

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

ROOM 139, HALL OF ADMINISTRATION/500 WEST TEMPLE/LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012/625-3611, Ext. 64605

M I N U T E S

FULL COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE: Wednesday, November 12, 1969
TIME: 2:00 p.m.
PLACE: Hall of Administration, Room 739

Robert Mitchell,
Chairman

Raymond Arbuthnot
Dr. John C. Bollens
Davis Brabant
John D. Byork
Maurice Rene Chez
Roc Cutri
Dr. Warren S. Jones
Mrs. Ray Kidd
Harlan G. Loud
P. S. Magruder
Kiyoshi Maruyama
Irvin Mazzei
L. E. McKee
Ferdinand Mendenhall
Louis Rogers
George Shellenberger
Mrs. Benjamin Erick Smith
William Torrence
Gus A. Walker
Burke Roche,
Executive Secretary

Members Present:

Robert Mitchell, Chairman
Dr. John C. Bollens
Davis Brabant
Maurice Rene Chez
Roc Cutri
Mrs. Ray Kidd
P. S. Magruder
L. E. McKee
Kiyoshi Maruyama
George Shellenberger
William Torrence

Members Absent:

Raymond Arbuthnot
John D. Byork
Dr. Warren S. Jones
Harlan Loud
Irvin Mazzei
Louis Rogers
Mrs. Benjamin Erick Smith
Gus Walker

GUEST SPEAKERS - Mr. John Spellman, County Executive of King County, Washington, and Richard R. Albrecht, Chairman of the Board of Freeholders, King County, Washington.

Mr. Mitchell called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. He introduced the committee members to Mr. Albrecht and Mr. Spellman. He then asked Dr. Bollens, Chairman of the Charter Study Task Force, to introduce the guest speakers.

Dr. Bollens said that Mr. Albrecht would speak first. Mr. Albrecht is an attorney in a prominent Seattle law firm. He has been active in civic affairs in Seattle and King County for a number of years. He served as Chairman of the Local Government Committee of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. He was a recipient of the Outstanding Citizen Award in 1968-69; and most important for the committee's purpose, he was the Chairman of the Board of Freeholders that drew up the new county charter of King County.

Dr. Bollens said Mr. Spellman would speak after Mr. Albrecht. Mr. Spellman is also a lawyer. Formerly he was Chairman of the Seattle City Civil Service Commission, and Chairman of the King County Library Board. In 1967 he was elected to the Board of County Commissioners in King County where he served until May of 1969, when he assumed the duties as the first elected County Chief Executive of King County. In the general election he defeated the former Democratic Governor of Washington, Albert Rosellini.

Mr. Albrecht began his remarks with a brief description of King County. It covers an area of around 2,500 square miles. The total population is about one and a quarter million--almost half of whom live in the City of Seattle.

E & E COMMITTEE MINUTES

November 12, 1969

Page 2

Since territorial days, the County had been governed by a board of three commissioners nominated by district but elected at large. There were also a number of independently elected department heads including the sheriff, coroner, clerk, auditor and treasurer. In 1952, a proposed new charter prepared by a board of freeholders was defeated by a two to one margin. In 1967, a new board of fifteen freeholders was elected to draft a new charter.

It early became clear that the most serious deficiency in the government was the lack of centralized executive authority and leadership. When department heads needed a decision, they had to go to the three commissioners and give each of them the same information. They then had to make sure that two of the three commissioners agreed on what had to be done. Most department heads complained about the resulting delay in getting a decision. The board also uncovered problems which had been avoided because of the divided responsibility among the commissioners. Although the idea of an appointed county manager appealed to the board members, they sensed from their public discussions that the people wanted to elect the chief executive because he would be given a great deal of power. The board also concluded that the people needed more representation. They therefore proposed a County Council of nine councilmen elected by districts of equal population.

The new charter required the elected chief executive to appoint a chief administrative officer with the approval of the County Council. The CAO is a professional administrator who acts as the chief of staff to the county executive. The County executive also has the power to veto ordinances passed by the County Council.

Mr. Albrecht concluded that the elected executive, assisted by a CAO, was in effect a compromise between the county manager form--which does not really have checks and balances traditional at the state and federal level--and the old political form consisting of a strong mayor with no requirement for professional administration. Mr. Albrecht then asked Mr. Spellman to give his views on how the new charter is working.

Mr. Spellman said that, in the six months the new charter has been in effect, the County has had its share of crises. He said, however, that these crises are a result of exercising leadership. Two and a half years ago when he was elected as County Commissioner, the County had no leadership and was floundering as many American counties are floundering. He said the Board of Commissioners, as is true with most boards of commissioners, was very adept at discussing problems in public meetings; but it lacked the ability to carry out its decisions. Because there was no appreciable day-to-day administration, the County departments had become semi-autonomous. In some cases strong department heads operated quite well. In other cases the lack of any central policy and the lack of any administrative checks resulted in very weak departments. As a consequence there had been a number of scandals.

E & E COMMITTEE MINUTES

November 12, 1969

Page 3

In an attempt to correct these problems the Board of Commissioners appointed a chief administrative officer who acted as a deputy of the Board. However, because the elected officials had personal relationships with the various departments and because the chief administrative officer had no separate, clear sphere of authority of his own he could not control the departments.

Mr. Spellman then spoke at some length on the advantages of an elected chief executive officer. He said that, although the County executive and the County Council are partisan offices, he does not feel that at the local level there is much difference between the partisan and the non-partisan types of government. Generally, the larger the county, the more apt it is to have an elected chief executive. He would further conclude that the people feel they can identify better with an elected official when they concentrate a great deal of power into his hands. Finally, the County has a more articulate voice speaking for it in its relations with federal, state and city governments.

Mr. Spellman said that the people are better represented by having nine councilmen elected by districts than having three County commissioners. They take a great deal of load off the County executive because the people in a given area go to the councilman with their complaints. The Council is a policy making board. It drafts ordinances; it sets policy; it approves the budget; it approves appointments by the executive. By the terms of the charter, however, it can not interfere in administration. It can not give orders to department heads or employees of any department.

Mr. Spellman concluded by giving examples of a number of actions he has taken on problems that had been pending for many years under the commission form of government. This, he said, is the major virtue of having a single chief executive.

Dr. Bollens then asked for questions from the committee members.

In answer to a question from Mr. Cutri, Mr. Spellman explained that King County has a personnel system which is not exactly a civil service system. All the employees below the department head and his chief deputy are selected and promoted either by written or oral examination. Mr. Spellman said there is a problem in giving some type of tenure or insurance to department heads since they are exempt from civil service protection.

Dr. Bollens asked Mr. Spellman if the elected chief executive officer system can function as successfully under a non-partisan election process as under a partisan one. Mr. Spellman replied that there was no question that he could operate successfully on either a non-partisan or partisan basis. He thought, however, that an appointed county manager probably could not survive a partisan system.

E & E COMMITTEE MINUTES

November 12, 1969

Page 4

Mr. Chez asked Mr. Albrecht what the CAO does. Mr. Albrecht replied that he acts as the chief of staff to the County executive. He runs the personnel office, the data processing office, purchasing, property management, building maintenance, and other functions that are not really politically sensitive and do not deal with the public directly.

In answer to a question from Mr. Brabant, Mr. Spellman explained that his veto can be overridden by a six to three vote of the Council. Mr. Spellman also explained that, besides appointing department heads and the chief administrative officer, he appoints the members of all boards and commissions. In the last six months he has eliminated half of the 52 boards and commissions. The County executive also initiates legislation. Most of the important legislation the Council has passed came through his office.

Mr. Roche asked how much time Mr. Spellman devoted to working with the State Legislature? Mr. Spellman said that he and his staff spend a good deal of time working with the Legislature when it is in session. He added that the three largest counties and the four largest cities in the State had formed an "Urban Coalition" to work toward legislation mutually beneficial to their governments.

Dr. Bollens asked Mr. Albrecht what he felt were the important factors that contributed to the success of the charter reform effort. Mr. Albrecht replied that a certain amount of credit should be given to the fact that the Board conducted all of its deliberations in public, and that the subject was reasonably well covered by the news media. He said that at the start there was some dissension among the freeholders because some had very strong convictions initially about what the charter should and should not contain. He said the Board spent the first six months breaking down those preconceived ideas by listening to people from other parts of the country and by listening to people from the County administration itself.

Mr. Magruder asked Mr. Spellman if he had determined as yet any specific economies which have resulted from the new charter. Mr. Spellman said that, although the opposition said the new government would cost more, it has been costing slightly less per month than the predecessor government. He has frozen hiring because he is able to take the employees and the dollars and move them around among departments to get the best results.

Mr. Mitchell thanked Mr. Albrecht and Mr. Spellman for their remarks. He said he wanted again to remind the committee members that the committee has other speakers to hear from and that it is not yet ready for conclusions.

He said the next meeting of the committee would be on Monday, November 24, 1969, 9:30 a.m. Loren Enoch, County Executive of Ventura County, will be the guest speaker.

Mr. Mitchell adjourned the meeting at 4:15 p.m.