

February 28, 1992

Dear fellow Charter Committee members,

At our February 20 meeting, the committee approved a charter provision that would create a local government policy-making committee. In a subsequent vote we established that this body--what we have come to refer to as a non-elected RPAC--would be continuing, meaning that its members would serve in that capacity for a period of time yet to be defined.

This approach is a mistake. Such a provision would be a disservice to the citizenry of local governments. A continuing, non-elected RPAC--especially one with voting power--would have license to orchestrate the flow of services and revenue to benefit their own purposes, and not necessarily to the benefit of the region as a whole. On the other hand, an RPAC appointed on an ad hoc basis would not be an entrenched unit. An RPAC made up of governments and interested persons and groups specifically affected by the regionalization of a function would be able to give the most expert advice to the council.

Metro is a service district. That is what it was created for and that is what I see it doing, now and in the foreseeable future. Metro's main purpose should be to provide those services that can't be performed effectively at the local level, an aspect that has a lot to do with special service districts. Yet the Regional Governance Committee proposal for the structure of a continuing, standing RPAC committee includes--out of a total 18 RPAC votes--only two votes for special districts. That just isn't fair, when these are the types of government most likely to be affected by Metro undertaking additional functions.

If there is to be a standing RPAC, I will continue pressing that all new functions go for a vote of the people along with a stipulated funding source. Before, I strongly supported a broad grant of funding authority for Metro. With an continuing RPAC I don't think a broad grant would be safe for the citizens who pay the bill. A standing RPAC could well be able to corral Metro's funding capabilities to benefit a special interest. They could pass an unwanted service up to the regional level, and hold the previous local funding to be spent for something else.

Meanwhile, Metro would continue in its role of inheriting the functions nobody else wants, instead of taking on those that are truly needed regionally. And the burden on the taxpayer would get bigger and bigger. At least a stipulated funding source for each function that Metro undertakes would tip the people off that a diversion of funds is taking place.

It is with this in mind that I urge you to reconsider the role that an RPAC would have on this regional government. Any authority we grant to another entity has to be carefully thought out. An ad hoc RPAC--appointed by the Council as needed for a specific time frame--would allow the Council to work out the best working relationship with local government. A continuing, standing RPAC--defined in the Charter--could lead to a situation that everyone in the region would come to regret.

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