

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL REGIONAL FACILITIES  
COMMITTEE OF THE METROPOLITAN SERVICE DISTRICT

Regular Meeting/Committee Retreat  
February 12, 1991

Committee members present: David Knowles (Chair), Jim Gardner  
(Vice Chair), Larry Bauer, Roger  
Buchanan, and Ruth McFarland

Committee members absent: None

Chair Knowles called the meeting to order at 4:45 p.m.

1. Council Regional Facilities Committee and Metro E-R  
Commission Discussion.

The object of the meeting was to discuss the responsibilities of the Council Regional Facilities Committee, Metro Staff, Metro E-R Commission (MERC), and MERC Staff; and how those functions were interrelated.

Mr. Don Barney, consultant and discussion facilitator, indicated he had spoken with a number of key people prior to the meeting to determine what direction the meeting should take.

He discussed briefly the results of his survey and distributed a report that outlined these results. A copy of this report is part of the record.

The following is a summary of the discussion:

Chair David Knowles: Mr. Barney, who did you interview?

Mr. Barney: I spoke with MERC Commissioners Richard Waker and Ted Runstein, Metro Councilors Tanya Collier, Ruth McFarland and David Knowles, Executive Officer Rena Cusma, MERC General Manager Lee Fehrenkamp, and MERC Assistant General Manager Dominic Buffetta.

Mr. Barney gave an overview of attitudes regarding the role of MERC and its relationship to Metro. According to Mr. Barney, some individuals within MERC view MERC as an autonomous, independent body, similar to the City of Portland's E-RC model or the City's Portland Development Commission. Metro representatives see themselves as accountable to the voters for MERC's actions, and therefore, view MERC as accountable to Metro.

Some MERC representatives view MERC as a manager of a business, requiring more flexibility than other departments within Metro. They indicate MERC is in competition with other businesses

for entertainment and meeting/convention business. They need the ability to compete. Metro representatives had a tendency to view MERC as a department within Metro, however, they did not see this as excluding the flexibility factor necessary for MERC operations.

Councilor Larry Bauer: I see MERC as a semi-autonomous agency that relieves a burden from Council. Resolution and Budget review are sufficient. It is not a Metro department, not a rubber stamp.

MERC Commissioner Sam Brooks: The Metro Council, Metro Executive, and MERC are in an evolutionary process. This process is to be expected, tensions over time will lessen. MERC needs to be able to make adjustments to get the job done, and make a profit.

Councilor Ruth McFarland: How Many Metro representatives attend MERC's meetings? This is an available option for communication that should be utilized.

Mr. Casey Short, Council Analyst: Mr. Don Rocks, Metro Executive Assistant, Mr. Dan Cooper, Metro General Counsel, and myself attend.

Chair Knowles: One role not stated as yet, is Metro's role to provide financial stability. A regional framework is needed.

MERC Commissioner Dick Waker: MERC facilities must make money. It is an extremely competitive market.

Chair Knowles: Metro's role is to raise money and set the budget. MERC's role is to manage operations within the budget.

MERC Commissioner Ted Runstein: MERC has to get to the business of entertainment.

Councilor Jim Gardner: What is MERC's role in transactions regarding purchase and disposal of real property?

Commissioner Runstein: Those activities should be reviewable by Metro, because they are not operational in nature.

Commissioner Waker: However, in obtaining permission to make purchases of real property, MERC cannot wait to go

through Metro's entire budget process each time. Time is of the essence.

Councilor McFarland: Has Metro exercised oversight capabilities? Would Metro be turned down?

Mr. Rocks: MERC autonomy means Metro should not micro manage.

The decentralization study was discussed.

Mr. Neil Saling, Acting Director of Finance and Administration: Answers are currently being developed regarding the level of autonomy required for MERC.

Commissioner Waker: There is no disagreement on the big issues; just the inside issues, such as personnel and purchasing. The problem is at the staff level.

Commissioner Brooks: MERC personnel, accounting, and purchasing are at issue. MERC did not have administrative rules in these areas. Now there are.

Commissioner Waker: MERC needs a separate set of rules.

Commissioner Brooks: There are some rules indigenous to the Zoo, MERC, etc.; however, some rules are uniform throughout.

Mr. Barney: Has communication been a problem?

Commissioner Brooks: Sometimes there has been a delay in communications.

Councilor George Van Bergen: "Autonomy" is a bad word. The issue we should be addressing is, "How are we going to get along?" The Memorandum of Understanding is destroyed by the adoption of the Code.

Councilor Gardner: Small problems exist with regard to the purchasing and personnel departments of MERC. There is a perception among MERC staff that they do not work for Metro.

MERC Commissioner Ben Middleton: I do not sense any mistrust among MERC staff. It is a non-issue.

Mr. Rocks: In some instances, trust does not make a difference. (i.e., accounting: you cannot pay on trust, there are legal requirements.)

Councilor Bauer: Is MERC developing a long-term plan for facility development?

Chair Knowles: Metro Executive Officer Rena Cusma is establishing a committee to study this issue.

Commissioner Runstein: That issue, raising subsidies and facility development, is a function of Metro, not MERC. MERC is able to act as consultant regarding entertainment and usage issues, however.

In closing, attendees were asked to explain what they had gotten out of the meeting:

Commissioner Runstein: Money issues should have been covered in greater detail.

Commissioner Waker: This group should encourage management to work together.

Councilor Van Bergen: Problems should be sorted out by management.

Councilor McFarland: I will try to attend more MERC meetings.

Councilor Roger Buchanan: The meeting was helpful. I would like to see more of these kinds of meetings.

Councilor Gardner: Trust versus distrust is not the issue; rather there is apprehension on the part of MERC that they will be micro-managed. This meeting is one way to eliminate those apprehensions.

Councilor Bauer: As a new member to the Committee, I found this meeting very informative. It would be helpful to schedule this type of meeting every four to six months. I would like to be involved in long-term regional facilities planning.

Mr. Dominic Buffetta: I appreciate the chance to work with Councilors and Executive Management.

Commissioner Brooks: I invite any interested Councilor to be on MERC Committees. There are a number of committees available.

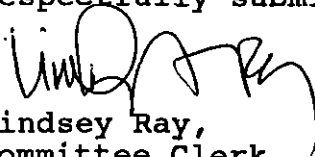
Commissioner Middleton: MERC Commissioners take their positions very seriously.

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Mr. Fehrenkamp: MERC is in the entertainment and hospitality business. Metro should be an ally, and make MERC's job easier to do, not more difficult. It would be helpful if Metro would respond better and faster.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Lindsey Ray,  
Committee Clerk

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