

One of the major problems with the City-Manager Form of Government is that it does not allow for the efficient and orderly transition of power which is why a long process still lies ahead. If the City elected its Chief Executive Officer, the matter would have been settled at the May 2010 election, but with an appointed CEO, we are still in a process that will take many more months!

Here are a few suggestions for your consideration:

1. Appoint one of the two assistant City Managers as the acting City Manager.

2. Start a search for a turn-around specialist, with no ties to the City, to act as the Interim City Manager. Preferably, this would be someone from the private sector who has a proven track record doing successful corporate turn-arounds. A turn-around specialist should only need 12-18 months to get City government ready for a long-term CEO to take over.

If a corporate turn-around specialist isn't available, then confine your search to candidates with government experience who specialize in turn-arounds.

3. Confidence in local government is at a very low ebb. A great deal of the blame for this lies with the structure of this government that allowed an imbalance of power to accumulate, with no easy way to resolve it; so a process must be found to begin restoring confidence. A good starting point would be a series of special Council meetings to allow public comment on what changes the City needs to make to its institutions of government.

Some of the topics that must be aired include:

Moving some or all of the functions of the three major agencies (Wharves Board, Park Board, and GHA) inside City government.

Making the City Council a full-time paid position.

Changing the length in office for Councilmembers from 2 years to 4 years.

Reducing the number of districts and adding at-large Councilmembers, or making all Councilmembers at-large.

Redrawing the districts to reduce or eliminate gerrymandering.

And, of course, electing the city CEO using a strong-mayor form of government.

These meetings should focus on hearing and discussing public opinion concerning changing the structure of local government. The people need a chance to suggest improvements, but re-arguing the battle from last week should not be part of the agenda.

Ideally, by the end of this process, we will have a consensus on needed changes, and City Council will not have to find a new City Manager, because all future CEOs in this city will be elected.

Comments to City Council on 03 May 2011 by:

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