

**Charter Review Committee  
Interim Report to City Council  
March 12, 2008**

The Charter Review Committee (CRC) is now in the midst of its systematic consideration of Albany's method of election of mayor.

The CRC began this discussion on April 24, 2007, by reviewing the Model City Charter, a publication of the National Civic League, which provides two alternatives for electing the mayor—election by and from the council, and direct election at large. Albany currently elects by and from the City Council, with a term of one year.

Of California's 478 cities, 147 (31%) have directly elected mayors. Over half of the cities that use the council-manager form of government directly elect their mayors. California divides its cities into two groups: large cities with populations of more than 25,000, and small cities with less population. In Alameda, the 11 large cities have directly elected mayors. The three small cities—Albany, Emeryville, and Piedmont—have mayors appointed by council. For California as a whole, 182 (84%) of the 217 small cities and 149 (57%) of the 261 large cities have council-selected mayors.

At the September 4, 2007 City Council meeting, the CRC requested direction on a time frame for a Charter Amendment regarding a directly elected Mayor to appear on a future ballot. Consensus of Council was to have the CRC take as much time as needed to make an informed recommendation.

Since April 2007, several individuals have presented their perspectives on this issue, including:

Sheila Young, former Mayor of San Leandro	Jim Keane, former City Manager of Berkeley
Gus Morrison, former Mayor of Fremont	Nancy McEnroe, Mayor of Piedmont
Linda Barton, City Manager of Livermore	Del Britton, Mayor of St. Helena (in writing)
Robert Nichols, former Mayor of Albany	Ruth Ganong, former Mayor of Albany
Robert Cheasty, former Mayor of Albany	Nora Davis, former Mayor and current
Peggy Thomsen, former Mayor of Albany	City Council Member of Emeryville
	(comments not reflected here)

Direct election of the mayor is often associated with a longer term of office than with council election. In Alameda County, council-elected mayors have 1- or 2-year terms, while directly elected mayors have 2- or 4-year terms. Direct election, with a longer term of office, is seen as providing more opportunity for forging strong relationships with officials in other cities and providing the City with more influence within the region, and being appointed to bodies controlled by the Alameda County Mayors' Conference, which reserves some positions for directly elected mayors. It is also seen as providing a stronger connection with the electorate. Council election is seen as providing an opportunity for more people to be mayor, and as fostering constructive relationships among council members. It is also seen as insuring that minority viewpoints are not excluded for extended periods of time. It has been noted that not being a directly elected mayor has not prevented some individuals from forging strong relationships with officials in other cities. Although several of our guests favored direct election, "Don't fix it if it is not broken" was also advised.

The term of office and the powers of the mayor are related to the method of election, but are legally separate issues. The amendment to the Charter proposed by Mayor Lieber includes a four-year term for a directly elected mayor. As a Charter City, Albany can expand the powers of the mayor beyond the ceremonial duties outlined in California General Law, but our review of city charters thus far has revealed no significant differences in the powers of mayors between Charter Cities and General Law Cities.

To date, no CRC consensus has emerged on this issue. We intend to obtain public input before concluding our consideration of this issue.