

# Council's panel releases charter revision plan

## Proposed document is trimmer

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Los Angeles' appointed Charter Reform Commission reached a milestone Monday when it released its draft of a new, leaner and simpler City Charter.

But the commissioners postponed sending it to the City Council for review and decided instead to meet with their counterparts on the city's elected Charter Reform Commission, beginning Thursday, to try to compromise on the many significant differences between their two proposals.

"We could give it to the City Council in two or three weeks as we originally planned but we are deferring that in order to have more opportunity to have discussions with the elected commission," said George Kieffer, chairman of the appointed commission.

Not everyone hailed the proposal Monday.

"It's disappointing that after months and months of work they are maintaining the status quo," said Noelia Rodriguez, spokeswoman for Mayor Richard Riordan.

The 337-page document released Monday is less than half the length of the current City Charter, which was approved 73 years ago and has been amended dozens of times.

Vast sections have been excised or simplified in response to complaints that it takes a specialist attorney to figure out the rules of city government.

"A charter has to be aimed at the average person as well as the lawyers and policy-makers that have to use it regularly," Kieffer said. "Instead of listing the thousands of things you can do, we limit what you can't."

Rather than listing all the tunnels, rains, sewers and streets that the City Council has power over, the new charter simply says the council as "power to provide for public improvements."

Also, large sections have been taken out of the charter and delegated to regulation by City Council ordinance, which does not have to go to the voters and therefore provides more flexibility to city government.

Rules removed from the charter include requirements for the establishment of a Building and Safety Department and Board, a Department of Municipal Arts, and a Transportation Department. Establishment and organization of those functions will be left to ordinance.

The charter also eliminates requirements that the city clerk must keep records of council meetings, and that city employees hired after 1940 are entitled to military leave.

The appointed panel's charter must be submitted to the City Council for review and possible revision before it is placed on the ballot.

Kieffer said the decision to aim for the June ballot rather than the April ballot means it can hold back its charter from the council to receive more public comments and

## CLASH OF IDEAS

Los Angeles' elected and appointed City Charter reform commissions have produced draft proposals that are in conflict with each other. Some of the differences are the following:

■ The elected commission supports giving the mayor sole power to fire general managers, but the appointed commission maintains the requirement of council concurrence in firings.

■ The elected commission does away with the city administrative officer as currently known and puts financial planning issues under a new finance department reporting to the mayor, while the appointed commission maintains the CAO as jointly reporting to the mayor and City Council.

■ The elected commission provides an alternative ballot measure allowing elected neighborhood councils, while the appointed panel leaves the selection of neighborhood council members to the City Council.

try to reach a compromise with the elected commission.

The two commissions face long odds in reaching agreement on a single charter proposal to submit to the city's voters.

"On many fundamental issues we have agreement, but there are still some major disagreements on some issues," Kieffer said.

The elected commission wants the mayor to have sole authority to fire top managers of city departments, but the appointed commission would continue to make such firings subject to the concurrence of the City Council.

Also, the elected commission would substantially change the job of city administrative officer and create a new Finance Department under the mayor, but the appointed panel would keep the CAO, who reports jointly to the mayor and council.

In addition, the elected commission would allow voters to approve elected neighborhood councils, but the appointed commission would let the council decide how members of neighborhood councils are selected. Under either approach, however, neighborhood councils would have only an advisory role in planning and land-use issues.

Both panels support creating several local planning commissions, appointed by the mayor, to make decisions on land-use matters.

"We have three major areas of disagreement" with the appointed charter commission, said Rob Glushon, a member of the elected commission. "I'm not willing to throw in the towel and say it doesn't make sense to try to reach a consensus, but I think it's going to be difficult."