

2/18/2021

Charter Review Committee
Attn: Mayor authority subcommittee

I was a member of the last Charter Review Commission and was in support of giving the voters the opportunity to decide if they wanted the Mayor to be able to vote as a member of the City Council and remove the veto power.

I am writing to tell you why I was, and continue to be in favor of having a Mayor who votes as a member of the council. My reason for this is that voting makes the Mayor accountable to the voters rather than sitting on the sidelines as a cheerleader.

The veto power of the Mayor is essentially a paper tiger. It has only been used twice in the last 30 years. Once by Mayor Frizzle and once by Mayor Bailey. All the Mayor Bailey veto did was result in 2 lawsuits that cost the city taxpayers about \$1 million, clarified the authority of the Mayor to veto employment contracts, and the subject of the veto got to keep the excessive benefits that were the reason for the veto.

The Mayor should be an active participant in the legislative process, particularly the budget. The current arrangement takes the Mayor off the hook for any legislative decisions by the city council. The Mayor's authority to veto council actions is only a delaying action, and the council can override the veto with 5 affirmative votes. Even in the Bailey veto case, the council chose to not vote to override the veto. instead, it went to court as noted above.

Under the current structure, making the Mayor a part of the city council results in the potential for 4-4 tie votes. This would essentially be the same as a No since there would not be a majority voting either Yes or No. As you will see in the reference material on this item from the last Charter Review Commission, a letter from the Mayor of Pasadena describes how this has not been a problem in that city which has 8 council members including the Mayor.

Another solution to eliminate the potential tie votes is to eliminate the Mayor as a separate position. Instead, there would be 7 Ward Councilmembers. Thus, a council member would act as Mayor on a rotating basis. This is done by a majority of cities in Calif. This is also how the Board of Supervisors functions, i.e., each year one of the 5 Supervisors is chosen by the majority of the Supervisors to be the Chair.

This option would also save the Riverside taxpayers in excess of \$500,000/yr., by eliminating the cost of the Mayor and at least 3 staff members. The council member elected each year by the city council might need a little more administrative help, but would only need one staff member like the current council members do. Many of the functions that currently exist in the Mayor's office could/should be done by city staff reporting to the City Manager.

Bottom Line - I believe the Mayor should vote as a member of the City Council and be more accountable to voters. and not be able to veto anything. I believe this irrespective of whether there are seven Ward Council members plus a Mayor elected at large, seven Ward Council members in total with one designated each year as Mayor, or eight Ward Council members plus an at large Mayor (not recommended due to the significant increase in cost).

Thank you for your time analyzing this important issue.

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