

Participation Study Group

July 23, 1997

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STUDY GROUP ON PARTICIPATION

AGENDA

CITY OF LOS ANGELES CHARTER REFORM COMMISSION

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 1997
6:30 p.m.

Water and Power Building, Room 1559
111 North Hope Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Contact - Raphael Sonenshein, Study Group Staff - (213) 367-5234
Jason Parry, Study Group Staff - (213) 367-5161

1. Roll call
2. Approval of minutes of June 25, 1997 and July 16, 1997 meetings
3. Discussion on participation in Los Angeles
 - Staff report on participation in Los Angeles
 - Presentation by Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas (8th Council District)
4. Comments by Commissioners on subject matters within the Study Group's jurisdiction
5. Comments from the public on non-agenda items within the Study Group's jurisdiction

MINUTES

CHARTER REFORM COMMISSION STUDY GROUP ON PARTICIPATION

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25, 1997
5:30 p.m.

Water and Power Building, Room 1559
111 North Hope Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Contact - Raphael Sonenshein, Study Group Staff - (213) 367-5234

1. Roll call

Members Present: Jose De Sosa, Andrew Friedman, Stewart Kwoh, Doris Isolini Nelson, and Sharon Schuster

Members Absent: Marguerite Archie-Hudson (excused) and George David Kieffer (*ex officio* - excused)

Other Commissioners Present: Anton Calleia

Staff: Raphael Sonenshein and Jason Parry

2. Minutes of June 11, 1997 and June 18, 1997 approved, as amended

3. Staff report and discussion of participation issues in the Charter

- Raphael Sonenshein provided review and analysis of findings from participation literature
- Study Group discussed relationship between Los Angeles City government and the public, and how neighborhood councils might affect this relationship
- Study Group discussed how federal and state laws might affect authorized neighborhood councils
- Ron Deaton, Chief Legislative Analyst, stressed the importance of the scope of powers given to neighborhood councils and questioned how councils would affect accountability
- Jason Parry reviewed democratic processes in the City Charter

4. **Presentation by Pete Echeverria, City Attorney, on federal and state constraints on local participation systems**
 - **Noted that constraints depend on characteristics of system, and he therefore could only speak generally at this time**

5. **Comments by Commissioners on subject matters within the Study Group's jurisdiction**
 - **Raphael Sonenshein presented proposed summer schedule for Study Group activities**

6. **Comments from the public on non-agenda items within the Study Group's jurisdiction**
 - **Casey Peters commented on commission form of governance**

 - **Ricardo Velasquez asked the Study Group to consider the bias of those involved in participation systems**

 - **James Ingram commented on the public comment process, and suggested the Study Group examine the history of boroughs in Los Angeles**

 - **Joe Ahn recommended a review of existing models of participation**

 - **Ken Downey commented on issue of how laws would apply to neighborhood councils**

STUDY GROUP ON PARTICIPATION

MINUTES

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CHARTER REFORM COMMISSION**

**WEDNESDAY, JULY 16, 1997
7:30 p.m.**

**Water and Power Building, Room 1559
111 North Hope Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Contact - Raphael Sonenshein, Study Group Staff - (213) 367-5234
Jason Parry, Study Group Staff - (213) 367-5161**

1. Roll call

Members Present: Doris Isolini Nelson and Sharon Schuster

Members Absent with Notice: Marguerite Archie-Hudson, Jose De Sosa, Andrew Friedman, George David Kieffer (*ex officio*), and Stewart Kwoh

Other Commissioners Present: Andrew Henderson and Robert Wilkinson

Staff: Raphael Sonenshein and Jason Parry

2. No action taken on minutes in absence of a quorum

3. Staff report on participation in Los Angeles

- **Raphael Sonenshein compared size of LA City Council Districts to districts in other jurisdictions: LA City Council districts are large relative to other cities' council districts, yet small compared to the size of some other elected officials' districts**
- **Study Group discussed implications of findings**

4. Presentation by Con Howe, Director of Planning

- **Discussed various ways to draw sub-city boundaries: by Council district, schools, police districts, and planning areas**
- **Reviewed origins, structure, and operations of New York City community district system, noting similarities to LA's planning districts**

5. No comments by Commissioners on subject matters within the Study Group's jurisdiction
6. Comments from the public on non-agenda items within the Study Group's jurisdiction
 - Leonard Shapiro recommended "sunshine" laws and open procedures for the executive and legislative offices of the City

City of Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission

Participation Study Group Staff Report

AN OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY BOARDS IN NEW YORK CITY¹

Basic facts:

- Community boards were established in New York City on a citywide basis in 1975, by the New York State Charter Revision Commission
- There are a total of 59 community boards, each with a maximum of fifty members
- The members of the community boards are selected by borough presidents and local city councilmembers.
- The boards receive funding for operating purposes and for a district manager, who serves at the board's pleasure.
- The boards have advisory powers.
- The boards' responsibilities include local budget priorities, land-use planning, and service monitoring.
- The definition of board areas aligned community and service districts.

Evaluating the community board system:

Budget

After the first several years, community boards succeeded about half the time in having their proposals included in the capital budget.

- Factors for success: agency support and community income level.
- Low-income districts are less likely to submit proposal with city agency cosponsorship.

¹Based on material in "Community Governance: A Decade of Experience", by Robert F. Pecorella, in Restructuring the New York City Government: The Reemergence of Municipal Reform, edited by Frank J. Mauro and Gerald Benjamin, The Academy of Political Science, 1989, pp. 97-109.

Land-use

Recommendations of community boards were followed more than 80% of the time.

- Boards in middle class areas were better able to get their recommendations followed than those in low-income areas. Those boards with the greatest clout have been able to draw on the resources of technical experts.
- "...(T)he board system has made it more difficult to alter fundamentally the character of city neighborhoods without extensive and public consideration of proposed changes."

District service cabinets

The charter reforms drew community districts on community and service agency boundaries. In addition, the city devolved management responsibility to district service chiefs within departments.

- Of the three responsibilities of community boards, this function was the least effective and popular.
- Very difficult to align the interests of the community and the agencies.
- The role of complaint-processor was effective in connecting the community to the agency.
- Severe organizational problems in decentralizing services while making them more accountable.

Conclusions

Perhaps this system has not evolved into community control in New York City, yet it did change the way the City conducts its business.

- "The boards are merely advisory bodies, but they have opened the land-use process in New York City to public scrutiny."
- "The boards can neither raise revenues nor allocate resources, but they have influenced the central-city process that does so. And even though the boards have been unable to coordinate service delivery within their communities, district managers serve as local ombudsmen for community residents."

City of Los Angeles Charter Reform Commission

Staff Report

***Preliminary Inventory of Citizen Advisory Groups
in Local Agencies, by Issue Area***

- I. Land Use and Development**
- II. Youth and Recreation**
- III. Public Safety**
- IV. Proprietary Departments**

I. Land Use and Development

Department	Citizen Advisory Group(s)	Number of Groups	Number of Members	Selection Method	Comments
Community Redevelopment Agency	Project Area Committees	30, one for each Project Area	Varies	Election	Develops Project Area plan changes
	Citizen Advisory Committees		Varies	Appointed by City Council member	
City Planning Department	Citizen Advisory Committees	35	9-11	Appointed by City Council member	Advise staff on community plans
	Design Review Boards	Approx. 7	Varies	Appointed by City Council member	Reviews development in special zones
Community Development Department	Citizen Unit for Participation	1	21 max.	Appointed by City Council members, Mayor, and several department boards	Approves Consolidated Plan and some budgetary changes
	Community Action Board	1	Approx. 30	Appointed by City Council, Mayor, poverty community, and gov't agencies	Federally required by Community Service Block Grant program
	Private Industry Council	1	Approx. 30	Appointed by Mayor and City Council	Federally required by JTPA
Transportation Department	Mobility Action Committees	8	Approx. 30	Appointed by Mayor and City Council Member	Provide forums for public input on traffic and parking
Housing Authority	Resident Advisory Councils and Management Corporations	17, one for each HA site or consolidated sites	5 members	Election, mail-in overseen by League of Women Voters	Advise HA on management of Housing sites; Corporation is 501(c)3

II. Youth and Recreation

Department	Citizen Advisory Group(s)	Number of Groups	Number of Members	Selection Method	Comments
Recreation and Parks	Park Advisory Boards	One for each City rec center and major park	Varies	Director of rec center or park	Complement Center's activities to fit community priorities
	"Special" Panels	Typically formed for major attractions	Varies	Self-selection	Support Park activities through fund raising and advocacy
LA Unified School District	Parent Collaborative	1	Max. 68	Elected representatives of district, zone, and local level parent groups	Advise LAUSD on parent services and evaluate school programs
Cultural Affairs Department	"Friends" of Cultural Affairs Centers	7, one for each Center	10 - 15	Self-selection	Advise and raise funds for Center

III. Public Safety

Department	Citizen Advisory Group(s)	Number of Groups	Number of Members	Selection Method	Comments
Police Department	Community Police Advisory Boards	18	Varies	Varies (none by election)	Meet with Area lead officers to convey community priorities

IV. Proprietary Departments

Department	Citizen Advisory Group(s)	Number of Groups	Number of Members	Selection Method	Comments
Department of Airports	Van Nuys Airport Citizens Advisory Council	1	14	Appointed by City Council members, Mayor, and Airports Board	Advises Airports Board, Mayor, and City Council on Van Nuys Airport issues
	LA International Airport Area Advisory Committee	1	24	Appointed by 7 neighboring jurisdictions – LA has three seats	Advises Airports Board
Department of Water and Power		Research in progress			
Harbor Department	Wilmington Community Advisory Committee	1	15	Self-selecting, with Harbor Board ratification	Advises Harbor Board on issues affecting Wilmington community

BIOGRAPHY

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCILMAN MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS

Mark Ridley-Thomas represents the Eighth Council District of the City of Los Angeles. Since his election in 1991, he has worked to create greater levels of citizen involvement with respect to government proposals, actions and decisions. Upon taking office, he established the Eighth District Empowerment Congress, a dynamic partnership between his office and the district's residents, business, religious institutions and neighborhood groups.

Prior to his election, Mr. Ridley-Thomas served for a decade as Executive Director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Greater Los Angeles, the local affiliate of the national civil and human rights organization founded by Martin Luther King Jr. Since 1992, he has served as a member of the Aspen Institute's Domestic Strategy Group designed to foster bipartisan consensus on national public policy issues.

During his tenure on the City Council, Mr. Ridley-Thomas has chaired the Committee on Economic Development, Housing and Community Redevelopment and the Ad Hoc Committee on Recovery and Revitalization. Councilman Ridley-Thomas currently chairs the Council's Information Technology Committee, as well as the Ad Hoc Committee on Sports Franchises, whose primary task is to bring NFL football back to Los Angeles.

Mark Ridley-Thomas is a life long resident of Los Angeles. After graduating from Manuel Arts High School, he received his Baccalaureate degree in Social Relations and master's degree in Religious Studies from Immaculate Heart College. The councilman earned his Ph.D. in Social Ethics from the University of Southern California. He is married to Avis Ridley-Thomas, the Administrator of the Los Angeles City Attorney Office's Dispute Resolution Program. They have twin sons, Sebastian and Sinclair and live in Leimert Park area of Los Angeles.