

Note to File

9-21-98

I'm rewriting JW's proposal to try and eliminate the two-tier confusion.

The CAO, Ken Thomson (co-author of *A Rebirth of Urban Democracy*), all the cities with the model neighborhood councils programs, and all others who have studied the issue, agree that size counts!

Nationally, neighborhoods normally don't exceed 5,000 to 10,000 people. One in St. Paul contains 26,000. If they are too large (1) it becomes difficult to have two-way communication with all the stakeholders, (2) it becomes difficult to get people to attend meetings, and (3) people who do attend find themselves discussing projects and issues that are so far away from them that they don't care. In a true neighborhood council meeting, every issue affects every potential attendee.

After being created, the Dept of Neighborhoods would submit a detailed plan to the City for the creation of a citywide neighborhood councils network.

If it were up to us, we would have the Dept of Neighborhoods begin by hiring temporary community organizers who would help the neighborhoods find and train leaders, define their boundaries, and prepare their by-laws, structure, and operating plans.

As the organizing of the neighborhoods reached a point of diminishing returns, the DON would work with some of the organized neighborhoods to temporarily expand their boundaries in order to take in adjacent areas that haven't yet organized so that everyone in the city is covered by an NC from the outset. The DON would then work with the NCs to cluster themselves into some number of community clusters as prescribed by the citywide plan. The City would provide funding to each of the clusters so that the NCs within them could share offices, staff, equipment, and expenses. The NCs would, as part of their own plans submitted to the City, determine how they will select the people who will oversee the operations of the cluster offices. This gives the basic foundation unit, the neighborhoods, ownership over their shared offices.

On Day One, the City would formally recognize all the NCs and their clusters, and begin providing the funding and support. Most or all of the community organizers would have their contracts terminated. There would be some on-going organizational work needed to organize those neighborhoods that have been slow. This work could be done by cluster staff and/or by continuing the contracts of some of the DON organizers.

The City would send its notices to the cluster offices, who in turn, would have a plan for disseminating the information further into the neighborhoods. Each office would have state-of-the-art communications (computers, fax machines, telephones, voice mail, access to the city's e-mail and Internet system, etc.) and funds for newsletters.

Nobody knows how many neighborhoods there are, but we can be sure that they will vary greatly in size. Therefore, the clustering becomes essential in order to (1) provide a more predictable citywide budget, and (2) provide greater funding equity. If the City were to directly fund neighborhoods that varied in size, for example, from 800 to 20,000, it probably wouldn't be possible to fund them each equitably.

Greg