

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

0220-03385-0000

Date:

To: The Governmental Efficiency Committee

From: Ronald F. Deaton, Chief Legislative Analyst
Keith Comrie, City Administrative OfficerSubject: **NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL PROPOSAL**

At the April 22, 1998 meeting of the Governmental Efficiency Committee (GE), the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) and the City Administrative Officer (CAO) were requested to provide a proposal and recommendations for the establishment of neighborhood councils and an Office of Neighborhoods based on previous GE decisions. GE also requested the selection procedures for other cities with neighborhood councils. The procedures are provided in the Attachment.

The Charter Reform Commission (CRC), established by the City Council in September 1996, has made preliminary recommendations regarding neighborhood councils. An explanation of the CRC's actions and how those actions may impact GE's recommendations is included in the Findings Section of this report. One CRC recommendation was modified as a result of GE's decisions.

The Elected Charter Reform Commission (ECRC), established by the voters in April 1997, is scheduled to take action on proposals for neighborhood councils at its regular evening meeting on April 27, 1998. The actions of the ECRC will be reported to GE at the next GE meeting.

Recommendations

If the City Council would like to establish neighborhood councils, then the City Council, subject to the approval of the Mayor, should take the following actions:

1. Create a citywide system for neighborhood participation based on the proposal of the Governmental Efficiency Committee;
2. Create an Office of Neighborhoods to support the citywide neighborhood participation system;

3. Request that the Ad Hoc Committee on the Proposed Budget find funds to implement the Office of Neighborhoods;
4. Direct the Department of General Services to provide office space for the staff of the Office of Neighborhoods in each of the following areas: City Hall, West Los Angeles, West Valley, East Valley, Northeast Los Angeles; and,
5. Request the City Attorney to prepare ordinances establishing the Office of Neighborhoods and an Early Warning Ordinance by June 30, 1998.

Fiscal Impact Statement

First year funding for the Office of Neighborhoods will be provided at a General Fund cost of \$1,378,668, including related costs. If the Office of Neighborhoods is fully operational in FY 1999-00, full-year funding will be provided at a General Fund cost of \$2,265,975.

(Statement of Findings attached)

Findings

1. Background

Since its January 21, 1998 meeting, the Governmental Efficiency Committee (GE) has conducted regular and special GE Committee meetings to discuss proposals to establish a neighborhood council program, an Office of Neighborhoods and to provide general guidelines for implementation of the program.

At its most recent meeting of April 22, 1998, GE requested the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) and the City Administrative Officer (CAO) to provide a proposal and recommendations for the establishment of neighborhood councils and an Office of Neighborhoods based on previous GE decisions. GE also requested the selection procedures for other cities with neighborhood councils. The procedures are provided in the Attachment. In addition, the preliminary decisions of the Charter Reform Commission, established by the City Council in September 1996, are included.

2. Preliminary Decisions of the Charter Reform Commission (CRC)

At its April 22, 1998 meeting, the CRC made several preliminary decisions regarding the provision of neighborhood councils. Because the CRC and Elected Charter Reform Commissions (ECRC) are working to provide one Charter document to the voters for consideration, the CRC's preliminary decisions may change after consideration of the ECRC's decisions at its meeting the evening of April 27, 1998.

CRC Preliminary Decisions:

- ▶ Create an Office of Neighborhoods in the Charter to facilitate the development of a citywide system that encourages neighborhood input and participation;
- ▶ Mandate the creation of neighborhood councils in the Charter, but leave some or all other the details to ordinance;
- ▶ Require that before certain City decisions can be made, they must first pass through a neighborhood council review and recommendation period;
- ▶ Require adoption of an ordinance to detail the types of decisions and the process;
- ▶ Seek a change to the Charter that would prescribe the selection process for neighborhood council members is determined by ordinance; and,
- ▶ Seek a change to the Charter that would require that neighborhood council boundaries are established by ordinance.

Prior to GE action regarding neighborhood council boundaries, the CRC considered a Charter amendment requiring that neighborhood council boundaries conform to identifiable communities. However, as a result of GE's action to use current council district boundaries for administrative purposes and to allow flexibility for exceptions, such as for neighborhoods on the borderlines, the CRC has acted to require that neighborhood council

boundaries be established by ordinance.

The CRC has also stated that detailing in the Charter exactly how neighborhood councils should be formed and should function may be premature. The CRC has determined that flexibility should be maintained in the Charter to facilitate the further discussion and development of neighborhood councils.

The CRC's actions to date are compatible with the actions of GE because GE is proceeding with implementation of a system of neighborhood councils. GE is also providing the specifics for a neighborhood council program that the CRC proposes to leave to ordinance.

3. **GE Committee Proposal for Neighborhood Councils**

GE has proposed the following purpose and general guidelines for the neighborhood participation plan.

A. Purpose for Neighborhood Councils

- ▶ To educate and empower all stakeholders in a neighborhood by providing both a means to give input to elected officials and to a way directly participate in the system; and,
- ▶ To foster a sense of community within local areas.

B. Guidelines for Neighborhood Councils; Neighborhood Councils will be:

- ▶ Advisory, because a Charter amendment is required to provide decision-making authority;
- ▶ Flexible, because a proposal for one neighborhood may not fit all neighborhoods;
- ▶ Evolving, because neighborhood councils may wish to change their procedures and operations over time;
- ▶ A two-tiered operation:
 - ▶ Tier One: Neighborhoods - identifiable neighborhoods, citywide;
 - ▶ Tier Two: Regional Councils - regions of the City; and,
- ▶ A means for representatives to meet quarterly to be informed of and to discuss Citywide issues at a Congress of Neighborhoods.

C. Boundaries

- ▶ Tier One - Neighborhoods: boundaries will conform to identifiable neighborhoods, as determined by the neighborhoods;
- ▶ Tier Two - Regions: boundaries will conform to current council district boundaries and will be used for administrative purposes;
- ▶ If an identifiable neighborhood falls 49 percent or less within a council district boundary, the neighborhood may determine the Regional Council by which it would like to be represented; and,
- ▶ Other exceptions to the general guidelines will be addressed on a case by case basis.

D. Selection Process for Tier Two - Three Proposals

1. Modified Self-Selection

- ▶ All communities of interest (COI) within a Regional Council area work together to form a consortium to determine its representation;
- ▶ The COI will determine the number of neighborhood council members required to provide complete and effective representation;
- ▶ The COI will be required to show evidence to the Office of Neighborhoods (ON) that its membership represents all stakeholders; and,
- ▶ If a stakeholder within a Region is not represented **after** the COI membership process, the Councilmember may appoint a representative for that unrepresented stakeholder.

2. Appointments

- ▶ Establish 15 seats for Regional Council representation;
- ▶ Councilmembers appoint 15 members to the Regional Councils;
- ▶ Appointments sunset after a designated period of one or two years; and,
- ▶ Thereafter, the neighborhoods self-select.

3. Combination of Self-Selection and Appointments

- ▶ Within each Region, establish 15 seats for Regional Council representation;
- ▶ Councilmember appoints five members; and,
- ▶ The Office of Neighborhoods selects 10 members through an application process.

4. **Office of Neighborhoods** (name consistent with the proposed Charter changes)

A. **Staff**

- ▶ Provide position authority for 34 positions;
- ▶ Begin with 13 positions, and add the remaining 21 positions by the end of the fiscal year;
- ▶ City Hall - begin with three positions: a) one executive director; b) one assistant executive director; c) one senior clerk typist;
- ▶ Field Staff - begin with ten field positions - one project coordinator and one clerk typist each in the following areas: a) West Los Angeles; b) West Valley; c) East Valley (Van Nuys); d) South Central and e) Northeast Los Angeles;
- ▶ After six months, the executive director will provide a progress report and may fill additional positions;
- ▶ To provide flexibility and enable neighborhoods to eventually provide input in the local hiring process, it is recommended that the following positions be exempt: a) executive director; b) assistant executive director; and c) all 15 project coordinators; and,
- ▶ The executive director of the Office of Neighborhoods will provide specific proposals for the operation of the Office (within the guidelines established by GE) after the first six months of operation.

B. **Funding**

- ▶ Ten months funding provided for one position (executive director);
- ▶ Nine months funding provided for 12 positions (one assist executive director; one senior clerk typist; five project coordinators and five clerk typists);
- ▶ Three months funding provided for remaining 21 positions (ten project coordinators, ten clerk typists and one management analyst)
- ▶ Total first year cost for 34 positions - \$615,146;
- ▶ It will cost approximately \$310,000/year to provide one annual mailing of the Neighborhood Council Newsletter to each one of the 1.3 million households in the City of Los Angeles for the newsletter (\$33,000), postage (\$260,000) and handling (\$17,000);
- ▶ Total first year cost for all 34 positions (\$615,146), expense (\$125,000), furniture (\$50,000), equipment (\$100,000), and interdepartmental chargebacks (\$300,000) is \$1,190,146, including related costs - \$1,378,668.
- ▶ Projected annual full funding cost for 34 positions (\$1,331,400), expense items (\$150,000), furniture (\$75,000), and equipment (\$150,000) and interdepartmental chargebacks (\$300,000) is - \$2,006,400; including related costs - \$2,265,975.
- ▶ Funding in future years for furniture and equipment will be substantially reduced after expenditures for one-time start-up costs.

C. **Office Space**

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- ▶ It is recommended that the Department of General Services secure office space for the Office of Neighborhoods staff in the following areas: City Hall, West Los Angeles, West Valley, East Valley, South Central and Northeast Los Angeles; and,
- ▶ Subsequent locations for ON field staff will be determined by the executive director of the ON.

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Attachment

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Selection Process of Various Cities

- **BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA**

Birmingham is divided into 99 Neighborhood Associations (NA), with 180 to 8,200 persons in each geographic area. The members of the NA Boards are selected through a city-wide election every two years. The election is conducted by the City of Birmingham. Voters are residents 16 years of age or older. Others who own property or businesses cannot vote but can voice their opinions at the NA meetings. Candidates for office must be 18 years of age or older, must reside in the area for a minimum of 90 days, and attended at least 2 NA meetings during the previous 12 months. The 99 NAs are grouped into 22 Community Advisory Committees (larger geographic areas) whose members consist solely of the president, vice-president, and secretary of each NA within its geographic area.

- **DAYTON, OHIO**

The seven Priority Board (PB) members are selected through a city-wide election conducted by the City of Dayton, Division of Neighborhood Affairs. Each PB is required to prepare an election plan consisting of: 1) a representation plan which divides the entire PB into smaller election districts and establishes which seats are to be filled in the coming election; and 2) a determination of the term which new members will serve. The length of the PB members' term and the number of members on each PB varies. The plan, along with an election timetable and budget, is submitted to the PB Chairpersons Council for approval. The Division of Neighborhood Affairs also submits a Code of Election Operations and Conduct to the Priority Board Chairpersons Council. To vote or to be a candidate, a person must be a registered voter in the City of Dayton.

- **NEW YORK, NEW YORK**

The 59 Community Board (CB) members are selected through an application process. Each Board has up to 50 members. The Community Board members serve a two-year term with 50 percent of the seats open each year. The applications are open for filing with the Borough President all year. Most CBs do not have term limits. City Councilmembers do recommend candidates from the area of their district that overlaps with the open Community Board seat. Borough Presidents generally, though not always, appoint the persons recommended by the Councilmember. Applicants are required to be a resident of New York City, own a business, or have a professional or other significant interest in the area. For example, if an applicant is affiliated with a non-profit organization in the area, the applicant must have a ranking board position within that organization to be considered as having a significant interest in the area.

- **PORTLAND, OREGON**

Portland is divided into eight District Coalition (DC) Boards. Each DC Board is incorporated as a nonprofit and is the umbrella organization for the Neighborhood Associations (NA) within its boundaries. Portland has approximately 90 NAs. Each NA determines how it will select its members. NAs select one delegate each to the DC Board. However, participation on the DC Board is optional for NAs.

- **ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA**

The 17 District Councils (DC) are non-profit organizations. Their board members are elected annually. The number of members on the DC is determined by each DC and incorporated in the by-laws for each. Each DC funds its own election. The only requirement for voting is usually proof of residency, which is verified with a utility bill. The elections are overseen by the League of Women Voters.

- **SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**

Seattle is divided into 13 District Councils (DC). Over 100 neighborhoods are grouped into the DCs. DC members are appointed by the individual neighborhood groups within their boundaries. Each DC determines the number of seats required to reflect its community. The DC must reflect the diversity of the community. If the DC does not reflect this diversity, the Office of Neighborhoods requests the DC to appoint members of the unrepresented groups to the DC Board.