

Jackie Bucholz

From: Robert Lieber [liebtaub@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Friday, January 25, 2008 10:01 AM
To: Jackie Bucholz
Subject: Re: Elected Mayor Report

Some information, facts, and opinions:

52 of 108 CA charter cities directly elect their mayors

-Direct election is used in both the smallest and largest cities in California (Sand City to Los Angeles)

-Many much smaller CA cities directly elect their Mayors (Sand City – 282, St. Helena – 6041, Rio Vista - 5717, Hughson – 4919, Ferndale – 1435, Dos Palos – 4785, Colfax – 1712, Avalon – 3317, etc.)

-157 of the 478 cities in California have elected Mayors (vs. 11 with elected City Attorney BTW!)

-We would become the 12th of the 14 cities in Alameda County to have an elected Mayor (all except the smaller cities of Piedmont (Pop 11,128) and Emeryville (Pop 7,538))

Directly elected mayor makes more sense than the current system we employ. The main drawback is the loss of any clout for our goals and objectives. Albany's mayor sits on few important body. We are simply not available/eligible most require a directly elected Mayor to sit on or appoint to; the BCDC, the Air Board, LAFCO, the MTA, any of the bodies that would help shape policy. It takes about half a year to be introduced and to come up to speed. By then most Albany mayors are half way out the door. Even assuming a cordial relationship with other elected officials, the brevity of the term does not give our mayor any leverage with our legislative or federal representatives. Most mayors are just getting to know these representatives when the term is over. Many mayors may not even have met our representatives before it was over.

The issue of consistency is equally disheartening. It takes years to make a program and get it to work. If the program is just being introduced when the mayor's term rotates, most programs will not survive the change.

There are numerous examples of failed opportunities but I will mention these.

We have been facing the prospect of purchasing the property at Pierce Street from CalTrans. That would not be necessary if we had consistent leadership at City Hall. The City dropped the ball. We should have had that property as mitigation for the closing of Pierce Street. Berkeley got a pedestrian overpass and beautiful cooperation from Caltrans.

The Albany Bulb is in limbo. It should have been incorporated into the East Shore State Park in 2004 when the park was adopted by the State Parks Commission. The City believed that the problem was that the Water Board was requiring further activity to cap and seal. However, this was just a misreading of what was possible. The short lived mayors do not have the staying power to challenge assumptions and to make relationships.

Around the year 1991 the Berkeley Opera was looking for a new home. At that time the Albany Theater was up for sale and the seller did not want it to stay as a movie house. The Berkeley Opera offered to work with the City of Albany to become the anchor tenant.

1/25/2008

We could have bought the Theater and the quarter block on which it sits, with its parking, for about \$650,000. However the city council was too timid to exercise any leadership. Of course that property would be worth a few million now and Albany would have had a theater district at its downtown. But we had no long term mayor with any authority or vision. The City Council dithered and could not make any real decision except that they were afraid that by buying the property they might put the city at some financial risk. Around that time we also had a chance to bring the Shakespeare Festival to town if we could house them.

Currently millions of dollars are being spent on the East Shore State Park improvements and planning. Despite the fact that the voters of Albany just prevented a mall from being built in the middle of the ESP, and the fact that the voters of Albany vote overwhelmingly to support the state and regional parks whenever they seek financing by a public bond. Albany is getting is one porta-potty out of this spending.

Albany's mayor has limited or no relationship with Senator Perata, Nancy Pelosi, the Governor, Barbara Lee, George Miller, either U.S. Senator, the Executive Directors of State Parks, Water Board, Air Board, CalTrans, or other important decision maker who can put an Albany concern onto an agenda for us. It takes time to grow relationships and time to have opportunities to meet other decision makers and work with them. The mayor of Berkeley knows each of them.

There are other examples but the point is that it takes time to make contacts. You need to be on the scene long enough for people to bother learning your name. Albany is not even on the list when names are mentioned for things. And worst of all, Albany often does not even know that it is being passed over. It remains in a quiet state of somnolence.

Another point on this is the problem with having to be elected from the council. It creates a herd mentality. Often a council member will not risk offending the rest of the council for fear of being passed over for mayor. This creates an atmosphere where the council does little and the city administrator sets the pace. This is not always bad but the problem with having the bureaucratic head set the pace is that bureaucrats tend not to be dynamic due to the nature of bureaucracies. A lack of leadership can often ensue.

A mayor usually has to run on a platform. We would not have had to waste the bulk of the city time and attention over the past three years if the issue of the future of our waterfront had been tested in a mayoral campaign.

One last point. We have also had mayors who were simply not up to the job. If we had elections that would be much less likely to happen.

Robert Lieber

Here is another letter I composed that adds to the point. Some is repeated information. Also, we don't have the power to make this change, we should trust the voters of Albany to do what they feel is appropriate. Allowing them to vote is the democratic choice.

-An elected Mayor gives the voters more choice. It takes away a potentially divisive item that in recent years has tended to divide the community and gives the power to the people.

-It allows the public to give consideration to the personal characteristics that are necessary in a Mayor (leadership abilities, experience running meetings, maturity, more experience on City Council or Commissions, etc)

Here are some of the bond funds we are attempting to bring to Albany that you requested to know about to help support arguments for a directly elected Mayor. I've included other issues as well. I will also ask a few other interested people to email you additional thoughts/reasons to support this Charter

1/25/2008

Change.

Prop 84 bond money.

I have met with Assemblywoman Hancock, East Bay Regional Parks Board Member Nancy Skinner, Regional State Park- Pat Mahone, and am scheduled to meet with Senator Perata(had meeting and will soon follow up with the head of Caltrans in DEC.) soon to lobby for directing funds to East Shore State Park from 84 bond funds for land acquisition (in Albany should land become available) and park improvements. The bulk of these funds will be allocated in two to three years. Replacing your prime advocate (the mayor) risks loss of funds (relationships count and you can be ignored if everyone knows you will be gone tomorrow)-or worse replacing the mayor with another not inclined to follow up or wanting to stop the process. For any agenda to be successful you need time.

We will be voting soon to renew the regional AA Bonds. There will be \$60-\$75 Million for land acquisition if passed. I have been working with many interested parties to insure that Albany receives due consideration for the allocation of these funds. We need consistency here!

Many Grants may be available including but not limited to California Land Grants and the Coastal Conservancy. ABAG Recently gave Albany \$100,000 for the study to complete the Ohlone Greenway to Bay Trail Class 1 Bike path. Federal and State and Private grants are always in the mix. The City of Albany is currently requesting many grants, one for \$1.5 Million from Home Land Security to retrofit Police, Fire and City Hall. We have written support from our Congressional delegation (both Senators and our Congress Representative), State Assembly and Senate Representatives. We are competing for Cheek restoration funds/grants. Infrastructure and civic needs that can be meet or assisted with grant funding is an ongoing process. Having consistency and a steady voice increases our chance of success.

Albany loses by not having consistency on regional boards and commissions and in some cases is denied a seat at the table. A mayor that serves for a full term would have time to build better and stronger working relationships with our neighbors in the Bay Area and State. Having an elected mayor would give Albany leadership and a *vision that the voters approve*. We would gain a voice on the National Mayors Conference and the opportunity to chair our own Alameda County Mayors Conference. Our citizens deserve the right to elect their mayor. We may be a small city but we can have a larger and more effective voice.

Soon we will be an Urban City with a Regional, State, National and International reach though the Internet and broadcasting. I love our small town feel but we should be all we can be. Having a credible voice starts with a directly elected Mayor with a term sufficient to complete a vision that the citizens voted on.

Robert Lieber

----- Original Message -----

From: Jackie Bucholz <JBucholz@albanyca.org>

To: Liebtaub@sbcglobal.net

Sent: Friday, January 25, 2008 8:41:31 AM

Subject: Elected Mayor Report

Bob:

Attached is the staff report on the elected Mayor for the 02/04/08 Agenda. Please review and send back with your proposed ballot language.

Thanks,

1/25/2008