

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: April 13, 1998

To: The Governmental Efficiency Committee

From: Ronald F. Deaton, Chief Legislative Analyst
Keith B. Comrie, City Administrative Officer

Subject: **NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS AND CITY HALL INFRASTRUCTURE**

At the April 8, 1998 meeting of the Governmental Efficiency Committee (GE), the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) and the City Administrative Officer (CAO) were requested to provide follow-up information on departments with citizen participation activities and field offices.

We have completed a survey of all City departments with citizen participation activities and field offices. Additional City departments with citizen participation activities include: Airports; Cultural Affairs; El Pueblo; Proposition K; Public Works, Operation Clean Sweep; Street Maintenance and Transportation. Additional City departments with field offices include: Aging; Animal Regulation; City Attorney; Personnel and Public Works.

In addition, the City Attorney has provided preliminary information regarding the legal ramifications for advisory neighborhood councils and neighborhood councils with limited decision-making authority in the City of Los Angeles.

RECOMMENDATION

Note and file.

Fiscal Impact Statement

There is no General Fund impact at this time.

Findings

I. Background

At the April 8, 1998 meeting of the Governmental Efficiency Committee (GE), the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) and the City Administrative Officer (CAO) were requested to provide follow-up information on departments with citizen participation activities and field offices. In addition, the City Attorney has provided preliminary information regarding the legal ramifications for advisory neighborhood councils and neighborhood councils with limited decision-making authority in the City of Los Angeles.

II. City Departments with Community Participation Boards

- **Airports**

Program

There are two citizen advisory councils: The LAX and the Van Nuys Citizen's Advisory Councils. The 18 member LAX Citizen's Advisory Council consists of three persons each appointed by the Mayors or LA County Supervisors of El Segundo, Inglewood, Lennox, Culver City and Marina Del Rey. The 18 member Van Nuys Citizens Advisory Council consists of three persons each appointed by the Board of Airport Commissioners and the Mayor of Los Angeles and two each appointed by the City Councilmembers from Districts 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, and 12.

- **Cultural Affairs**

Program

Cultural Affairs recently established nine Regional Arts Councils to provide advice on programming and activities at its nine Community Arts Centers (William Grant Still, Art in the Park, Eagle Rock, Lankershim, McGroarty, Encino, Croatian, Unity, and Vision Complex), five Community Theaters (Madrid, Ebony, Warner Grand, Los Angeles Theater Center, and Gallery), and two Regional Arts Centers (Watts Towers and Barnsdall Art Park).

Level of Staff

Each facility is operated by Cultural Affairs Departments staff or a non-profit arts organization selected through a competitive bid process.

- **El Pueblo**

Program

The ordinance establishing El Pueblo also created two advisory committees. One is the El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument Merchants Advisory Committee made up of Olvera Street merchants. Appointments are made by the Olvera Street merchants. The other is the Friends of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument Advisory Committee. The Commission establishes appointment criteria for the Friends of El Pueblo committee and minimum meeting requirements and rules for both committees. Both committees have authority to meet, consult and provide advice, assistance and information to the El Pueblo Commission on any matter affecting the El Pueblo Monument. The Friends of El Pueblo Committee has not yet been formed. The Merchants Advisory Committee is already in operation.

Level of Staff

The El Pueblo Commission Executive Assistant provides some support (typing agendas, recording meetings) and a department staff person attends the meetings to provide information and listen to concerns.

- **Proposition K**

Program

There are two citizen participation activities for Prop K. One citizen board advises on the setting of priorities as to when projects identified in the assessment measure are to be built. The other citizen board provides recommendations on the award of competitive grants. In addition, there are also local citizen groups at each park to advise on the scope and design parameters of each specific project.

Level of Staff

There are two part-time staff for these boards. There is a committee for each project. The Department of Recreation and Parks staffs those. However, for each project there is a project manager.

- **Public Works, Operation Clean Sweep**

Program

In FY 1997-98, the City established a Neighborhood Matching Program which provides grants of \$250 (minimum) to \$5,000 (maximum) for neighborhood-initiated improvement projects, such as building and installing playgrounds, planting and beautifying medians and parkways, establishing community gardens and painting classrooms. The neighborhoods must provide a dollar for dollar match the City's grant with cash, volunteer labor, valued at \$10/hour, materials or professional services. The Neighborhood Review Panel, composed of seven to nine citizens representing each of the five regions into which the City is divided, will score, rank and recommend proposals.

Level of Staff

No additional staff have been added for this program.

- **Street Maintenance**

Community Forest Advisory Committee: consists of 16 appointed individuals (one from each Council District; one for Mayor), that meet once a month to advise Street Services, Recreation & Parks, Harbor, Airports and DWP on policy and procedures relating to the Urban Forest.

Targeted Neighborhood Initiatives: consists of an estimated 11 neighborhoods, working through the Mayor's Office to improve the quality of life in designated neighborhoods. Issues before them include tree planting/trimming; pavement/improvements of alleys, sidewalks, curbs and unimproved streets. This group may be receiving funds from the Mayor and Council.

- **Department of Transportation**

The Mobility Action Committees in Chinatown, Laurel Canyon, Los Feliz, the Valley, Westchester and Westwood advise the Department on methods for improving mobility and decreasing traffic problems. There are also Traffic Subcommittees under the Community Police Advisory Boards in Hollywood, West Los Angeles, Pacific and Wilshire. The Citywide Bicycle Advisory Committees advise the Department on methods for improving bicycle safety and the Citywide Child Pedestrian Safety Committees focus on coordination with the LAUSD on methods for increasing safety along corridors to and from schools and during school hours.

III. City Departments with Field Offices

- **Aging**

The department has one staff person in the Constituent Services Center in Council District 8.

- **Animal Regulation**

The Department has six site offices located in the East Valley, North Central, South central, West Los Angeles, the West Valley, and the Harbor. From the site offices, staff pick up stray animals and provide low cost rabies vaccinations and pet adoptions.

- **City Attorney**

There are 21 branch offices of the City Attorney from which criminal misdemeanor and civil cases are prosecuted.

- **Personnel Department**

The department has one staff person in the Constituent Services Center in Council District 8.

- **Public Works**

Contract Administration

Contract Administration has site offices in the East valley, West Valley, El Segundo, LA-Glendale, Tillman Water Reclamation Plant, Harbor and West Los Angeles.

Engineering

Engineering has district offices in the Valley, West Los Angeles, the Harbor and El Segundo.

Sanitation

Sanitation has District offices in South Central, North Central, West Los Angeles, East Valley, West Valley and the Harbor.

Street Lighting

Street Lighting has offices in the San Fernando Valley and Hollywood.

Street Maintenance

Street Maintenance has 37 yards located throughout the City that provide street cleaning, and resurfacing services.

- **Department of Transportation**

There are 23 field offices from which staff provide parking and intersection control, crossing guard services, ticket hearing offices, and various engineering and design services for the City.

- **Department of Water and Power**

DWP operates 14 customer service centers in which customers may pay utility bills, report service problems, request or discontinue utility services and receive other utility bill information.

IV. Advisory or Decision Making Neighborhood Councils

The City Attorney reports that if neighborhood councils are given decision making or "gate-keeper" authority, the City may be required to:

1. **Amend the City Charter** - to the extent that the City Charter already grants powers to other agencies, the Charter may need to be amended to grant those powers to the neighborhood councils. Charter section 32.1 already gives the Mayor and Council some power to transfer responsibilities among "departments."
2. **Comply with the Voting Rights Act**, which requires that: a) the populations of neighborhood council areas must be equal to insure that each district is fairly represented, and districts within each area from which council members are elected must be of equal population; b) redistricting or redefining the neighborhoods must occur at least every 10 years; c) redistricting can not be done solely on the basis of race, and must include communities of interest and cohesiveness, although minority voting rights must not be diminished;

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3. **Require neighborhood council representatives to complete all disclosure documents** required by the Ethics Commission and by applicable state and federal laws and comply with state and local conflict of interest and ethics laws;
4. **Provide resources for 103 or more elected officials**, (based on the number of identified neighborhoods, although more may be required when the Voting Rights Act is considered) which may include the costs for office space, staff for the elected officials as well as additional City staff to provide support to the officials;
5. **Conduct the elections**, which may cost approximately \$2 million, based on the cost of the 1995 General Election.
6. **Allow only registered voters to participate**, which could exclude approximately 40% of the population that live and/or have an interest in the community.
7. **Ensure that the decisions of those jurisdictional bodies are appealable to the City Council** - if decisions of neighborhood councils are not appealable to the City Council, there may be concern that such decisions could affect areas whose residents are not given the opportunity to vote for representatives who make decisions which affect them.

The City Attorney reports that if neighborhood councils are advisory, the City would be required to:

1. **Insure that the entire City has a right to participate in neighborhood councils.**
2. **Insure that neighborhood councils are not gate keepers**, that those seeking to do business with the City are not required to receive approval from the neighborhood councils before proceeding to the City Council with its request;
3. **Avoid conflicts of interest with neighborhood councils pertaining to City contracts.** For example, if a member of a neighborhood council has a business interest in a contract, the entire council may be ineligible to vote on that issue. In other cases, only the member would be disqualified.

The City Attorney also suggested that if the neighborhood groups organize as non-profits, the City could recognize them, provide assistance as it would to any non-profit and avoid conflict of interest issues, as defined by Government Code 1090. As non-profit organizations, they would also be able to raise funds, although all City provided funds would have to be spent in accordance with City requirements.

KC:RFD:JOS