

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
CITIZENS ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY COMMISSION**

ROOM 139, HALL OF ADMINISTRATION / 500 WEST TEMPLE / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012 / 974-1491

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September 25, 1974

Honorable Board of Supervisors
Los Angeles County
383, Hall of Administration
Los Angeles, California 90012

Gentlemen:

SUBJECT: OPERATION OF THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

In May 1973, the Board of Supervisors requested the Economy and Efficiency Commission to conduct a study of seven commissions where the commission itself operates as the head of the department and appoints the chief executive.

We submitted our first task force report on March 19 supporting the Board's proposal to transfer the authority to appoint the Director of Planning from the Regional Planning Commission to the Board of Supervisors, and you unanimously approved it.

On June 18, 1974, the task force submitted to the Board a second report regarding the appointing authority and operating responsibility of the Arboreta and Botanic Gardens and the Otis Art Institute. Again the Board approved our recommendations.

This is the third report of the task force assigned to study the department head commissions. The task force consists of (Mrs.) Mary Jane Kidd, Chairman; Dr. Robert J. Downey, (Mrs.) Catherine Graeffe Burke, Joseph A. Lederman, William J. Moreland, and Earl J. Sachs.

I. OPERATION OF THE MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

The Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History was founded in 1910. It is a people's Museum owned by the County which pays the salaries of the 170 member staff and maintains the property, including three hundred fifty thousand square feet of floor space displaying scientific and historical objects valued at millions of dollars.

Under the present ordinance, management and control of the Museum is assigned to a board of 15 governors, who are appointed by the Board of Supervisors for four-year terms. The full board officially meets four times a year; special committees of the board, however, meet every month. In addition, an executive committee of seven members has power to act when necessary between meetings of the Board of Governors.

The Board of Governors appoints a Director of the Museum of Natural History following specialized examination procedures which the County Charter prescribes for "a position requiring peculiar and exceptional qualifications of a scientific, professional or expert character." Subject to the general supervision of the Board, the Director administers the day-to-day activities of the department.

The Museum of Natural History is the largest museum of its kind in the west. Its mission is to bring the world of natural history and of man to the community. The Museum collection contains more than seven million specimens, including exceptional collections of minerals, insects, marine animals, birds, the world's largest collection of Ice Age fossils, and objects related to the history of Los Angeles and the southwest. A substantial portion of these collections belongs to "The Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History Foundation," a non-profit, charitable organization which provides the principal private funding support to the Museum. In conjunction with its collections, the Museum conducts an intensive research program. Its scientific staff includes 22 specialists with PH.D.'s who are involved in nearly 80 research projects. Many of these projects are funded through government and private grants to the Museum Foundation.

The Museum also operates the La Brea Tar Pits in Hancock Park on Wilshire Boulevard, the world's richest source of Ice Age fossils.

Through its education division the Museum conducts a wide-ranging teaching program. More than 110,000 school children receive classroom-related tours of the Museum each year. Classes are conducted by a faculty of 180 volunteer docents. In addition, professional teachers from the Museum staff conduct special workshops and seminars throughout the year. Museum exhibits also go out to thousands of classrooms through the educational lending service.

All non-County and private activities are conducted through the Museum Foundation. The Foundation is a "public charity" as defined by the IRS Act of 1969.

The Foundation, led by a board of 35 trustees, serves as a conduit for private contributions of materials, monies and government or private grants. It receives gifts suitable for Museum collections and loans them for an indefinite period to the Museum. In addition, through the efforts of the Foundation, the Museum has been able to conduct studies, research and field exploration throughout the world to provide and accumulate material for the serious production of new knowledge.

Most recently the Foundation has served as the major fund-raising agency to support expansion of the Museum construction program. Currently this group has raised more than \$2 million towards the construction of a museum building to be located at the Rancho La Brea Tar Pits on Wilshire Boulevard. It has also pledged to raise approximately \$3.5 million, the bulk of which has already been raised, for exhibit installation and furnishings for a new addition to the existing Museum.

Another important activity which operates within the framework of the Foundation is the Museum Alliance. The Alliance is administered by its

own Board of Directors and operates with a considerable amount of autonomy. It has over 8,000 members of all ages who contribute dues ranging from \$12.50 to \$100 annually and \$500 for a life membership. Volunteers and docents of the Alliance contribute thousands of hours each year to bring the activities of the Museum to the citizens of Los Angeles.

II. TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The ordinance governing the operation of the Museum of Natural History (Ordinance Number 4099, Article XIII) should be amended to make the following changes.

RECOMMENDATION 1.

Continue the present authority of the Board of Governors to appoint or to discharge the Director of the Museum but to require additionally that the appointment or discharge must be approved by the Board of Supervisors.

The present ordinance now states, "Pursuant to the civil service provisions of the County Charter said Board of Governors shall appoint and supervise a Director of History and Science, which office is hereby created." The task force recommends the continuance of this procedure with the additional provision that the appointment by the Board of Governors should be subject to ratification by the Board of Supervisors.

The Board of Governors of the Museum operates in a similar capacity to the Board of Governors of the Otis Art Institute. Traditionally throughout the country such institutions are operated under the governance of a lay board whose members have demonstrated an interest and willingness to devote their time, as well as their own personal resources, to the furtherance of museum programs. That the present and past Boards of Governors have demonstrated such interest and willingness is well documented by the success of the Museum's programs, by the immense private support which the Museum has attracted, and by the reputation which the Museum has

established as one of the finest institutions of its kind in the world. The task force believes, therefore, that this very successful record of operation should not be disturbed by any major change in the basic appointing authority and method of operation of the Board of Governors.

We believe the Board is in the position to be most familiar with the specialized qualifications which are required for the position of Director. In addition, through their Museum activities and interests some members of the Board should be well acquainted with the reputation of potential candidates in museums or academic institutions throughout the country--or, indeed, the world--who would best meet these qualifications. We believe that the Board of Governors should continue to play the major role in the appointment process of the Director. Therefore, we recommend that when the position of Director becomes open the Board of Governors should be assigned responsibility for searching out qualified candidates throughout the country or elsewhere. Then, following civil service procedures, the Board should determine which candidate to recommend for final approval by the Board of Supervisors.

We recommend the additional provision for approval by the Board of Supervisors for the following reasons.

The Board of Supervisors is responsible directly to the people for the operation of the Museum and for the establishment of appropriate management and budgetary policies applicable to its operation. The Board of Governors and the Director in turn are responsible for establishing policies and programs compatible with the Board's general direction. The Director, in particular, is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of 170 County employees, the administration of a \$2.3 million annual budget, and the management and safeguarding of collections and exhibits worth many millions of dollars. If, then, the Board of Supervisors is to be held finally

accountable for the effective management of the Museum, it appropriately

should participate in the appointment process of the Director. That the present ordinance does not provide for this participation is a deficiency which the task force believes should be corrected.

The present ordinance is silent on the authority of the Board of Governors to discharge the Director. However, under present provisions of the County Charter, appointing authority also carries with it a similar authority to discharge. The latter action is subject to review by the Civil Service Commission in a public hearing, if the employee requests it.

Therefore, as in the appointment process, we recommend that a discharge action by the Board of Governors also should be subject to approval by the Board of Supervisors, with the Director having the right to appeal the decision to the Civil Service Commission under current civil service procedures.

The task force believes that this procedure takes advantage of the talents, knowledge and interest of the Board of Governors in the appointment process and at the same time appropriately assigns final approval authority to the Board of Supervisors acting in its capacity as the chief executive of Los Angeles County responsible directly to the people.

Redefine and clarify the responsibilities of the Board of Governors and the Director and their relationship to each other and to the Board of Supervisors.

The present ordinance states, "Subject to the supervision of the Board of Supervisors, the Department of the Museum of Natural History shall be under the management and control of a Board of Governors, which Board is hereby created."

The words "management" and "control" in standard organizational terminology means the day-to-day administration, direction and control of an organization. These duties, the task force believes, can only be performed by the Director. The Board of Governors--however often its Executive or other Board committees may meet between the quarterly meetings of the Board--is in no position to provide this type of day-to-day supervision of the department.

The responsibility of the Board rather should be in conjunction with the Director to establish the basic operating policies of the Museum, determine Museum goals and programs, and provide general governance and review of the Museum's operations under the management of the Director.

Under this concept the Board of Supervisors delegates general governance of the Museum to the Board of Governors as appointees and representatives of the Board of Supervisors. The Director, in turn, is responsible to both the Board of Governors and the Board of Supervisors for the effective operation of the Museum under the policies laid down by both Boards. Thus, while the Board of Governors provides general supervision of the Director, it is important to recognize that on any given subject or problem the Director must have direct access to the Board of Supervisors. While it should be his responsibility on these occasions to keep the Board of Governors informed, it must be realized that if a serious problem occurs in

the operation of the Museum, it is the Director who will be called on the carpet by the Board of Supervisors, not the Board of Governors. Therefore, the Director's right, and in fact responsibility, to communicate directly with the Board of Supervisors must be fully recognized.

In accordance with this basic philosophy, the task force recommends that the present ordinance be changed to specify clearly the respective duties and relationship of the Board of Governors and the Museum Director. As the governing board representing the Board of Supervisors, the Board of Governors should perform the following duties:

1. Under the general supervision of the Board of Supervisors develop and establish Museum policies in conjunction with the Director, determine Museum goals and programs, and provide general governance and review of Museum operations under the management of the Director.
2. Serve as advisors to the Board of Supervisors with respect to all facets of Museum operation including, in particular, future goals and programs.
3. In conjunction with the Director promote the image to the public of the Museum and its cultural and educational activities.
4. Contribute regionally, nationally or internationally to coordinated efforts from which the Museum may eventually be a direct or indirect beneficiary.
5. When the position of Museum Director becomes open, search out qualified candidates for the position and, following appropriate civil service procedures, determine the candidate to be appointed, subject to approval by the Board of Supervisors.
6. If proper cause is shown, discharge the Director, subject to applicable civil service procedures and to approval of the Board of Supervisors.

As the executive directly in charge of Museum operations, the Director should be assigned the following major duties:

1. Under the general direction of the Board of Governors develop and administer the operation of an integrated Museum program that includes all County, private, contractual, grant-supported or other activity that is part of, or impinges on, the Museum of Natural History.
2. Inform the Board of Governors, the Board of Trustees of the Museum Foundation, the Board of Supervisors, and the Chief Administrative Officer on the status of, or significant changes in, Museum programs and of opportunities and problems of concern in Museum management.
3. Prepare a proposed annual budget for the Museum, with the review and concurrence of the Board of Governors, for submittal to the Chief Administrative Officer for review and final submittal to the Board of Supervisors.
4. Maintain a current analysis of all revenues and expenditures of the Museum. This responsibility includes a periodic review and free and continuous access to the operating statements of the non-profit supporting organizations to enable the Director to coordinate their fiscal and operational programs with the overall operation of the Museum.
5. Request a financial audit of the supporting organizations at least once a year to verify conformity to accepted accounting principles concerning the collection, maintenance, and disbursement of funds. At the request of the supporting organization, this audit may be conducted either by the County Auditor-Controller or a private firm.
6. Promote a positive image to the public of the Museum and its cultural and educational efforts.
7. In conjunction with the Board of Governors and the supporting organizations maintain a program of investigating possible sources of non-County Museum support--be it financial, in-kind, or in time--and coordinate the activities involved in such a program.
8. Contribute regionally, nationally, or internationally to coordinated efforts from which the Museum may eventually be a direct or indirect beneficiary.

RECOMMENDATION 3.

*Clarify qualifications for membership
on the Board of Governors.*

As stated in our previous reports on department head boards and commissions, rigid qualifications for board members are difficult to develop. However, to provide the necessary expertise and interest to the Museum in its effort to bring the world of natural history and of man to the community, it is necessary that members of the Board of Governors have the time, interest, ability, and willingness to support the department, Director, and the Board of Supervisors. Equally important, members should recognize the need to establish a close ongoing relationship with the Board of Supervisors in order to serve effectively as advisors to the Board of Supervisors on Museum matters.

We also recommend that the principal officers of the Board of Governors not serve concurrently as the principal officer of another board of the supporting organizations of this Museum.

While the Board of Governors and the boards of the supporting organizations share a desire to help the Museum, such participation will differ among the three boards. The Governors will be responsive to broad community goals and the wishes of the Board of Supervisors. The other boards or committees will have the primary responsibility for volunteer work, for gift and fund-raising and similar private programs. That the memberships be broadly overlapping would be normal, and should not be inhibited. Yet a degree of autonomy is essential if the primary difference in objective will continue to be recognized. There are also issues regarding Museum goals and programs that should be addressed separately. Such independent analysis of individual issues by the boards would be difficult if the officers were largely overlapping.

Very truly yours,
MRS. RAY KIDD, Chairman Task Force on
Department Head Commissions