursday consists of five of the 15 members on the elected Charter Reform Commission. Committee member Paula Boland was absent.

Under the committee's tentative proposal, the community councils would represent about 35 areas of the city, each consisting of about 100,000 people, said the committee's chairman, Bennett Kayser.

The committee also unanimously decided Thursday to recommend forming a Department of Neighborhoods -- "a single point resource at City Hall in which a clerical staff and general manager would support the community councils."

Committee member Janice Hahn said the department would be vital, noting that her own committee has struggled because of a lack of this type of support.

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