

M O T I O N

The current version of the Los Angeles City Charter was developed in the late 1990's through the combined efforts of two charter reform commissions that conducted an extensive review and analysis of every section of the prior charter. That charter reform process was the outgrowth of widespread dissatisfaction with the responsiveness of municipal government at the time, which was most dramatically evidenced by a secession movement in the San Fernando Valley that nearly succeeded.

Twenty-three years after that overhauled charter went into effect, the City faces new challenges that could not have been foreseen then, as well as new opportunities for progress, improved services, greater accountability and more responsiveness. The delivery of core city services has been severely challenged in recent years by overlapping crises of homelessness, housing unaffordability, a global pandemic, economic strain, climate change urgency and threats to public safety, among other things. At the same time, City government has been rocked by the unethical conduct of some city leaders that has caused a crisis of trust and confidence.

In light of these circumstances, many parts of the Charter have come into question in recent years, including those involving the City's land use process, role of the Ethics Commission, delivery of City services, vacancies in City elected offices, censure and suspension, and others. The City's Charter is in need of both minor revisions in the short term and a major overhaul in the long term. It is important for the City Council to engage with the public to start this work now.

In addition to addressing the issues of the current Charter, the City should also create a process for a periodic review of the Charter. The process to update the City Charter in the late 1990s was chaotic due to the lack of a predefined process. To draft a new Charter, two different commissions were created, one elected by the voters and the other appointed by the City Council. It was initially unclear which commission had what authority. The dueling commissions later came together to present a unified set of Charter reform changes to the voters, but the process to arrive at a unified set of reforms was unnecessarily confusing, disorderly and acrimonious.

To ensure that future Charter updates are more orderly, the City Council should establish a process for periodic review of the City Charter. Periodic charter review commissions can address governance issues by gradually proposing amendments with a regular cadence, rather than the current process of completely overhauling the Charter. In 2007, Portland, Oregon voters adopted a regular Charter Review Commission and starting in 2010, it has referred nine amendments to the ballot, all of which were overwhelmingly adopted by voters. A similar process for Los Angeles is worthy of consideration.

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WE THEREFORE MOVE that the Chief Legislative Analyst, with assistance from the City Attorney and City Clerk, be directed to report with best practices for a Charter reform process and options to create a commission to evaluate and provide recommendations on Charter reform for the 2024 or 2026 ballots.

WE FURTHER MOVE that the City Attorney, CLA, CAO, Ethics Commission and the Planning Department each be requested to report back with separate recommendations for identifying and prioritizing sections in the Charter that would benefit from reform to modernize the City's organizational infrastructure and/or support more strategic citywide policies.

WE FURTHER MOVE that the CLA seek input from Council Offices and other City stakeholders regarding Charter reform and include in the aforementioned report these concerns and/or recommendations.

WE FURTHER MOVE that the Chief Legislative Analyst, with assistance from the City Attorney and City Clerk, be directed to report with options for creating a process for periodic review of the City Charter.

PRESENTED BY: Paul Krekorian
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PRESENTED BY: Marqueece Harris-Dawson
MARQUEECE HARRIS-DAWSON
Councilmember, 8th District

SECONDED BY: Tom Wilson

ORIGINAL