

## MEMORANDUM

December 10, 2001

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** City Manager

**SUBJECT:** Summary of Review of Commissions: Planning, Northwest, Community Development, Cultural Heritage, Design

### **Background**

At a special meeting held January 31, 2000, City Council directed the Council committees to review the necessity, mission, parameters and processes of the city's advisory commissions.

To support this process, Council members were asked which advisory bodies appeared to have the greatest need for review and for suggested changes in structure and focus. A matrix summarizing those comments was forwarded to each committee for consideration during review.

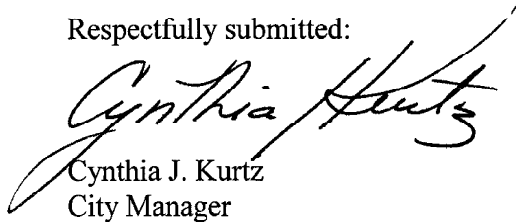
The Legislative Policy Committee was directed to review all advisory bodies except those currently reporting through another Council Committee. The Utility Advisory Commission was reviewed by the Deregulation Committee and the Code Enforcement Commission was reviewed by the Public Safety Committee. The Business Enterprise Committee was charged with reviewing those advisory bodies that currently report through that committee (RBOC, PCAC, PCOC) and the commissions and committees associated with the development review process in northwest Pasadena.

Over a period of several months, each of the committees completed a review process that included a query of commission members through a questionnaire and meetings with the Chair of each commission.

The City Council has now asked staff to present a summary of the results of the review process and outline alternatives raised during the course of the review. A one-page summary on each of the commissions is attached.


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Respectfully submitted:



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## **Planning Commission**

### *Preliminary Review*

None of the Council members saw a need to review the Planning Commission. It was suggested that the Cultural Heritage Commission and/or the Design Commission be merged into the Planning Commission.

### *Committee Review*

The Planning Commission was not reviewed by a committee

### *Questionnaire Results*

Summary is based on two out of nine members:

- Both members believe the Commission's analysis and recommendations could be better presented to the Council;
- Member ship is adequate and attendance is good.

### *Alternatives*

Discussion regarding the merging of the Cultural Heritage Commission or the Design Commission into the Planning Commission is included under each commission below.

## **Northwest Commission**

### *Preliminary Review*

Seven Council members saw a need to review the Northwest Commission. It was suggested that the Human Services Commission be merged into the Northwest Commission.

### *Committee Review*

The Chair of the Commission attended the Business Enterprise Committee meeting on December 6, 2000, and reviewed the Commission's response to the questionnaire. The Chair of the Committee noted for the record that there is a consensus that the Northwest Commission continues to have an important role and there is a shared concern about integrating the work of the commission more fully with the Project Area Committees.

### *Questionnaire Results*

Summary is based on responses from two out of nine members:

- There is some frustration among members over the seemingly inconsistent role of the commission;
- Meetings are inconsistent, with a large amount of meetings canceled, and as a result "many issues slide by the Commission";
- The role of the PACs and Planning Commission overlap with Northwest but members find it helpful;
- Vacancies are a problem;
- There is some concern about members who have financial interests in the land use decisions being made.

### *Alternatives*

The City is encouraging reinvestment in Northwest Pasadena. Typically in areas where reinvestment is encouraged, the City streamlines the development approval processes. In Northwest Pasadena the development review process includes review by the Northwest Commission and potentially a Project Area Committee in addition to the City's typical process. Elimination of the Northwest Commission would serve to streamline the development review process. Retaining the Northwest Commission provides for additional public input into projects.

The concept of merging the Human Services Commission into the Northwest Commission was discussed in the previous report on commissions with a human service focus. Another advantage of combining these commissions would be the combination of the grant process for the CDBG and Human Services Endowment Funds under one advisory body. As a disadvantage, combined commission may result in a competing focus for priority on Northwest issues or citywide issues

## **Community Development Committee**

### *Preliminary Review*

Six Council members saw a need to review the Community Development Commission. There were no suggestions for mergers or change.

### *Committee Review*

The Chair of the Committee attended the Business Enterprise Committee meeting on December 6, 2000, and reviewed the concerns of CDC members. The BEC Chair noted a consensus that the Community Development Committee continue and suggested that the two groups meet again in the future to discuss the development process.

### *Questionnaire Results*

Summary is based on responses from two of seven members:

- The code is ambiguous and efforts appear to be duplicated by the Northwest Commission and occasionally the Planning Commission;
- Lines of communication between the Council and Commission could be improved.

### *Alternatives*

The Community Development Committee is required by law. If another commission was to take on this function, the membership would have to include two tenant members and must take on all legal responsibilities of a community development committee.

## **Cultural Heritage Commission**

### **Preliminary Review**

Five Council members saw a need to review the Cultural Heritage Commission and it was suggested this body be merged into the Planning Commission.

### **Committee Review**

The Chair of the Cultural Heritage Commission met with the Legislative Policy Committee on August 15, 2000, to discuss the results of the questionnaire. The chair stated agreement with statements made by fellow commissioners regarding a need for a more pro-active stance on educating the community, Council disregard for advice from the Commission, and the appearance that developers carry more influence with the Council than Commission members. The Chair also spoke against combining the Cultural Heritage and Design Commissions.

### **Questionnaire Results**

Summary is based on responses from five of seven members:

- All members understand their charge;
- Membership is adequate and attendance is good;
- The proposed changes in the code and the make-up of the Commission will substantially improve the role of the Commission as some feel the code is too weak;
- Would like the Commission to be more proactive in educating the community about our local history and prevention issues;
- Not enough landmarks being nominated;
- By and large, some feel the Council ignores the advice given by the Commission on the safety of the neighborhoods;
- Some feel that developers carry more weight with the Council than the recommendations from the Commission;
- Some feel that there is an overlap with the Design Commission.

### **Alternatives**

There has been a suggestion to merge the Cultural Heritage Commission and Planning Commission. Merging the Cultural Heritage Commission with the Planning Commission has the potential benefit of streamlining the process by which projects which involve historic properties are reviewed. The Cultural Heritage Commission and Planning Commission have, during the past year, both had full agendas. Combining the Commissions may be too large of an agenda for any one commission.

## **Design Commission**

### *Preliminary Review*

Five Council members saw a need to review the Design Commission and it was suggested that this body be merged into the Planning Commission.

### *Committee Review*

A representative of the Commission was not able to attend the Legislative Policy Committee meeting on August 15, 2000, during which the results of the questionnaire were to be discussed. The results were distributed, but there was no discussion and no action taken.

### *Questionnaire Results*

Summary is based on responses from three out of eight members:

- Overall members understand their charge. However, more clarification is needed in their role concerning environmental documents;
- Consistent attendance by all members has been difficult – barely able to achieve a full quorum;
- Some overlapping with the Cultural Heritage Commission;
- Funding and staffing prevent “development review” to proceed in a predictable manner due to the lack of a citywide Historical Resources Survey;
- Concern exists regarding development and the balance of old and new. Where new developments “poach” existing tenants to leave existing developments and leave older centers that become run down – may be a cycle that costs the tax payer lots of redevelopment fees;
- Some members feel it would be helpful to actually see staff reports submitted to Council so they know their advice and decisions are being relayed;
- Difficult to be sure if Council is finding analysis and recommendations useful in making decisions since there have been several notable instances where the Council acted in opposition to the Commission’s recommendation;
- Don’t always feel that the Commission is a valuable forum for community input since the Council has usurped Planning and Design Commission’s role as the “first line” of review for development. Council now wants to “pre-approve” projects (major developments) prior to Commission review;
- To improve effectiveness, allow the Commission occasional opportunities to provide the Council with its “direct input”.

### *Alternatives*

There has been a suggestion to merge the Planning Commission and Design Commission. During the past year, both Commissions have had full agendas. Combining the two Commissions obligations may be too large an agenda for one commission. The benefit in combining the Commissions may be to streamline the process.

## **Lincoln Avenue & Fair Oaks Avenue Project Area Committees**

### **Preliminary Review**

Project Area Committees were not given preliminary review by the Council.

### **Committee Review**

The Chair of the Lincoln Avenue Project Area Committee attended the Business Enterprise Committee meeting on December 6, 2000, and voiced agreement with the issues presented in the single response to the questionnaire. Following discussion on how the Lincoln Avenue PAC operates, its by-laws, and difficulty of meeting, the Chair suggested there be a thorough discussion with staff before addressing this issue.

At the following meeting, on January 3, 2001, the Business Enterprise Committee held a general discussion on the role of the PACs. The chairs of both PACs were in attendance. Staff summarized the law regarding PACs and reported that the required three-year term for each of the committees has expired, leading the Council to decide if the committees are to continue. However, continuation of the Lincoln Project Area Committee is a requirement of the Lincoln Redevelopment Plan. The Plan would need to be amended if the PAC were to be sunset. Following discussion, it was noted the PAC committees would be reviewing their by-laws and addressing some outstanding issues such as effectiveness, streamlining, and membership. The BEC requested that the PACs return for further discussion once this process was complete.

### **Questionnaire Results**

#### ***Lincoln Avenue***

One member of the PAC responded to the questionnaire:

- The PAC is insufficiently staffed, has no direction, and has very poor communication with the Council;
- The PAC has ceased to function “due to the realization that we are powerless to perform the role we are supposed to play . . . with the support of City Council and City staff, we have been left to fade away.”

#### ***Fair Oaks Avenue***

None of the ten members of the PAC responded to the questionnaire.

### **Alternatives**

Currently two of the five redevelopment projects in Northwest Pasadena have Project Area Committees. The staff is analyzing the merger of the five project areas. If the merger is approved, creating one project area committee for the five project areas would be recommended.