



CITY OF LONG BEACH

H-1

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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February 10, 2009

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive the supporting documentation, conclude the public hearing, and declare the ordinance amending Chapter 2.63 of the Municipal Code as it relates to the Cultural Heritage Commission read for the first time and laid over to the next regular meeting of the Council for final reading; and

Adopt a resolution authorizing the Director of Development Services to submit amendments to the Cultural Heritage Commission Ordinance to the State Office of Historic Preservation for its review and approval as an implementing ordinance of the Certified Local Government (CLG) program. (Citywide)

DISCUSSION

In February of 2006, the City Council was presented information regarding program issues, improvements, and revisions related to the City's Historic Preservation program. The City Council received the report and provided positive comments on the proposed work program. Many of the suggestions, including the preparation of a Historic Preservation Element of the General Plan, initiation of the first phase of the citywide historic resources survey, and the integration of historic, planning and redevelopment efforts have been made or are underway. A key item of the Historic Preservation Program is the revision of the Cultural Heritage Commission ordinance, Chapter 2.63 of the Municipal Code, in order to provide a more effective decision-making process. The recommended amendments to the Municipal Code include the following:

- 1. Reduce the number of Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) members from fifteen to seven.** The large commission was established prior to the appointment of a historic preservation officer. Currently, the large membership results in a longer, less effective decision-making process and inconsistent approvals of work scopes. Reducing the number of commissioners would allow for a more efficient and effective process, while still allowing Long Beach to meet the national requirement to be a Certified Local Government for review of historic resources.
- 2. Amend the procedures for administering certificates of appropriateness for alterations to landmark buildings or structures located within historic districts.** The current procedures require that such changes be reviewed and approved by the Cultural Heritage Commission or, in some instances, the department director. This has substantially hindered the permitting process and, at times, has caused the Commission to focus on non-preservation matters rather than on larger policy issues affecting historic resources and the preservation program overall. Therefore, staff

proposes to shift the review of Certificates of Appropriateness for structures in historic districts from the Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) to staff, with the CHC acting as an appeal body for staff determinations, the approval body for all alterations to historic landmarks, and on preservation policy issues.

- 3. Replace references in Chapter 2.63 to “Planning and Building” with “Development Services” to reflect the new department name.** In December 2007, the Development Services Department was formed from the Department of Planning and Building and the Redevelopment Bureau. These changes will update the code to reflect the new department name.

In developing these recommended changes to the Cultural Heritage Commission ordinance, staff has conducted considerable research on other cities' ordinances and has utilized guidance publications from the State Office of Historic Preservation to propose ordinance appropriate language that reflects “best practices” nationally. Staff reviewed the proposed changes with representatives of Long Beach Heritage. Recommendations were discussed with the Cultural Heritage Commission on June 18, 2008. On October 2, 2008, the Planning Commission considered this matter and recommended that the City Council amend the Cultural Heritage Commission ordinance.

This letter was reviewed by Assistant City Attorney Michael J. Mais on January 27, 2009 and by Budget Management Officer Victoria Bell on January 23, 2009.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

Council action is requested on February 10, 2009 to allow for the immediate appointment of Cultural Heritage Commission members and transition of Certificate of Appropriateness review to staff.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with the suggested action.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,



CRAIG BECK
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

APPROVED:



PATRICK H. WEST
CITY MANAGER

CB:DB:JO:JG

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Attachment: City Council Ordinance
City Council Resolution