

Neighborhood Councils

City Council Approves Plan For Neighborhood Councils

By LOREN KELLER

City News Service

LOS ANGELES (CNS) - The Los Angeles City Council today approved a final plan for creating a citywide system of neighborhood councils, a key provision of the new City Charter that voters approved two years ago.

The plan, adopted on an 11-0 vote and awaiting the mayor's signature, calls for setting up 10 to 20 councils in the first year and possibly hundreds more over the next five years.

"The point of neighborhood councils was to empower communities around the city and to particularly look at stakeholders and neighborhood groups that have historically not had a place at the table," said Councilwoman Laura Chick. She chairs the Ad Hoc Committee on Charter Implementation.

The city's Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, which will oversee the creation of the councils, has been allotted \$5.2 million in the mayor's proposed budget to do the job.

The councils are intended to advise city agencies on decisions relating to zoning, development and other issues affecting neighborhood residents.

The City Council also approved a flurry of amendments to the plan, including measures to provide staffing and direct funding to the councils once they are certified and extra funding for councils in poorer areas; set up term limits for neighborhood council leaders; and increase the amount of public notice required before neighborhood council meetings.

But the plan had some detractors.

Jack Allen, president of Neighborhood L.A., a group of community activists, urged the council to reject the blueprint.

"The flesh that was added, from our experience, is cancerous. The vision is blinding, and the details are full of the devil," he said.

"Instead of common sense, it's full of nonsense. It was drafted by bureaucrats for bureaucrats, not the people who have to work in the trenches."

But Councilman Mike Hernandez said the plan will remain flexible.

"There has to be a clear focus on outreach, and allowing for participation," he said. "The plan does allow for change."

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