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## **Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation**

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**PRESENTATION BY**  
**Tom Mauk, City Manager, City of Whittier**  
**V.P. West Coast Region, Intl. City/County Managers Association**  
**Topic: Management of City Government**  
**June 10, 1998**

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Chairman Abel welcomed Mr. Mauk to the Commission. Mr. Mauk thanked the Commission for the invitation to speak. To illustrate the difficulties of reforming government, he told a story by George Carvello from Santa Clarita.

A young man was walking along a beach which was covered with starfish. As he walked, he would pick up starfish and throw them back in the water. An older man seeing what is happening, approaches the young man, and asks him why he was attempting this impossible task. "It doesn't make any difference. Obviously, there is no way to throw all the starfish back in the water as the surf deposits multitudes more for every few you toss into the sea." The young man thinks about this, bends down, picks up another starfish, throws it back in the water and says to the old man, "It made a difference to that one."

Mr. Mauk stated that, in Whittier, they believe that it does not make any sense to attack "this policy" or "that program" without having established an overall vision. This vision empowers the staff. The issue of reinventing government has focused on the fact that there is too much government in California. Mr. Mauk believes this to be true, but in spite of the efforts of many talented people nothing has happened. The reason is that the status quo forces are exceptionally huge, as evidenced by the failure of the California Constitution Revision Commission. To make a difference people must subscribe to the philosophy that broad reform is out and local reform is in.

### **The Issues**

Traditional institutions are becoming irrelevant. Both the environment and industry are changing rapidly around us.

1. Power around us is changing from politics to economics.
2. Quickness is in. Slowness is out. The bureaucracy and pyramid organizations are suffering.
3. Bottom-up decision making is in. Top-down decision making is out.
4. Neighborhoods are in. Bureaucracy is out. An example is GreenLeaf Park in Whittier designed by the city to improve the neighborhood. The neighborhood did not want parking spaces for their park, despite a code that required parking. They felt that people from outside the neighborhood would come to use the park. They are now building the park

- without parking.  
5. Smallness is in. Bigness is out.

### **Creating a culture.**

1. Leadership must equal vision and ideas.
2. Bias for action.
3. Trust - teamwork.
4. No punishments for taking risks. Rewards for success.

These are all philosophical views held by Whittier with regard to creating a responsive government. As a result of creating such an environment Whittier has been able to do the following projects.

### **Projects**

#### **Santa Fe Springs Policing Contract.**

Two requirements: 1) The City of Santa Fe Springs would have to save \$500,000 per year, and 2) Whittier would have to earn a profit of \$500,000 per year. The status quo tried to defeat this project. The courage of the elected officials ensured that it was implemented, but not before the council had staff examine a worse case scenario. They found Whittier would still make a profit of \$300,000 per year. This took courage from the elected officials and confidence in the staff.

Now Whittier has a million dollar fund balance from that contract. Additionally, the crime in Santa Fe Springs has gone down 42% in three years. This is an actual decrease in crime due to a service that is small, quick, and local.

This contract was not driven by cost savings, but by customer service requirements. Santa Fe Springs had too much deputy turnover, out of control liability exposure, and they needed a quicker response time. This was not the fault of the Sheriff. It was an issue of big versus small.

There was a huge effort to defeat this project from the management of the Sheriff's Department and the union. The 60's management model of top-down management and union power needs to be removed from the management of cities.

#### **Whittier Hills Open Space Acquisition.**

A small contingent of Whittier citizens wanted to preserve open space in the Hills but lacked necessary funds to buy land.

A Council person formulated a simple idea to initiate a \$1.00/ton mitigation fee at Puente Hills Landfill. Over three years these fees provided three million dollars to buy land and expand Preserve space. This created the impetus for further funding from the County of Los Angeles to help save additional green space in the Puente Hills.

This "generational project" exemplifies what can be done when an idea is brought to fruition through the courage and vision of City and County elected officials.

#### **1987 Earthquake Recovery.**

Today Whittier is a better community, than it was ten years ago, by having gone through the 1987 earthquake. They generated a new masterplan for the entire community and a new specific plan for the downtown business district as a direct result of the '87 earthquake. The city has a new historical focus and a redevelopment project area that is producing a million dollars per year to work on the problems created by the earthquake.

Much of this renewal came out of this "small creative quickness," spoken about earlier, as traits that lead to successful projects.

Two days after the earthquakes, amid clean up and disaster relief, Whittier held a staff meeting in City Hall and only permitted discussion of the positive aspects or opportunities that the earthquake could afford the community, such as extra money from HUD. The disaster relief model that is available today was based on the Whittier '87 model.

Additional Smaller Whittier Initiatives.

Provision of lifeguard services for County pools adjacent to Whittier and Santa Fe Springs.

Dial-a-ride services for La Habra Heights.

Santa Fe Springs now contracts traffic signal services for the region and is successfully competing with the County of Los Angeles due to the smallness of the operation and quicker response time.

Brea provides not only profitable police services for Yorba Linda, but recreational services in Diamond Bar and is now entering the computer consulting business.

**The Message**

The City is beginning to "get it." It is making cultural and organizational changes that are allowing things to get done that the 60's management model once impeded.

Whittier specifically promotes a bias for change. Successful staffers are those who suggest new ways of doing things. Satisfaction with the status quo is not rewarded. Whittier determines its priorities wisely and promotes a culture of making things happen.

If the City does not begin to understand the changes coming about at other levels of government, it runs the risk of becoming increasingly irrelevant as a community and Whittier has too good of a system to become irrelevant.

Whittier proposes to change with what is around it slowly (the starfish analogy) and it can help motivate other communities through its courage, commitment and vision.