

Area Commission/Civic Association Work Group

Comments and Suggestions for Topic Areas Updated 6 August 2007

Status of Non-Residents

Recommendation: "The City should allow each individual area commission to define its own residency requirements subject to the requirements of City Code Section 3109."

Staffing and Financial Support

- Time delay between end of year and receipt of next year's check is excessive.
- Can there be electronic transfer/handling of funds between city and area commissions?
- Can unspent funds be carried forward? If accumulation is not allowed, can they be carried forward and deducted from the following year rather than requiring refund of unspent balance?
- There are too many restrictions on how funds can be used.
- Perhaps change distribution of funds to different area commissions based on inequity in local resources.
- Amount of funding is too low.
- Finance-related paperwork should be streamlined.
- Can the city establish websites for area commissions where content can be updated locally?
- Can the city provide storage for area commission records and permanent archives? How could this be handled?
- Request that city interns w/ACs have website experience.
- City should provide dedicated staff for AC (and CA?) website creation and maintenance.
- Beef up the Neighborhood Liaison program – it works well.

Training and Education

- City should reinstitute a training academy for commissioners, particularly officers and new members.
- City should go to commissions for new commissioner training after an area's elections.
- Provide mandatory training on meeting management and the role of commissions, as well as discretionary training for personal development or enrichment.
- Provide training on basic topics at least twice per year.
- City staff should receive training on the role of AC/CAs during their orientation if their job involves regular or required contact with AC/CAs.

Status of Community Councils and Civic Associations

- Distinction is necessary between CAs and ACs: Treatment should be same regarding input on city actions, but different in terms of receiving resources from city.
- Provide basic guidelines on how CAs operate.
- Perhaps some resources should be provided to CAs for "AC-type" functions.
- May need to provide distinct status to "coalitions" as opposed to "civic associations."
- Larger CAs should be considered for training and resources that assist in zoning and similar government-type functions, but not monetary support.
- There should be a "one-stop" contact point at the city for a resident to identify local development issues and the representative neighborhood organization.
- Work Group should affirm that CAs have standing with the city while acknowledging the differences with ACs.

Community Planning Areas and Commission Boundaries

- A process needs to be established for amending AC boundaries without disbanding existing commission.
- A high bar should be set for changing AC boundaries, and a higher one set for areas leaving an AC.
- Affected ACs should have input on any boundary changes.
- Critical to determine who makes the final decision on any boundary changes.
- City code should provide for change and dissolution of ACs, not just their establishment.

Dispute Resolution

- Formalize allowing ACs and CAs to testify at city council regardless of usual speaker limits.
- City should provide (potentially mandatory) mediation training for all AC members and civic groups.
- There may be different subsets of mediation needed:
 - For disputes between neighbors
 - For disputes between neighborhoods
 - For disputes between neighborhood and AC/CA
- City should provide a “standard” good neighbor agreement for use by all areas of the city.
- Standardization of documents and processes would be helpful to overcome disparity of expertise among various neighborhoods in dealing with common situations.

Encouraging Participation in City Service Delivery

- Need to have full results of city decisions available to AC/CAs (e.g., BZA decisions w/ any conditions).
- Creation of a citizen input group should be considered relative to the city website and information thereon.
- Periodic reminder from city to all residents explaining existence and purpose of AC/CAs (in form of mailing?).
- Perhaps get a “community page/board” in the Dispatch and/or other media outlets to get publicity for AC/CA issues.
- Create a more prominent link for AC/CA info on the city website.
- Put AC/CAs formally in the process for all city infrastructure and policy issues particular to an area (similar to development process), e.g., transportation and utility projects. Allow AC/CAs to help engage the public. Remind city of CCC 3109.15(D)(3).
- City staff should provide regular updates on previously-reported projects.
- All areas and groups should have equal treatment with regard to notification of issues, engagement of city staff, etc.
- Provide reminders/training for city staff regarding the purpose and role of AC/CAs.
- Provide some enforcement authority to ACs to speed ability to respond to local issues.
- Provide for consistent notification from each agency on all city activities.
- Why have minimum participation for city training/services such as blockwatch training?
- What is realistic to expect communities to do themselves versus what the city should be expected to provide?
- Need better follow-through from city on commitments, otherwise citizens are not encouraged to participate where service and response is unreliable or unfairly allocated.
- Need regular attendance by key city staff/departments for reporting at local meetings.
- ACs need more of a say in development decisions/city services, esp. demolitions.

Common Committee Structure

- Perhaps a city staff person can be designated as a central contact point for civic groups linking to council committees.

Other – Graphics

- The City should regulate electronic/flashing signs.
- The City should rescind the March 27, 2000, policy memo that prohibits AC/CAs from dealing with graphics in zoning cases.
- Composition of the Graphics Commission should be changed so it reflects the broad interests of the public rather than the sign/graphics companies and owners/users.