

MINNEAPOLIS GOVERNMENT: A BALANCING ACT

Prepared and Published
By
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MINNEAPOLIS

The League of Women Voters of Minneapolis
81 South 9th Street, Suite 335, Minneapolis, MN 55402

April 2005

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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This report is made possible in part by the following:

MEDTRONIC FOUNDATION GRANT



JOLA PUBLICATIONS

Dennis Schapiro, owner, graphic design by Amanda Luker

CURA

This project was supported in part through a New Initiatives grant from the University of Minnesota's Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA), which funded the work of graduate research assistant Jose Diaz. The contents of the report are those of the League of Woman Voters City Government Structure Committee and do not reflect the views of the University of Minnesota or CURA.

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“Democracy is supposed to be inefficient. It’s designed to place a premium on patience, perseverance, compromise—and accountability. Forced to choose between accountability and efficiency, we will choose the former every time.”

“Is The City Too Complicated”,
by Craig Cox,
The Minneapolis Observer,
(December 14, 2004)

“In an era of permanent fiscal pressure, liberals should welcome a more efficient government to assure that more money is available for social needs. Conservatives should welcome it to help keep taxes at levels consistent with strong economic growth. Rightly understood, better performance by government can become that rare arena in which common ground is possible.”

Dohrmann & Mendonca,
The McKinsey Quarterly,
(2004, Number 4)

THESE ARE NOT EASY DAYS FOR MINNEAPOLIS. Once Minnesota's shining light, the city is derided at the Legislature, faces constant budget crunches and struggles with myriad entrenched constituencies and performance inefficiencies. As the chart on pages 10 and 11 shows, it is a labyrinth of confusing lines of authority and responsibility. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "If you want to move people it has to be toward a vision."

A vision for this city is missing. This is no secret. In a 2003 city survey, 33 percent of respondents said that "managing city government" was the second biggest challenge after public safety. Without a vision how can Minneapolis balance priorities and move forward on the road to the future? How can the city create a balance between citizen access and performance efficiency?

The League of Women Voters of Minneapolis chose to study the city's structure as a way of starting the conversation on a meaningful level. What should we as citizens do? How can we make this the best city in the nation once again? To do that we interviewed many current and former participants and experts in Minneapolis government and studied the key scholarship on city government. This report lays out the issues, the history and research to help start the debate.

CRITERIA FOR STUDY

As we begin to consider whether the current government structure in Minneapolis will be able to serve its residents well into the future, we immediately encounter questions such as "what should be the purposes of a local government" and "on what bases should its success (or failure) be measured." Most would agree that the purpose of government should be to deliver services to its residents, but we may argue about what services are most efficiently provided at what level of government. Decision making should be carried out by the level of government that is closest to the individual citizen.

Several of the local observers we interviewed for this study pointed out that at one time Minneapolis was considered the destination for those who wanted to see "good government" at work, but this is no longer the case. Has Minneapolis changed? Have the

criteria for determining what makes good government altered? What other factors might influence local observers? As a 2002 article in *Governing Magazine* said: Among the leadership and the citizenry of the Twin Cities, there is a feeling that the city's promise once put on national display has somehow gone unfulfilled. The last time one of the big newsmagazines devoted a cover to celebrating a place Americans ought to consider living, it was *Newsweek's* salute to Seattle, with a photo of journalist Michael Kinsley in a yellow rain slicker and the tag line "Swimming to Seattle: Everybody Else Is Moving There. Should You?" (*Governing Magazine*, April, 2002).

We discovered in our preparation of this study some criteria that seem to be generally equated with good government. These include: accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity and accessibility. Other factors such as: flexibility, cost effectiveness, diversity, and sustainability were also men-

tioned in the research we examined. (Slack, 2004; Bird, 2001; etc.) These criteria are neither monolithic nor mutually exclusive; they interact with and influence each other. The goal is to balance the criteria in a way that allows for solid decision making and effective governance.

Accountability is a commonly-established norm by which a specific entity is held responsible to complete duties and/or obligations by correctly executing delegated powers or managing entrusted resources. In government this means, in part, that there should be clear linkage between decision making related to revenues and to expenditures. Models of accountability depend on who is in charge and include: legislative, executive, and partnership. One of our resources argued that the fundamental problem with our present form of city government is that there are no clear lines of accountability. Others argue that elections are the way we hold the government accountable. An argument that is made in favor of the city-manager form of government is that it separates politics from administration, thus clarifying and enhancing accountability.

A national project measuring government performance had this to say about Minneapolis in 2000: “Minneapolis faces many obstacles in its effort to move toward managing for results. Not only is there resistance from some long-term employees in this strong-labor city, but the diffuse power structure can make it difficult to move forward. As one manager says, ‘with the mayor and full-time council, it’s like having 14 bosses.’” (*Governing Magazine*, February, 2000)

Transparency means the structure or organization of government is simple and easily understood. Transparency relates closely to accessibility, since a structure that is not well understood will be difficult to access. One interviewee said that “things work best

when expectations, roles and responsibilities are clear. City government works poorly when these are unclear.”

Responsiveness occurs when government is aware of and acknowledges resident needs and desires and, ideally, addresses them. Sometimes the question seems to be not whether Minneapolis officials are responsive but are they responsive in the right way. Should council members, for example, emphasize constituent services or the policy needs of the entire city? One former council member said “the council shouldn’t be in the business of customer service.” But the government overall needs to be responsive, so whose responsibility is it to ensure that service, accessibility, and responsiveness are provided to Minneapolis residents?

Equity requires that the level and kinds of services provided are uniform across the governmental unit without regard to variations in the resources (ie. taxes) collected there. Some of our interviewees suggested that committed council members representing wards (and neighborhoods) are the most effective way of ensuring that all parts of the city are treated fairly.

Accessibility is provided through public meetings, hearings, elections, and direct contact with officials. Individuals we interviewed for this study disagreed about how accessible city government is in Minneapolis. One suggested that the system is not set up to be accessible; hearings, for example, are held but poorly advertised. Another said there is too much access. And, a third pointed out that the city could be run much more efficiently if accessibility were more limited.

Flexibility refers to government that is able to respond rapidly to changing needs. Several of our resources suggested that the sheer size of the city council along with the number of independent boards makes

it hard for Minneapolis to adapt quickly. Others felt that additional factors (labor agreements, the local media, political parties, and other interest groups) contributed to a lack of flexibility. This criterion also relates to sustainability.

Cost effectiveness rests on indicators that measure the extent to which a service is achieving its intended results – service quality, benefits to citizens and impact on the quality of life – and then balances these with the costs of providing those services. Efficiency is a part of the cost-effectiveness equation. Efficiency indicators measure how much resource (staff time, money, etc.) is required to deliver a service. Scale and duplication are also factors in determining whether a service can be provided cost effectively. Those who urge consolidation of Park Board and City of Minneapolis policing often use an argument of cost-effectiveness. Smaller bodies and those with fewer committees are generally more cost-effective, because they use fewer staff resources and technical expertise.

Diversity among officeholders and policy makers contributes to the strength and vitality of our political system. It helps assure community-wide solutions to problems and builds confidence that the political process represents all voices equally. In addition to racial, ethnic and political diversity, we might also consider age, economic background, life experiences and myriad other factors that contribute to a vital and dynamic city.

Sustainability considers the future impact of current decisions – for example, on the budget base or the environment. A widely shared vision for the city as well as a strategic plan may contribute to making sustainable decisions.

“There are places where, if you want to find the future of the city being pondered, the council chamber is the last place you’d

look. [The council is] a group of people who primarily deal with very mundane, housekeeping things in their districts. That’s what they do, it’s what they’re interested in, and it’s the way they see their power.” (Are City Councils a Relic of the Past? *Governing Magazine*, April, 2003) This comment was made about the Pittsburgh City Council, but it echoes what we heard from some of the observers we talked with about the Minneapolis City Council.

Although not a criterion that was identified in the research, an appropriate communication system including effective human relationships and regular opportunities for information exchange was mentioned by several of our resources as a critical component of a successful municipal structure. There was concern expressed about the level of communication and cooperation between the City of Minneapolis and other units of government – i.e. Hennepin County, the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Legislature, especially elected officials representing the metropolitan area. An effective communication system would also enhance accountability and increase flexibility.

FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

To understand the issues, we must first look at current structures, the city’s history and comparisons with others.

MINNEAPOLIS PAST AND PRESENT

The State Legislature wrote the first Minneapolis City Charter in 1872. In 1896, the State authorized home rule. After numerous attempts to adopt a new charter the Charter Commission compiled all state laws regarding the city, which was approved by the citizens in 1920,. Since that time there have been many proposals to amend

the charter. Most have experienced lengthy periods of debate and few have been adopted, and therefore much of the structure harkens back to the nineteenth century. A charter amendment in 1984 created the main components of the current structure. (<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/city-hall/laws/charter/>)

The Minneapolis structure is sometimes called a Strong Mayor / Strong Council system. It is similar to a strong mayor system but has ceded a significant amount of executive authority to the City Council.

The mayor is elected citywide for a four-year term. There are thirteen council members elected by geographical wards, also for four-year terms. All of these positions are elected in non-partisan elections, although candidates typically seek political endorsement, and the City Council does caucus by political party. The positions of mayor and city council are paid on a full-time basis, the current salaries are \$89,773 and \$68,331 respectively.

The Charter provides for a City Coordinator, an administrator who oversees six major city functions, including finance. As demonstrated in the organizational chart and boxes outlining the structure in Minneapolis on pages 10 and 11, most appointments of key staff occur through nomination by the Mayor and approval by an Executive Committee of the City Council and eventually by a majority of the City Council. If the Executive Committee and Council do not approve a mayoral nomination after three tries, the roles are reversed, and the Executive Committee nominates, with approval of the Mayor and Council required.

The Executive Committee consists of the Mayor, City Council President and up to three additional members chosen by the City Council. If multiple political parties are represented on the City Council, not

all members of the Executive Committee can be of the same party. Under current practice the Council Vice President, Chair of the Council Ways and Means and Budget Committee, and the minority leader of the City Council fill the three slots for additional members. Other executive functions provided by the Executive Committee are labor negotiations with City unions and supervision of some of the key staff. The Committee also coordinates ideas, policies and programs initiated by the City Council or the Mayor, orchestrating their consideration and enactment by the City Council.

The Mayor clearly takes the lead in nominating persons to fill most key staff positions, but the Council must ultimately concur and has frequently blocked or strongly influenced the Mayor's selection. Rather than a strong executive leader, the Minneapolis structure provides for administration by committee. The Mayor still has responsibility for creating a vision for the city, which is done through an annual state of the city address, preparation of a budget for Council consideration and use of the bully pulpit to advance the mayoral vision.

The City has a number of advisory boards, and the Mayor and the City Council both have significant roles in the appointment process, in some cases leaning to greater Mayoral authority (Civil Rights Commission – 66% of the appointments) and in other cases greater Council authority (Capital Long Range Planning – 79% of the appointments).

Independent Boards

Another aspect of Minneapolis governance that is unusual is its independent boards. While many cities have school boards which operate independently of the city government, as in Minneapolis, the Park and Recreation Board and Library Board have a rare amount of independence.

The Library Board has six members elected at large from the community and two appointed members, one by the Mayor and one by the City Council.

The Park and Recreation Board consists of nine members, six elected from defined districts and three elected at large.

Each of these boards hires its own superintendent or director and sets major policy for the parks and libraries respectively. The superintendent or director serves as the chief administrative officer, hiring and supervising all other agency staff. The main limitation to complete independence is the requirement to establish budgets within the levy set by the Board of Estimate and Taxation.

The Board of Estimate and Taxation is another unusual aspect of Minneapolis government. It serves as a mediator in distributing the financial pie that feeds all components of the city governance. The membership includes the Mayor, City Council President, Chair of the Council's Ways and Means and Budget Committee, one representative each from the Library Board and the Park Board, and two members elected at large. It sets a maximum levy limit, as required by the State's "Truth in Taxation" statute, and thereby establishes the budgetary framework for all City government (excluding schools). The Board serves in lieu of having the citizens of the City vote on each city budget.

Every office, department, board, commission and other agency of the City financed in any way by appropriations of the City Council, or having any power to levy taxes, submits to the Board of Estimate and Taxation and to the Mayor budget information for the following fiscal year. Such budget information includes a statement of proposed expenditure, the revenue from all sources and a recommended program for capital improvements for the ensuing five-year period. The Board of Estimate and Taxation each year

fixes the maximum amount of money and maximum rate which may be raised in the aggregate by general taxation by the City Council, Boards or departments.

City/County Cooperation

Hennepin County has a separate board with elected commissioners, three of whom represent districts which are all or mostly within Minneapolis City boundaries. The City works cooperatively with Hennepin County in a number of areas. The Emergency Communications User Board, Municipal Building Board and the Youth Coordinating Board are some of the more significant cooperative ventures with the County. The City has also provided for representation of other governmental units on the Neighborhood Revitalization Board and the Planning Commission.

COMPARING WITH OTHER CITIES

It is difficult and in some ways almost impossible to compare cities on any set of characteristics because of state and geographic differences. But, it is possible to look at what other municipalities are doing and to examine their structures and strategies as options for Minneapolis. To put this into a larger context, it's useful to understand four common forms of municipal government.

Mayor-Council. *This form has a legislative body that is elected either at-large, by ward or district, or by some combination of the two (e.g., some at-large and other by district). The distinguishing characteristics of this plan are two. One, the mayor is elected separately, and two, the official designation of the Office of Mayor is the formal head of the city government. Depending upon local laws, the powers of the mayor may vary greatly, from limited ceremonial duties to full-scale authority to appoint and remove department managers. The mayor sometimes has veto power over the city council.*

This form tends to be in older, larger cities, or in very small cities, under 25,000 population.

It is most popular in the Mid-Atlantic and Midwestern parts of the US. Depending on the city charter, the mayor could have weak or strong powers. Cities with variations on the mayor-council form of government are: Los Angeles, CA; Houston, TX; Topeka, KS (in November 2004 Topeka voters approved a change to the council-manager form); and Minneapolis, MN.

Strong Mayor. *In many large cities of America, the mayor is elected to lead the city. This typically includes running the municipal organization through city employees, with the top management being selected by the mayor. A good political leader is sometimes not a good municipal administrator. Hiring trained administrators has served to overcome this shortcoming.*

Some strong mayor systems include a council as well, like St. Paul, while others do not.

Council-Manager. *This form of government has a leader elected by popular vote. S/he is responsible for policymaking, while the management of the organization is under the direction of a city manager. The council appoints and removes the manager by majority vote. The mayor is a member of the council, with no special veto or administrative powers. The mayor is, however, the community's recognized political leader and represents the city at ceremonies, as well as civic and social functions.*

This form is common in cities of population over 10,000, mainly in the Southeast and Pacific coast areas. Depending on the city charter, the mayor could have weak or strong powers. Some examples are: Phoenix, AZ; San Diego, CA; Salt Lake City, UT; and Rockville, MD.

Commission. *This form of government, which usually employs non-partisan, at-large elections, includes a board of commissioners. Collectively they act as the legislative body. Individually, each commissioner serves as the head of one or more departments. The municipal reform movement in*

the U.S. has all but led to the demise of this type of local government. Its weaknesses are obvious, since few elected leaders possess the necessary requirements to operate large portions of a municipal organization. The commission form of city government is the oldest form of government in the US, but exists today in only a few cities. Examples are Cedar Rapids, IA and Great Falls, MT.

(The information above is based on: *Current Municipal Problems*, pp. 20-29, Vol. 13, 1986-1987)

PROS AND CONS OF GOVERNMENT FORMS

Governments are not immune to trends and geographic patterns. Many of us are familiar with and associate the town meeting form of government with New England, for example, although this form applies to fewer than five percent of cities with populations over 2,500. Likewise there are extreme differences in the role and size of county governments across the U.S. It is the Mayor-Council and Council-Manager forms which seem to predominate in larger cities and may be best suited to cities like Minneapolis.

The Council-Manager form of government arose during the early years of the twentieth century as part of the progressive movement in American politics and gained rapidly in popularity. Almost 50 percent of all cities now use that form, and 63 percent of cities over 25,000 are under the Council-Manager form. However, pure forms of either Mayor-Council or Council-Manager structures are increasingly rare. Frederickson et al (2004) found that Mayor-Council cities (called Type I or political cities) have adapted many features of the Council-Manager form and that Council-Manager cities (called Type II or administrative cities) have embraced features of the Mayor-Council form. These adapted forms tend to make Type I cities more efficient and Type II cities more

responsive. The Frederickson study goes on to suggest that many cities since the 1980s operate under a new, Type III structure (called conciliated city) which intentionally blends features of the previous structures. The study concludes "...that cities are much more structurally dynamic than the literature suggests. In fact, cities are remarkably fluid and adaptable." Type III cities, according to the researchers, "appear to meet the needs and the wants of citizens."

From our research, it appears that cities with council-manager forms of government are considering the mayor-council form at least as often as mayor-council cities are examining the council-manager form.

Another form, one that appears to be increasing in popularity, is the City-County or Metropolitan government. A number of experts on government including some of the people we spoke with for this study suggest that the issues facing large metropolitan cities are not very amenable to solution at the municipal level; these experts argue that any consideration of changes to local government structure would do well to look at metropolitan government as an option. One person argued for an elected Metropolitan Council with a professional manager as the best way to develop and carry out a metro wide vision in the Twin Cities.

Metropolitan governments are intended to resolve dilemmas of parity - disparities between a central city and its suburbs. They are also intended to realize the advantages of scale in the supply of services and the development of infrastructure and to facilitate comprehensive and rational planning. The current prevailing conceptions of metropolitan government focus on loose frameworks of cooperation (rather than metropolitan-wide governance) and coordination, particularly in the realm of development.

PROS AND CONS OF GOVERNMENT FORMS

Council-Manager

PROS	CONS
Greater administrative efficiency and capacity.	Less opportunity for political participation.
More responsive.	Less opportunity for political participation of minorities.
Cost effective.	1. The standard features of the separation of powers and check and balances are weakened since: 2. There is an established merit-based civil service and professional administration. There are some administrative policies, procedures, and that militate against direct meddling in city administrative affairs by city council members and/or mayor.
More favorable environment for formulation and implementation of strategic plans.	
Reduces transactional costs.	
This form of government makes commitment more credible for elected officials.	

Strong Mayor

PROS	CONS
Strong political leadership.	Concentration of authority in one person.
More political responsiveness.	Weaker council powers.
May enhance the effectiveness of bureaucratic organizations because of the political leadership and political responsiveness.	Political agendas may override administrative issues.
Clear separation of powers.	
Good when political issues are more relevant for the community.	
This form of government makes commitment more credible for elected officials.	

Mayor-Council

PROS	CONS
Promotes participation.	Increases potential for conflict.
Balances legislative and executive.	Political agenda may take precedence.
May provide more opportunity for diversity.	Less efficient.
Increases accessibility.	Generally higher costs.

CITY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE – COMPARISON TO OTHER COMMUNITIES

	Minneapolis, MN	Saint Paul, MN	Tulsa, OK	Colorado Springs, CO	Omaha, NE	Seattle, WA	Austin, TX
POPULATION (2000 Census)	382,618	287,151	393,049	360,890	390,007	563,374	556,562
FORM OF GOVERNMENT	Mayor-Council	Strong Mayor	Mayor-Council	Council-Manager	Mayor-Council	Mayor-Council	Council-Manager
MAYOR							
Length of Term	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years	4 years	3 years
Partisan/Nonpartisan	Non-partisan (Runs with endorsement)	Partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Non-partisan	Non-partisan (Runs with endorsement)	Non-partisan
Powers	Executive	Executive	Executive and administrative	No administrative duties	Executive	Executive/Legislative	Legislative
Hours	Full-time	Full-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Full-time	Full-time
Salary	\$89,773 (2004)	\$96,888 (effective 2002)	\$105,000	Stipend of \$6,250 per year (increase to \$18,000 on April 2005 Ballot)	\$96,205	\$141,650	\$53,000 (plus \$5,400 car allowance)
CITY COUNCIL							
Number	13	7	9	8 (4 elected city-wide, and one for each of the 4 districts)	7	9	6
Length of term	4 years	4 years	2 years	4 years	4 years	4 years (4 in odd number year & 5 in next odd number year)	3 years
Partisan/non-partisan	Non-partisan (Runs with endorsement)	Partisan	Partisan	Non-partisan	Non-partisan	Non-partisan (Runs with endorsement)	Non-partisan
Powers	Legislative	Legislative	Legislative	Legislative	Legislative	Legislative	Legislative
Method of election	Ward	Ward	Electoral Districts	City wide and by district	By district	At large	Numbered seats
Staggered terms	No		No	Yes	No		Yes
Hours	Full-time	Part-time		Part-time		Full-time	Full-time
Salary	\$68,331 (2004)	\$48,444 (effective 2002)	\$18,000	Stipend of \$6,250 per year (Increase to \$12,000 on April 2005 Ballot)	\$30,392	\$96,507	\$45,000 (plus \$5,400 car allowance)
Number of wards/districts	13 wards	13 wards	9 districts	4 districts	7 districts		

City-county governments are used in several metropolitan areas with one central city surrounded by many suburbs. Examples include Indianapolis and Miami-Dade County.

In January 2003, Louisville and Jefferson County, Kentucky, combined into one metropolitan government, implementing a merger of a size that no city in America has pulled off since Indianapolis did it in 1970. Interested parties from Memphis, Milwaukee, Rochester, Buffalo, Cedar Rapids and Fresno have observed this situation as they consider their own moves toward merger.

Such consolidated governments are viewed as having improved bargaining power; reduced service duplication; protection of the core city and its strengths; and, a competitive advantage in terms of improved metropolitan identity for economic development. Disadvantages are described as: increased resident isolation from elected leaders; decreased efficiency due to sheer size; negative impact on small service suppliers who are closed out of government contracts; and, masking of problems due to larger pools of data (the effect of averaging, for example.)

WEIGHING THE FACTORS

Based on the results of the 2001 and 2003 resident surveys, it is clear that a significant number of people (29%) who live in Minneapolis perceive the city in a more negative way now than just a few years ago. Communities of color were even more likely to say that the city has gotten worse (37%.)

“Managing city government” (including addressing financial problems) was seen as the second biggest challenge facing the city after “public safety.” The thirty-three percent of survey respondents who mentioned this as a challenge listed three specific concerns: balancing budgets, keeping taxes down, and better quality services. When asked how the City could be more efficient, residents showed no consensus. More than 50% made no suggestions.

When residents were asked to rate five aspects of city management on a four-point scale ranging from poor (1) to very good (4), no rating exceeded 2.5 in 2003 and every rating was lower than in 2001. The five areas rated were: providing value for tax dollars; representing and providing for the needs of all residents; providing meaningful opportunities for residents to give input;

Survey 2003 | Survey 2001

Residents were asked to consider change over the past three years in the 2001 survey. The time frame for consideration was shortened to two years in the 2003 survey. As seen in Table 7, resident attitudes have changed significantly - becoming more negative overall.

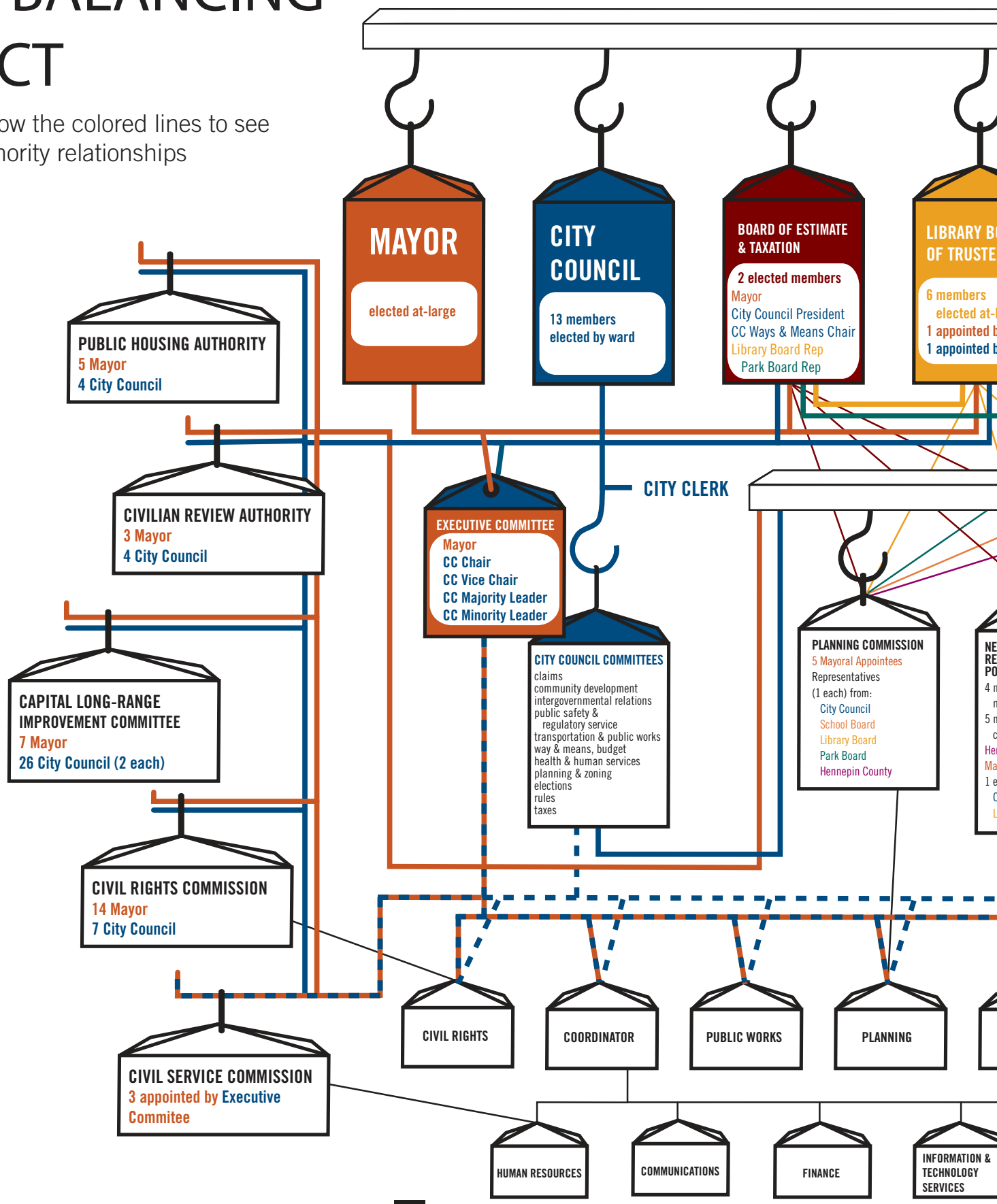
Table 7: Perceived Change in Minneapolis over Time: Year-to-Year Comparison

Rating Scale	Survey Year		Significant Change	Direction of Change (statistically significant)
	2003	2001		
Gotten better	19%	33%	Yes	Less positive in 2003
Stayed the same	53	52	No	-
Gotten worse	29	15	Yes	More negative in 2003

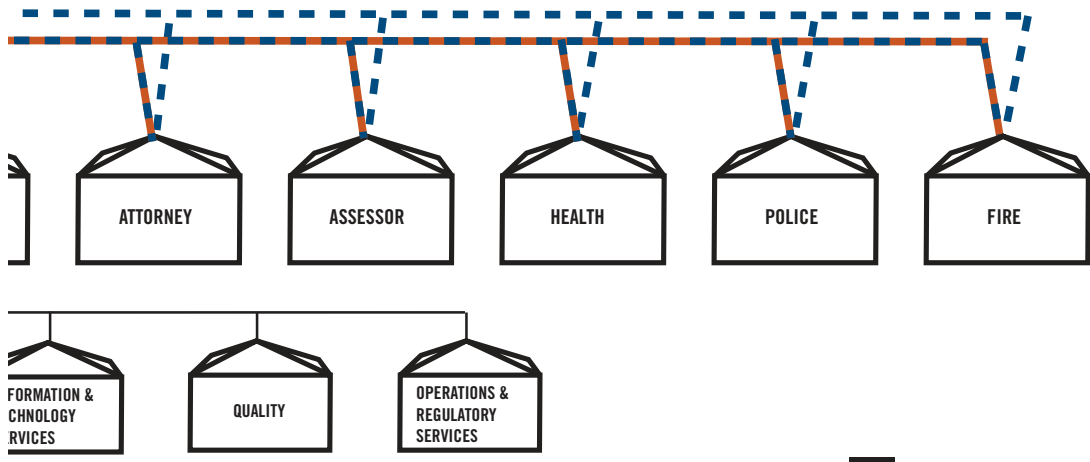
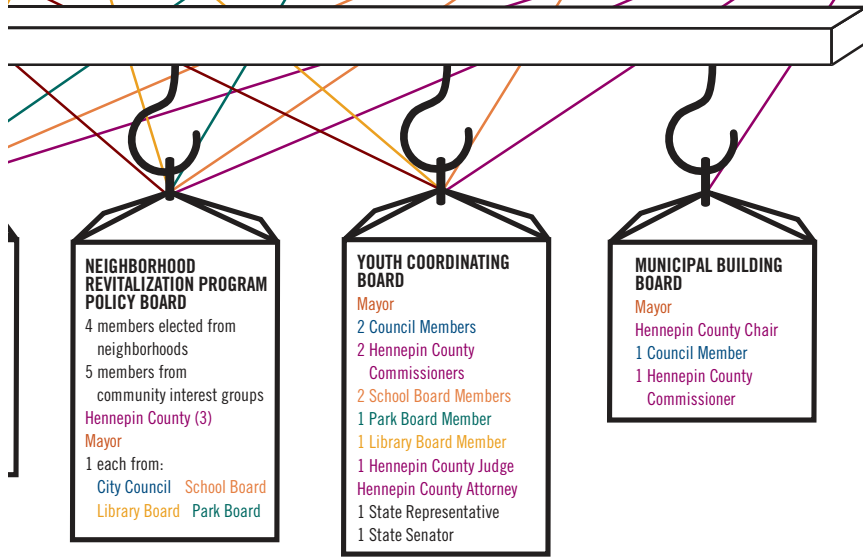
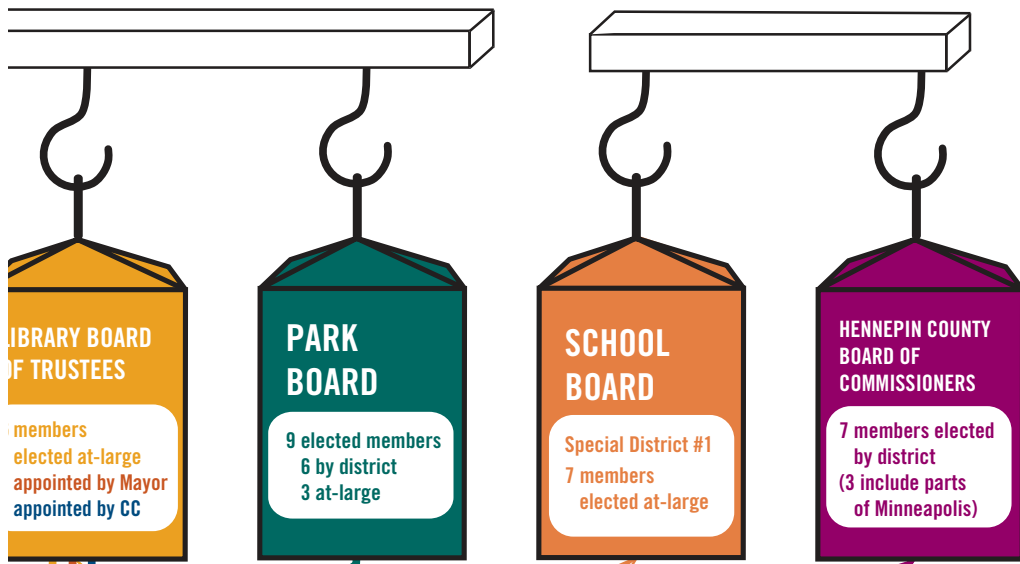
Minneapolis Government: A BALANCING ACT

Follow the colored lines to see authority relationships

MINNEAPO



MINNEAPOLIS VOTERS



Legend

RED	MAYOR
BLUE	CITY COUNCIL
BROWN	BOARD OF ESTIMATE AND TAXATION
YELLOW	LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES
GREEN	PARK BOARD
ORANGE	SCHOOL BOARD
PURPLE	HENNEPIN COUNTY

Colors demonstrate interconnections in appointments to and supervision of boards, commissions, staff and other agencies, including joint ventures such as the Neighborhood Revitalization Program and Youth Coordinating Board.

The dotted blue line from Council Committees demonstrates that work direction is given by the City Council although official supervision is through the Executive Committee, denoted by the red and blue line.

MINNEAPOLIS CITY GOVERNMENT

Table 8: Biggest Challenges Facing Minneapolis – Segment Differences

Biggest Challenges n = 800	Grand Total	Housing		Race / Ethnicity		Gender		Income	
		Own	Rent	White	Communities of Color	Female	Male	< \$50k	> = \$50k
Public Safety – crime/drugs/gangs	37%	40%	32%	38%	31%	43%	30%	36%	39%
Managing City government – financial problems	33	43	19	38	18	33	33	26	46
Transportation – congestion//transit/roads	28	29	27	33	12	25	33	24	38
Education – quality/funding	25	28	20	28	16	31	19	22	34
Economic development – job creation/unemployment	21	18	26	18	33	22	20	22	21
Housing – affordability/availability/condition	21	20	22	22	16	22	20	21	23
Cultural relations / Immigration	9	9	7	8	11	9	8	9	8
Growth/Population	8	8	10	9	7	9	8	8	9
Environment	6	8	4	7	3	7	5	5	8
Don't know	11	10	13	10	16	8	15	14	6

Note: Multiple responses possible, totals exceed 100%. Numbers appearing in light gray are too small for statistical testing.

■ Differs significantly

communicating with residents; and, effectively planning for the future.

According to the City’s own analysis of the survey data “The most significant change has to do with resident perceptions of City government effectively planning for the future – a majority of residents (55%) now perceive performance as ‘only fair to poor.’”

Fifty-seven percent of residents rated the City as only fair or poor on communicating with its residents. This suggests that any attempts to change the structure or improve the current one should include components that address this issue.

More than half of the residents surveyed in 2003 rated the City only fair or poor on providing meaningful opportunities for input on important issues. It seems this issue ties closely to communication. While many respondents (37%) had no suggestions for improving public involvement, those who did respond suggested: better notification of meetings through advertising and getting more information out ahead of time; using media such as television, radio and newspapers to notify residents of meetings; providing mailings and leaflets for meeting notification; and, posting notices on the City’s website.

Other suggestions for improving citizen involvement included: better meeting locations; holding meetings at varied times; returning phone calls; promoting ways for residents to be more involved; greater effort by the City to make residents feel their opinions matter; and, making invitations for involvement more appealing.

MEASURES FOR EVALUATING POTENTIAL CHANGE

A common theme among those we interviewed for this study was the need to measure City performance, effectively monitor performance, and tie those measures and outcomes to funding decisions. Likewise, we believe that any changes to the statutory form of government in Minneapolis and, indeed, any proposed improvements to the current structure should be made with a clear understanding of expected outcomes. The “good government” criteria examined on pages 1-3 should provide a starting point.

Proponents of change should be able to clearly describe which of those criteria their proposal will address and how. If the “problem” is, as a significant number of our resources suggested, less one of structure and instead one of personality, then it’s difficult to see how the criteria would be affected.

Perhaps the statutory form of government matters less than the commitment of elected and appointed officials to accurately assess and efficiently meet the needs of their constituents. A balanced combination of leadership, responsiveness, and efficiency may be what's lacking; if so, it may be that what's important is to address those issues rather than the structure. As one resource put it "Any structure will work with commitment behind it, and no structure will work well without it." And, many of our informants felt that personality plays a big role in Minneapolis that would persist even if the structure were changed.

What other factors should be considered in order to determine whether Minneapolis ought to implement changes in structure? We think there are at least four sets of factors that should be examined. Two are complex: what do residents expect from their city government and what measures would any change need to meet. Two are practical: what parties and/or interests would need to be involved in change and what progression of strategies would be required to effect change.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND INVOLVEMENT

The League of Women Voters of Minneapolis believes that any changes to city government should maintain or enhance the current level of citizen engagement. Our current position recommends balance between neighborhood and city-wide interests, maintaining a variety of ways for citizens to participate, and improving communication and access

Depending on the nature of the proposed change, the process for approval and implementation would vary. Some fine tuning of the existing government structure in Minneapolis could be undertaken with the approval and commitment of the Mayor and Council alone without any changes in the charter. Even significant structural changes, such as a decision to hire a city manager *within the current mayor-council form* could be readily accomplished if the will were there. Proposals to change from the mayor-council form, to reduce or expand the number of Council Members, to change the nature of the independent boards would require charter change and/or legislative approval.

While recent *Star Tribune* editorials have resurrected city government structure as a local issue in 2005, at least one former Charter Commission member says he doesn't detect

MINNEAPOLIS ONE CALL AND 311

One of the possible changes that our interviewees mentioned was to clarify the role of the council members and to emphasize policy making over constituent services. With the upcoming implementation of Minneapolis One Call, a new system that will track and expedite all kinds of service requests such a change may be feasible. With One Call, when residents call to report a pothole or broken streetlight, they receive a ticket number and estimated repair date that allows tracking of completion of the work. This system should allow measurement and continuous improvement of the City's performance.

Other cities that have implemented similar efforts (often called 311 service) report positive results. As a non-emergency companion to 911 service, 311 improves customer service and provides a way of collecting data to make the city work better by showing patterns that no individual department or council member would be able to discern based on the limited number of data bits they could collect. It allows the city and its employees to see the big picture and make decisions accordingly. (To read how Chicago, Baltimore and New York have used 311 see *Time*, February 7, 2005, p.52)

Table 36: Ways to Encourage More Public Involvement – Segment Differences

Ways to Encourage Involvement n = 800	Grand Total	Housing		Race / Ethnicity		Gender		Income	
		Own	Rent	White	Communities of Color	Female	Male	< \$50k	> = \$50k
Don't know	37%	36%	38%	38%	32%	36%	38%	38%	34%
Provide better notification of meetings	19	17	23	18	25	19	20	22	18
Enhance meetings – type and location	15	16	12	15	14	16	14	14	16
Enhance communication – listen to people / opinions	8	9	6	8	9	10	6	7	10

Note: Only response categories having 5 percent or more of all respondents are represented in the above table.
Numbers appearing in light gray are too small for statistical testing.

■ Differs significantly

Table 38: City Governance Assessment: Year-to-Year Comparison

Rated Service (Good to Very good)	Survey Year		Significant Change	Direction of Change (statistically significant)
	2003	2001		
Providing value for your tax dollars	51%	54%	No	-
Representing and providing for needs of all citizens	46	48	No	-
Communicating with its citizens	41	49	Yes	Decrease in satisfaction
Effectively planning for the future	39	50	Yes	Decrease in satisfaction

a groundswell of support for charter reform in Minneapolis.

“People like the checks and balances,” says Chuck Lutz, deputy director of the Community Planning and Economic Development Department, who chaired the Minneapolis Charter Commission in the 1980s. “They are inherently suspicious of what they see as an over-concentration of power,” he says. “Good, bad, or indifferent, democracy is messy, and people like it that way.” (Nathan, *Minneapolis Observer*)

Charter changes may be accomplished in several ways specified by Minnesota Statute 410.12. Amendments may be proposed: by citizen petition, by the City Council, or by the Charter Commissioners. Proposed amendments must be submitted to the Charter Commission and enacted only after recommendation by the Charter Commission and approval by the City Council on a 13-0 vote or after placement on the general election ballot by the council after being forwarded from the charter commission. The council does have the authority to determine the wording of proposed changes on the ballot. If 51% of those voting on the amendment support it, it passes. For a proposed change to appear on the November 2005 ballot, it would need to be introduced after May 10, 2005. (See Appendix for the complete timeline.)

OPTIONS FOR INDEPENDENT BOARDS

Three independent boards are established in the Minneapolis Charter, Estimate and Taxation, Library, and Park and Recreation. They have served the city well over the years. The Board of Estimate and Taxation serves in lieu of a public referendum on setting maximum tax levies; it also has the internal audit function for all city departments, boards, and commissions. The Library Board has the authority to levy tax for the support of the library system, although the Board of Estimate and Taxation has the power to set a maximum library tax levy. The Board also appoints the Director and establishes policy for the city libraries. The Park and Recreation Board, like the Library Board, levies taxes for the park system and operations, establishes policy, and employs a staff. Both the Park Board and the Library Board are subject to state legislation for some of their activities.

(The school board is governed by state legislation since 1959 when Minneapolis Public Schools were established as a Special Independent School District. Prior to that time the city council and board of estimate and taxation controlled school funding. There is also a joint-powers Youth Coordinating Board.)

Library Board

The Minneapolis Public Library is governed by an independent Board of Trustees. Six are elected at large for four-year terms and two are appointed for two-year terms by the Mayor and City Council. (All board terms expire in 2005.) The Library Board derives its authority both from the city charter and from state legislation; it has the authority to levy taxes for the support of the library system, although the Board of Estimate and Taxation has the power to set a maximum library tax levy. The Library Board also appoints the Director.

According to the Urban Library Council (ULC), whose membership comprises 104 large urban libraries in the U.S. including the Minneapolis Public Library and the St. Paul library, almost three-quarters of library boards are authority boards, as are both the MPL and St. Paul boards. Fewer than 25 percent are advisory. However, only six percent of all authority boards have members elected by the public. In every case, advisory boards' members are appointed. The average size of authority boards is ten members.

Public libraries vary as to their situation within the governing environment. Nearly 50 percent are departments of city (or county) government. About 20 percent are nonprofit agencies; the remaining 30 percent are multi-jurisdictional agencies, independent municipal corporations, political subdivisions or autonomous municipal bodies.

The Saint Paul Public Library recently became an independent agency after a long history as a city department. Its Library Board consists of the members of the Saint Paul City Council. The actions of the Library Board are subject to mayoral veto and override of that veto in the same manner as other actions of the City Council. The library's proposed budget is now published and presented separately from the City's.

According to the ULC "traditional reliance on local government budgets has given public libraries a revenue base that is relatively stable." Indeed, between 2002 and 2003 most libraries experienced increases in general operating revenues. This is a stark contrast to the circumstances in Minneapolis, where in 2003, due to state budget cuts, the library was required to cut approximately \$2.1 million from its budget after the start of the fiscal year.

Local Government Aid (LGA) reductions to Minneapolis in 2003, 2004, and 2005 amounted to \$26 million, \$35 million, and \$2 million respectively. Local Government Aid (LGA) to the Library went from \$7.4 million (36.8%) of library budget in 2003 to \$6.5 million (32.8%) in 2005. These budget reductions resulted in layoffs of 25 percent of the library staff and severe reductions in library hours across the city. The two entities that can give money to the Library Board are the Board of Estimate and Council Members through LGA (local government aid). The library can't raise or borrow money for itself. There is a disconnect between the ability and authority to fund and run the library. A substantial portion of the city's LGA funding had been allotted to the library, so when LGA was cut the library was hurt. As noted above LGA has been a large portion of the library's funding and accounted for 20 percent of the total LGA the city received. Yet, if you go to the City's web site and examine its current legislative stance on LGA, there is no mention of the library and its precarious situation, although there is support for full funding for LGA. (<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/legislativeaffairs/index.asp>)

If, as the Urban Libraries Council argues, "Urban public libraries are assets in the communities they serve, supporting and stimulating lifelong learning as well as providing equitable access to information. In addition to their vital roles in serving individuals,

PARK/LIBRARY BONDING

The Park and Recreation and Library Boards are independent boards, except to the extent that their budgets, levies and bonding authority are cooperatively developed with the City Council and Board of Estimate and Taxation. However even established controls and designed cooperation do not always work as anticipated. Two recent cases illustrate the breakdown.

In 2004 the Minneapolis Park Board was able to secure its own building without bonding authority by using a lease-purchase agreement to, in effect, mortgage property it purchased on the riverfront to use as park headquarters. This purchase had a positive financial impact for the Park Board as it replaced space previously leased at a higher cost. However it was done without the approval of the City Council, which weighed in as desiring co-location with other city offices. The end result was Park Board securing its new building without City bonding authority or the blessing of the City Council.

On the flip side, the Library Board sought Council approval to sell bonds for major capital maintenance for the Walker Library. The Library is located on a key corner in the Uptown neighborhood and the City Council has visions of selling the land for a mixed use development that would include a new library along with housing and retail space. While considering this option the City Council would not approve bonding authority for the library repairs. Without bonding authority the Library Board has been stymied in making repairs to its building.

urban libraries are tools for their communities. Public libraries serve as resources for addressing community priorities such as economic development, neighborhood revitalization, civic participation, and the integration of new immigrants,” then it may make sense that the Minneapolis Public Library would be better integrated into all the City’s activities if it were more closely aligned with other City departments and the Council and Mayor.

Park Board

In 1883, the Legislature authorized an independent Board of Park Commissioners for the City of Minneapolis, with its own taxing authority. Soon after, City voters elected the first park Commissioners. Later, the Board officially adopted the ‘recreation” part of its name. Commissioners are responsible for: developing park policies; and enacting ordinances governing the use of neighborhood and regional parks, parkways, beaches and lakes, and special use facilities such as pools, ice arenas and municipal golf courses. The Commissioners also appoint the Parks superintendent.

In 2004, the Park Board created new administrative districts, going from six to three, but the number of commissioners will remain at nine, three at large and one each from six districts. The 2005 election of Commissioners will be conducted along the new Park District lines that were created via the redistricting process. Current elected Commissioners continue to represent the Park District from which they were elected through 2005.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board reduction in Local Government Aid (LGA) was \$4.07 million dollars from the 2003 original budget. Overall revenues (Property Taxes, LGA, State Grants, Other) for 2004 were \$2.3 million dollars less than the 2003 original budget. The proposed 2005 budget is \$49.9 million.

Board of Estimate And Taxation

The Board of Estimate and Taxation, consists of the Mayor, the President of the City Council, the Chair of the Committee on Ways and Means and Budget of the City Council, an elected member of the Library Board as designated by the board, the President of the Board of Park Commissioners or another member, and two additional members representing the general public elected at large for terms of four years. The Board serves in lieu of having the citizens of the City vote on each City budget.

Every office, department, board, commission and other agency of the City financed in any way by appropriations of the City Council, or having any power to levy taxes, submits to the Board of Estimate and Taxation and to the Mayor budget information for the following fiscal year. Such budget information includes a statement of proposed expenditure, the revenue from all sources and a recommended program for capital improvements for the ensuing five-year period. The Board of Estimate and Taxation each year fixes the maximum amount of money and maximum rate which may be raised in the aggregate by general taxation by the City Council, boards or departments.

Although several League studies have addressed indirectly the Board of Estimate and Taxation, the LWVMpls currently has no position dealing specifically with the role and responsibilities of that Board.

The current LWVMpls position on libraries supports: adequate financing and sound administrative procedures for the Minneapolis Public Library; an independently elected Library Board; and, cooperation between library systems on a regional basis. Support for an independent library board dates back to 1965.

The current LWVMpls position on parks supports: adequate financing, sound

administrative and planning procedures; an independently elected Park Board; and, procedures to increase board responsiveness to the public. Support for an independent park board dates to 1974.

In 1980 the League reaffirmed its support for four-year terms for Council Members, the Mayor, Park Commissioners, School Board Members, members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation, and the Comptroller/Treasurer. Because members strongly supported the independence of School, Park and Library Boards, it dropped support for consolidation of taxing power under the Council.

The primary factor influencing the League's support for independent boards seems to have been the belief that their independence would: increase accountability, provide for greater citizen involvement in decision making, and lead to better financing. Interviews conducted for this study suggest that these three goals may not be as well served by independence as many would wish.

Several of those we talked with argued that the independence of the boards is costly in terms of decision making and transparency. For example, tradeoffs in the budgeting process weaken the taxing authority of the Park and Library Boards. While the Council actually makes many decisions about budgets for parks and libraries, Council Members are able to refer citizen complaints to the respective boards, thus severing decision making from accountability. And, while the Parks superintendent and the Library director are invited to City department head meetings, they have no real input. This has strong negative implications for communication and trust.

Council Members, present and past, have reported that they receive a significant number of constituent phone calls about

park and library matters. This may occur because Council Members are better known, have offices and staff, and are listed in phone directories. Library and Park Board members, especially those elected at-large, are less well known and may simply be harder to reach by phone.

Given these considerations it may be time to ask whether independent boards continue to meet citizen needs in the ways originally intended, and to ask whether other options might do as well or better. In the past, the independent boards, especially the Park Board, have been successful in securing funds from the Minnesota Legislature for projects in the city, which also benefit nearby residents and, in many cases, the entire state. But, the tight financial picture for now and into the future demands careful priority setting for the whole of Minneapolis. This may be more likely to happen if budget decisions centered on one body, the City Council. This certainly does not preclude the continuation of citizen boards for parks and libraries but would probably mean a change from elected to appointed members (The library board already has some appointed members). Such boards are common, at least in other large urban municipalities.

Board members argue that the quality of our parks and libraries are directly tied to the independence of their boards, that such high quality is no small matter, and that their future should not be left in the hands of a city department. Yet, public safety, probably the most important aspect of the city according to resident surveys, is entrusted to a department. And, great libraries in cities such as Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and Seattle, in fact, 40 out of 96 large urban libraries surveyed in late 2003, are city (or county) departments. Of those libraries led by authority boards (like the Minneapolis Public Library) more than 85 percent have appointed boards.

CITY AND PARK POLICE

In 2000 the Minneapolis Police Department and the Minneapolis Park Police Department jointly reviewed the service they provided to look for gaps and overlaps that could be addressed by changes in organization, policy or operations. Over a period of six months they looked at seven areas of responsibility (eg. 911 response, training). They also reviewed the delivery of park law enforcement services in other cities. The study identified the need to formalize and document the relationship and responsibilities of each department.

Three recommendations came out of the study:

- undertake a criminal investigations restructuring initiative in which Minneapolis Police Department would take over the investigative work load of the Park Police as an 18-month pilot program;
- jointly target preventive law enforcement to designated public parks and adjacent neighborhood areas;
- develop a written memorandum of understanding to formalize the services provided by each jurisdiction and how cooperative efforts further their individual mission and responsibilities.

These recommendations were to be implemented in 2001, but changes in the players (Council, Police Chief, etc.) have resulted in no action.

“Strong political leadership is a very rare commodity. It doesn’t correlate with one structure or another.... mustering the civic will to make gut-wrenching choices requires the deft touch of talented politicians. The most important challenge isn’t to write charters for them; it is to nurture them in the first place.”

“Lure of the Strong Mayor,” *Governing Magazine*, July, 1993

In the case of the Board of Estimate and Taxation, whose work seems to be little understood by most residents, the names and responsibilities of the elected members of the board are virtually unknown. One of our resources suggested that the function of the board might be carried out by a body similar to but smaller than CLIC, the Capital Long-range Improvements Committee, thereby eliminating the need to elect two citizen members. CLIC makes recommendations to the City Council and Mayor on capital improvement program development and annual capital improvement budgets. It has 33 citizen members with seven at-large members appointed by the Mayor and two members from each ward appointed by the Council.

PREVIOUS LEAGUE STUDIES AND POSITIONS

From its very beginning, League of Women Voters of Minneapolis (LWVMpls) has shown an avid interest in Minneapolis city government and its structure. In 1923 the LWVMpls endorsed a city manager plan and in 1925 reaffirmed its belief in the principle of home rule. It worked for adoption of city-manager type charters in 1926 and 1936 without success. It worked for a strong-mayor type charter in 1948, 1960 and 1963, but those attempts failed, too. After the last defeat, the LWVMpls and others interested in charter reform conceded that a complete new charter was politically impossible and that piecemeal charter revision was a more realistic goal.

LWVMpls in 1969 and 1970 supported establishing four-year terms for Council Members and other City officials and electing some Council Members at-large. As a result of the 1971 study *New Trends in City Government* the LWVMpls reaffirmed its support for four-year terms and for at-large Council Members. In the spring of 1980 the LWVMpls produced *Minneapolis Government Structure: Help or Hindrance?* as

an attempt to clarify and update previous positions and to analyze the effects of the 1978 charter change. The League reaffirmed its support for four-year terms and dropped its support for at-large Council Members. In 1989, the LWVMpls published *View from the Inside: The Structure and Functioning of Minneapolis City Government*. Based on this study, the LWVMpls reaffirmed its support for electing the Mayor as the politically responsible city-wide leader to a four-year term; electing the City Council by ward to non-staggered terms and limiting their terms to twelve years in office; the existence of a bipartisan Executive Committee; and long-range planning by the City Council.

In addition to possible major shifts such as adoption of the Council-Manager form of government, espoused by some of our resources as well as the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* in a series of commentaries in December 2004, there are a number of more moderate options which might be considered to improve the functioning and/or efficiency of Minneapolis City government. These include: change in the size of the council, shifting from full-time to part-time council members, modification or elimination of wards, elimination of independent boards, or various combinations of these options.

POSSIBLE CHANGES

Council Size

Although there have never been more than 13 wards in Minneapolis, the number of City Council Members fluctuated, being as high as 39 in 1887. Since the mid 1950s, when the population of the city was significantly larger at 521,718, each of the thirteen wards has been represented by one full-time Council Member. At that time communication between elected officials and their constituents required significant time for the distribution of printed information or the scheduling of meetings

or broadcast outlets to engage significant numbers of citizens. Much communication thus entailed considerable lag time or was likely to miss many residents.

With the 2000 estimated city population of 382,618 people and the widespread availability of electronic communication mechanisms, it might be possible for citizens to maintain or improve access to their elected officials even with fewer Council Members. If constituent services in Council offices are replaced by the Minneapolis One Call (311), that major part of the Council's role will disappear.

Some of those we spoke with in preparing this report strongly suggested that a smaller council would be better because it more quickly could reach agreement on decisions. This, they say, would be advantageous especially in times of rapid change. Others feel that the current, relatively large council is better able to bring a variety of viewpoints and expertise to the decision making process. This diversity would be lost in a smaller council and might result in poorer decisions.

Full-Time Vs. Part-Time Council

Those who favor a full-time Council point to the importance of the work done by Council Members, the need to attract competent, diverse office holders, and to the opportunities that having full-time Council Members provides for interaction with constituents.

Somewhat surprisingly, those who favor a part-time Council make almost the same arguments. Part-time office holders, they argue, would be more likely to focus on important policy matters and stay out of day-to-day City management. They also say that making Council Members part-time would increase the pool of potential candidates by attracting persons whose career interests are outside of politics. And, they

suggest that constituent services are either better handled through mechanisms such as 311 or could be managed more effectively (and, perhaps, more fairly) by structured processes for resident input that did not require Council Members to be constantly at the beck and call of voters.

Elimination of Wards

Many of those we interviewed lamented the "lack of vision" or "attention to the big picture" evidenced by the Council and Mayor in Minneapolis. This situation, in their view, contributes to short-sighted decision making as well as internal competition. Some decisions that should be made, they told us, are deferred or overlooked because of their likely effects on one or more wards. Even if Council Members know that a particular decision is a good one for the City as a whole, they are understandably reluctant to "commit political suicide."

Some argue that a Council elected at large, or one that had a combination of at large and ward Council Members, would tend to focus on "what's best for Minneapolis" and thus make better quality decisions with more attention to their future impacts. Others believe that an at-large Council would have a tendency to make decisions that would exacerbate existing disparities among the City's neighborhoods and might also disadvantage specific interests or groups.

Some pointed out that Council Members are often advocates for their constituents based on their more thorough understanding of local situations, while City staff need to be more uniform in their application of rules and decisions and are, at the same time, usually less familiar with the neighborhood situation.

Another criticism of at-large Councils is that running City-wide makes at-large candidates and office holders "mini-mayors." And, the costs of running City-wide campaigns are

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT IN MINNEAPOLIS

In April 1999, Minneapolis committed to a system of performance measurement. Performance measurement is a process of assessing City progress toward achieving City goals. According to the City's web site, Minneapolis has chosen to focus on three types of measures: Efficiency Measures (productivity); Effectiveness Measures (quality and satisfaction); and Outcome Measures (results and value added).

Expected outcomes of performance measurement include:

- **Enhancing Governance:** The use of performance measurement is intended to strengthen the ability of public officials to set priorities, inform constituents, and hold the system accountable.
- **Enhancing City Management:** Performance measures will help provide City of Minneapolis departments a context for decision-making for the best investment of limited resources.
- **Enhancing Relationships with Citizens:** The City of Minneapolis is working to strengthen the City's ability to communicate performance to the public.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT IN ONTARIO

Performance measurement can be more useful when it provides benchmarks. For example, in Ontario common assessments are used in all municipalities. The objectives of the program are to: provide a tool to assess how well municipal services are delivered; improve performance; strengthen accountability to taxpayers; and provide an information resource that allows municipalities to share strategies and learn new and or better practices from one another. Ten areas are assessed: local government, fire, police, roads, public transit, waste water, storm water, water, solid waste, and land-use planning.

COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING

Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) was proposed as a solution to the city's development problems in 2002. It would bring together three existing units to provide seamless access for developers working with the city. An outside evaluation of CPED conducted in late 2004 showed that the new department has resulted in better management of development funds, but that significant problems with the new structure remain to be addressed. To date neither the department nor the Council has taken action to implement the consultants' recommendations nor to adopt other steps to improve the new unit.

considerably higher than those run in a more limited geographic area. For example, one person we interviewed suggested that the reason Library Board members are so little known is that they run City-wide and with relatively little funding.

Non-Partisan Council Members

Technically, Minneapolis Council seats are non-partisan, but, of course, the endorsement by a political party is a major factor in most races. Some city councils are elected without party endorsements, although often there are other kinds of endorsements sought. In addition to party and labor union endorsements, police and firefighters, women's groups, racial and ethnic interest groups, and many others are integral to a successful run for office in Minneapolis.

Other Remedies

We also heard suggestions to: lengthen or shorten terms of Council Members; to streamline or standardize the role of Council Members; and, to adjust the balance of power among the Mayor, Executive Committee and City Council -- all as possible remedies to perceived weaknesses in the current system.

What we did not find in our researches for this study was unequivocal evidence that any of these possible changes is consistently associated with better governance. There are Mayor-Council cities with even larger councils than Minneapolis which are viewed as highly effective, but there are also "good" councils which are smaller. The same situation exists for each of the options. Intuitively, it would seem that smaller councils and/or those with part-time Council Members would be more cost effective. But, this would only be true for Minneapolis to the extent that current council member workloads would not be simply shifted to city employees. It appears that this has been the case in some other jurisdictions.

"The truth is there is no perfect system for all cities and all seasons. Almost any set of rules can work under the right circumstances. Phoenix has done extraordinarily well under a rather strict system of city-manager government. Chicago has prospered under the relatively benign political autocracy of the Daley family....In a great many cities, 'reform' is always going to consist of whatever system hasn't been tried there lately. ("The Mayor-Manager Conundrum," by Alan Ehrenhalt, *Governing Magazine*, October, 2004).

Realistic Expectations

Minneapolis residents, at least in the past, have shown little inclination to make sweeping changes to the City Charter. Instead they have favored incremental changes such as adjusting terms of office, adding or subtracting assigned roles and responsibilities, and other subtle modifications in the way the City functions. Some would argue that this is exactly why major changes are now required. Others, just as adamant, say that this incrementalism shows the wisdom of the electorate.

Perhaps what Minneapolis needs more than major structural change is widespread commitment on the part of elected officials and city employees to use the performance management system recently put into place along with other strategic and tactical techniques to make the existing structure work as effectively and efficiently as possible.

TIMELINE

The Charter Commission is continuing with its work of clarifying language in the current version of the City's Charter.

In February Minneapolis Sen. Larry Pogemiller introduced a bill (SF 1234 - sponsored in the House by Rep. Margaret Anderson Kelliher as HF 1486) to create a panel to study the form and structure of city government in Minneapolis and make recommendations to the Charter Commission, legislature or other branches of government; the bill has been referred to the Senate State and Local Government Operations Committee. If passed the panel would have seven members and would have until June 30, 2006 to complete its work and make recommendations. One member would be appointed by each of: Governor, Mayor, Council, Park Board, Library Board, School Board, and Downtown Council.

There are many in and out of the City who will be highly interested in any proposals for change. It will be difficult to effect changes without the support (or perhaps in some cases neutrality) of these interest groups.

The current Mayor, potential candidates for that office as well as current and future Council Members will be active in advancing or resisting specific proposals. Recent Charter change initiatives in 1988 and 1989 saw intense involvement by then-current office holders.

City employees and their unions are now and would continue to be key players, as would the state and local media including electronic and print outlets. The series of December 2004 editorials in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* and follow up articles in many of the neighborhood newspapers in Minneapolis attest to this latter interest. City employees have amply demonstrated their interests in past Charter change pushes and in ongoing efforts to influence the course of municipal decision making.

Political parties and members of the legislature will have strong views on what happens in Minneapolis. So should residents. We hope this study contributes to the community conversation on this important topic.

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- Chuck Ballentine, Director
Housing, Community Works, & Transit
Hennepin County
- Don Fraser, Former Mayor
City of Minneapolis
- Jon R. Gurban, Superintendent
Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board
- Kit Hadley, Director
Minneapolis Public Library Board
- Janet M. Hively, Senior Fellow
College of Continuing Education and
Senior Advisor, Vital Aging Network
University of Minnesota
- Jay Kiedrowski, Senior Fellow
Center for Leadership of Nonprofits,
Philanthropy and the Public Sector
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota
- Barret W.S. Lane, Ward 13 Council Member
City of Minneapolis
- Chuck Lutz, Deputy Director
Community Planning and Economic
Development
City of Minneapolis
- Bob Miller, Executive Director
Minneapolis Neighborhood Revitalization
Program
- John Moir, City Coordinator
City of Minneapolis
- Trudy Moloney, Director
Council Operations
City of St. Paul
- Lee Munnich, Senior Fellow and Director
State and Local Policy Program
Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs
University of Minnesota
- Kathleen O'Brien, V.P. for University Services
University of Minnesota
- Scott Russell, Staff Writer
Southwest Journal
- Jeff Schneider, Senior Project Manager
Community Planning and Economic
Development
City of Minneapolis
- Dick Smith, Assistant Director of Public Works
City of Minneapolis
- Lyall A. Schwarzkopf, Former City Coordinator
and Former City Clerk
City of Minneapolis
- Ray Waldron, President
Minnesota AFL-CIO

APPENDIX

2005 Charter Amendment Proposal Calendar

Meeting Schedule

These regularly scheduled meeting dates do not preclude the Charter Commission, Intergovernmental Relations Committee or City Council from scheduling special meetings.

Calendar for a proposed Charter amendment initiated by a Citizen Petition	
May 10, 2005	Earliest date a petition may be submitted to place a question on the November General Election ballot. Petitions submitted prior will require a special election be conducted. <i>(M.S.410.10 Subd.1)</i>
July 6, 2005	<i>Regularly scheduled</i> Charter Commission meeting to recommend Charter changes for referral to the Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) Committee
July 19 and August 2, 2005	<i>Regularly scheduled</i> Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) Committee meetings to approve ballot language before statutory deadline to propose charter amendments
August 5, 2005	<i>Regularly scheduled</i> City Council meeting to approve ballot language before statutory deadline to propose charter amendments
Aug. 16, 2005	State law prohibits any Charter proposal from being submitted for the November General Election ballot after this date <i>(M.S.410.12 Subd.1- 12 weeks prior to the general election)</i>
September 16, 2005	Written notice to County Auditor of ballot language <i>(M.S.205.16 subd. - 53 days prior to election)</i>
Nov. 8, 2005	General Election

Requirement for number of signatures on a Citizen Petition *(M.S.410.12 Subd.1)*

At least 10,084 Minneapolis registered voter signatures are required to submit a citizen petition. This number is determined by State Law, which requires signatures from at least 5 percent of total votes cast at the previous State General Election. At the last State General Election held November 2, 2004, the number of Minneapolis residents who voted was 201,672.

Verification for a Citizen Petition *(M.S.410.12 Subd.3)*

- The Minneapolis Elections and Voter Registration Office has ten (10) days to verify initial submission of signatures.
- Petitioners have ten (10) more days to obtain additional signatures if needed.
- The Minneapolis Elections and Voter Registration Office has five (5) additional days to verify additional signatures.