

Agenda Report

DATE: January 11, 1998

JOINTLY TO: PASADENA CITY COUNCIL &
THE PASADENA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD

FROM: CYNTHIA J. KURTZ, CITY MANAGER
VERA J. VIGNES, SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT

SUBJECT: SCHOOL DISTRICT GOVERNANCE ISSUES

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council and Unified School District Board:

- 1) Review the history of discussion and action concerning governance of the Pasadena Unified School District and reach a joint agreement on whether there is a need for a new task force;
- 2) If there is agreement to move forward, jointly define the charge of the task force, and;
- 3) Reach agreement on the membership of the task force.

BACKGROUND:

Over the past year, City Council has emphasized their interest in providing stronger support to the schools and building cooperative efforts between the School Board and City Council. In this interest, the City Council has held discussions and taken actions they believe to be a foundation for joint action in the future. The purpose of this report is to outline the current context of governance, including City Council actions and current issues, for joint review by City Council and the School Board and to prepare a basis for further action.

City Council Actions

Noting that school board elections are governed by the Pasadena Charter, City Council introduced the concept of a task force to look at governance issues in September, 1997. At that time, the Council had recently formed the 21-member Charter Reform Task Force that included members with background in the field of education. It was proposed that this task force review the possibility of district board elections as an approach to create greater inclusion and involvement from individual neighborhoods throughout the community.

Following discussion, it was determined that it would be constructive to evaluate the current system and have the Task Force return with recommendations.

The recommendations of the Task Force were presented to City Council on July 6, 1998. Regarding the Board of Education, the Task Force recommended that:

- a) the method of election for Board of Education members be changed to a proportional representation system, and;
- b) the City Council form a new task force to study and make a recommendation on a specific method of voting under a proportional representation system, and;
- c) that based on upon the new task force's recommendations, Charter language would then be drafted and presented for a vote of the people on the specific method of voting under a proportional representation system, and provide for the election of all five School Board seats simultaneously. This Charter amendment proposal should go before a vote of the people no later than the year 2000 and, if approved, the new voting method would be used for the next municipal election in the year 2001.

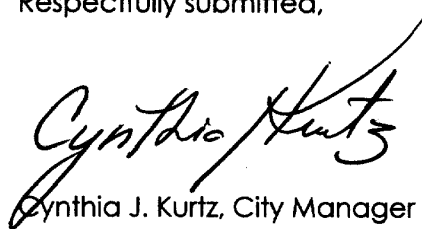
During public comment, it was noted that proportional representation is somewhat controversial and deserved further study by a new task force. It was also suggested that the new task force be given the latitude to look at a number of ways to increase interest in board elections, including district representation (vs. at-large representation). After further discussion, City Council took action to move forward with a new task force.

In a resolution that stated, "Whereas, there is widespread community concern about the quality and governance of our schools; and, whereas, this Council and other members in the community believe that addressing governance issues may be part of the solution to the problems besetting our schools," it was moved that the new Task Force be formed "in conjunction with the Pasadena Board of Education, the City Council of Sierra Madre and Supervisor Michael Antonovich, and that the Task Force be directed to review the governance of the Pasadena Board of Education and recommend to the City Council the best method of electing a Board of Education that is more accountable and more responsive to the electorate."

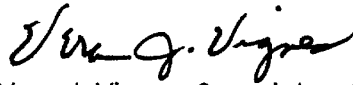
Issues

Task Force makeup and membership have not yet been determined and a specific agenda has not been set. In addition to the evaluation of the current general election system vs. proportional representation or district election, it has also been suggested that the Task Force review the possibility of compensation for board members. Other issues related to governance may be appropriate for Task Force review. The City Council anticipates further defining the Task Force through joint discussion with the School Board.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cynthia Kurtz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Cynthia J. Kurtz, City Manager

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vera J. Vignes". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a prominent initial "V".

Vera J. Vignes, Superintendent of Schools