

To: Joel
From: Greg
Re: Charter Commission - NCs

11/26/97

Last night was the second a final meeting of the appointed Charter commission devoted to NCs.

LAURA CHICK:

She complained about the disconnect between City Hall and the public. She noted a meeting that was advertised with 6,000 fliers, but only 40 people showed up. Because the city=s programs are disconnected, we need a new city blueprint.

She divided her district in thirds, and created planning advisory councils in each (IMPACTS). Members appointed by her. Includes homeowners, renters, business owners. Meet monthly. She gets them involved in the early stages of planning and land use issues. Requires developers to meet with them first. Members have term limits - 2 years. They elect their own chairs. She provides them with leadership training, but said that they were appointed to reflect her philosophy of planning. She feels that the same thing should be done throughout the city in a uniform way. It=s a Aone size fits all@ approach. She=s thinking about expanding their role into budgetary issues.

She didn=t think that elected the members would be a good idea, because it would discourage many people from getting involved if they had to go through the trouble and expense of running for office.

Boundaries should not be by council district, but by neighborhoods. Might start with planning districts. Dept of Neighborhoods would staff the NCs.

Citing Seattle and Baltimore, she stressed the need to take all the neighborhoods functions of different departments and put them into one new department. She=s going to Baltimore next week to continue to develop this idea. She didn=t think this would require any additional cost.

She felt that the Charter should address how the council districts relate to the NCs.

MIKE FEUER:

Explained his livable NCs. He has learned that the Aone size fits all@ approach won=t work. He has seen the difference just between the North Hollywood and South Robertson NCs. One group didn=t want elected or appointed leaders. They wanted to invite all comers to participate equally. He sees some merit in electing leaders. The NH group decided that a big priority is creating tutoring programs in the apartment buildings primarily occupied by Latinos, but surrounded by Anglo single family.

NCs need to bring city services closer to the people.

JACKIE GOLDBERG:

Spoke about the community group that was formed in the Yucca corridor. Took 3 years of work to organize it, but it's paying off now. Doesn't depend on her now. To determine how to spend \$1M from the targeted neighborhoods initiative, they had a meeting with 450 people. It was hard to hear everyone. Know they have to figure out what to do next. She'll probably form a steering committee.

Can't see putting a "one size fits all" proposal in the Charter. Would like to see NCs representing no more than 50,000 people. Should have paid staff. Leaders would be elected on the ballot. City Council could overturn planning decisions with a super majority. NCs should be first voice in determining how money is spent in the area. Must keep neighborhoods together.

Doesn't worry that NCs might be a breeding ground for political rivals. We've got term limits anyway.

HENRY CISNEROS

Must be about making people feel connected, not just the delivery of services.

L.A. already has many well-defined community boundaries. Should use natural boundaries, not planning districts. NCs should fit into council districts. (During Q&A, a commissioner explained to him how hard it is to create districts in which people are being elected, and have them conform to neighborhoods. She cited the Voting Rights Act.)

Favors decentralizing power. Making citizens masters over their own lives. Doesn't think City Council should micromanage. NCs should be given some direct power such as over planning and land use, design, and historic preservation. Advisory over other issues.

Favors elected leaders. Appointed leaders means they will change at least when the appointing authority changes.

Might favor a borough system.

DIANE LINN - Director, Portland Office of Neighborhood Associations

She used her time to try and explain the commissioners that the issue isn't whether NCs should be given direct power, or remain advisory as we have now. She explained how their system made super lobbyists of the citizens, and that they preferred their independence over being part of the governmental system.

She said that when Tufts did their research, they found that 7.5% of the entire population participate in the NCs -- a large number.

Diane pointed out that crime prevention was one of the major functions that the NCs perform. And that they "contract" with the city to do this. And the police support the idea.

In Portland, each NC gets 5 minutes to speak before the City Council. Everyone else gets 2 minutes. Some NCs are more active than others. Depends upon what she called the

cycle of organization -- the ebb and flow that all groups go through.

RICHARD CLOSE

Talked about town councils (the VICA idea we thought). When asked if he supported the VICA plan, he said, "It has plusses and minuses. I don't mean to avoid answering the question." Then he said that these are questions the commission will have to deal with.

He spent lots of time talking about Valley secession.

NCs must have real power. It's all about power, he said. Must establish along community boundaries.

BENNETT KAYSER

Spoke about the Not Yet New York group that he worked with when he was president of the Hillside Federation. Said they want 70 community planning boards. 1 homeowner, 1 renter, 1 business owner, 1 business renter, 1 community organization leader on each board. Council could override with super majority.

Wouldn't add more bureaucracy because they would replace the deputy advisory agency. Pay them only a stipend so they could afford babysitters for the night meetings.

COMMENTS:

This isn't just about putting together models from what other cities have. It's tailoring something that will work here. That involves knowledge of our special dynamics -- our huge size; ethnic diversity; 15 full time councilmembers.