COUNCILMEMBER DONNA FRYE
City of San Diego
Sixth District

MEMORANDUM

DATE: **February 15, 2005**

TO: **Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers**

FROM: **Councilmember Donna Frye** Donna Frye

SUBJECT: **Strong Mayor Transition Ad-Hoc Citizens Advisory Committee**

Yesterday, the Government Efficiency & Openness (GE&O) Committee voted unanimously to form an Ad-Hoc Citizens Advisory Committee to assist the city transition to a Strong Mayor form of government. This is an important step forward in this process that will ensure public participation.

This committee will report back to the GE&O committee on a regular basis regarding its progress. In order to ensure all areas of the city are included, the committee will consist of at least nine members, consisting of one representative from each Council District, selected by that district's Councilmember, and one representative selected by the Mayor's office. In an effort to get this committee working as quickly as possible, I would request that all candidates be submitted to the chair by February 22.

The GE&O members also recommended that the City Attorney's office and City Manager's office attend each meeting and be available to the committee for any questions or concerns that may arise in the course of the discussion.

The committee's goals will be to specifically address the concerns raised at the GE&O committee today by the committee members and the League of Women Voters (see attachment), as well as to help guide the City through this transition.

Thank you for your attention to these matters. Your timely response is greatly appreciated.

cc: P. Lamont Ewell, City Manager
Michael Aguirre, City Attorney

DF/ks

To: Governmental Efficiency & Openness Committee
From: League of Women Voters of San Diego
Date: February 14, 2005
Re: Item-4: Role of General Public in the Transition to Strong Mayor

Under the best of circumstances, a one-year transition period to a strong mayor government would be a struggle. How much more difficult is it now, under the worst of circumstances? Let's just say that the events of 2005 will, one day, be the most interesting chapter in some future book about San Diego history.

We have two important reasons for coming here today on the subject of the strong mayor transition. First, because the League of Women Voters is an organization that has always worked long and hard to encourage better government practices to serve the greater public interest. And second, because we care about the future of San Diego.

We have confidence that through a cooperative transition work plan, this city stands a chance of emerging stronger, healthier, and more responsive to the people of San Diego than it's been in decades. We also believe that the Governmental Efficiency & Openness committee is probably the best hope the city has of completing a successful transition to strong mayor by the end of the year.

For starters, GE&O could serve as the official coordinator of transition activities undertaken by the offices of city manager, city attorney, council, and mayor. Through scheduled committee meetings, progress reports could unify the efforts of each city entity and guard against anything falling between the cracks in this very complicated process. A hired city consultant would benefit greatly from participating in these meetings.

Equally important, GE&O can create a structure to enable public participation in the transition process. Our neighborhoods and communities have as much at stake as any and all private interests in the way the strong mayor transition takes place. Participants from all parts of the city, as well as from civic groups working for good government, deserve a place at the table.

Right now, the public can't do much more than hope or pray that the city's legal and financial chaos will be resolved swiftly. But regarding the strong mayor transition process, we have an active and constructive role to play to expedite an outcome that will benefit the entire city.

The LWV and other representatives in the public sector can offer something that no city consultant or Rand report will be able to do. We can identify *first-hand* the issues in the transition process that greatly impact our city's neighborhoods and communities. We're in a unique position to identify and help resolve many omissions and conflicts in the strong mayor charter changes soon to be implemented, problems that stand in the way of a successful transition process.

We can give you some examples right now, just for starters.

Regarding council procedure:

* What happens on January 1 when the city manager is no longer working for the city council? To whom will council members direct their requests for supporting information, reports, and analyses of issues that now come from the city manager?

* Who will prioritize and set the agenda for our 8 council members to discuss and vote on new council rules and responsibilities during the transition process?

* When and how will a presiding officer for the city council be chosen? What will be the terms of that office? How much additional staff will he or she require?

* What will be the legal and functional obligations of the mayor's newly appointed city manager and also the city's bureaucracy to the city council?

* Will the public be afforded the regular opportunity to address the mayor during city council hearings?

Regarding the city budget:

* We were promised a strong council system as the flip side to a strong mayor. This will require expert legislative backup. When will budget discussions take place and how much will be budgeted to hire a highly qualified budget analyst and competent staff? Will the office of budget analyst also take responsibility for legislative analysis? We need that information as soon as possible since an RFQ for a budget analyst should be circulated promptly.

* Will council offices need increased budgets for office staff? What about the mayor's office? What other demands on the budget can be expected as a result of strong mayor charter changes?

Regarding planning and land use, a legislative activity of great importance to communities:

* How will city planning processes and decisions be affected by the separation of the mayor from the city council?

* Which branch of government will be responsible for environmental reports and the certification of EIRs?

* Who will constitute the Housing Authority?

* Who will sit on the Redevelopment Agency? To which branch of government will CCDC and SEDC answer? Who has jurisdiction over the city's 10+ other redevelopment project areas?

Regarding council committees:

* The rules committee now handles such things as council rules, economic development, international airports, port district, interagency/binational agreements,

taxes, fees, labor relations, city charter, and intergovernmental relations. How will these responsibilities be split between the city council and the mayor?

* Who will provide committee reports, analyses, and other information and services now provided by the city manager?

These are just a few of the unresolved issues we have been discussing with other people in the community. And they barely scratch the surface. A working committee of community constituents could hit the ground running on these and other time-sensitive issues without losing precious months waiting for outside help.

A citizens' committee could begin work with Beth Murray, for example, to create a time line and a list of talking points and actions for our 8 city council members to help them move toward legislative independence.

It could participate in coordinated public presentations at GE&O to bring recommendations on these transition issues to the attention of other city agencies.

It could work alongside a city consultant to inform and communicate with community and neighborhood groups throughout the year.

It could explore the options for creating a Charter Review Commission to monitor and measure charter changes in a consistent and open process.

From our long experience working on city issues, we have learned that the public often does not know how to be heard, how to get involved, how to contribute constructively to city affairs. And you end up hearing from them when they're most frustrated and angry. But that's not the way most people want to be heard at city hall. The GE&O committee could give all of us a much better option.