



City of Long Beach
Working Together to Serve

Office of Gerrie Schipske
Councilwoman, Fifth District
Memorandum

R-36

Date: November 14, 2006

To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

From: Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District *G.S./jj*
Council Member Val Lerch, Ninth District *Val*

Subject: AGENDA ITEM: Request the City Clerk and City Attorney to provide the following documents to the City Council related to Charter Reform: 1) A complete copy of the current City Charter; 2) A chronology of revisions and amendments to the Charter; 3) Information concerning the California Municipal Home Rule law and requirements for Charter revision; 4) The National Civic League "Guide for Charter Commissions;" 5) The National Civic League "Model City Charter;" 6) An estimate of the costs to conduct a city-wide special election in 2007 related to Charter amendments compared with conducting same in 2008 during Council elections for Districts 2, 4, 6, 8.; and 7) Projections of voter turnout in a special versus regular election.

DISCUSSION

The City Council is currently undertaking the review of the City Charter and has been tasked to complete this review within a short, eight-week time frame (much of which is during the holiday season). From this review, the Council is being asked to make recommendations for revision of the Charter and to place such recommendations on a ballot to be voted upon in a special, city-wide election in the Spring of 2007.

The revision of a city charter is a serious matter. Our city charter is a complex, legal document that should not be lightly revised. It is the document that makes Long Beach independent of the state legislature and provides us with direct control over our local affairs and the structure of how we are governed.

In order for the City Council to fully understand the context in which this task is being undertaken, it is important that it receive all the information necessary to make this process successful and the decisions derived from it appropriate.

It would be most helpful if the City Council were given: a copy of the current City Charter so that it might refer to it during workshops and public hearings on proposed revisions; a chronology of the dates and types of prior revisions would provide a historical context; and an explanation of the California Municipal Home Rule law and its requirements for charter revision.

Two important publications by the National Civic League would also greatly assist the City Council in this effort: "Guide for Charter Commissions" (which details how to organize and conduct a comprehensive charter-review process

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with citizen outreach and involvement) and "Model City Charter" (which remains the standard for local government administrative reform). The National Civic League is one of the leading proponents of citizen democracy in the United States. It was founded in 1894 by Theodore Roosevelt and other government reformers. NCL is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to building community and promoting political reform at the local level.

The City Council should also be given cost estimates for conducting a city-wide special election in a non-scheduled year (Spring 2007) and a comparison of such costs if proposed charter changes are placed on the ballot during the regularly scheduled election of Council Districts 2, 4, 6, and 8 in 2008. These cost estimates should include printing, postage, staffing, equipment and other costs related to conducting a city wide election.

Finally, the Council should be given projections of voter turn out if proposed charter changes were placed on a special election ballot versus a regularly scheduled election ballot in order to determine how best to involve the most citizens in these decisions.

RECOMMENDATION

Request the City Clerk and City Attorney to provide the following documents to the City Council related to Charter Reform: 1) A complete copy of the current City Charter; 2) A chronology of revisions and amendments to the Charter; 3) Information concerning the California Municipal Home Rule law and requirements for Charter revision; 4) The National Civic League "Guide for Charter Commissions;" 5) The National Civic League "Model City Charter;" 6) An estimate of the costs to conduct a city-wide special election in 2007 related to Charter amendments compared with conducting same in 2008 during Council elections for Districts 2, 4, 6, 8.; and 7) Projections of voter turnout in a special versus regular election.