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Task Force on Structure of City Government

Common Council Subcommittee

Friday, November 16, 2018

RMT comments:

5. DISCUSSION OF TOPIC AREA 1 IDENTIFIED IN THE CC SUBCOMMITTEE WORK PLAN

a. **Full v. Part time alders or hybrid of full and part time.**

- This determination will be driver of many of the other issues to be discussed and the recommendations to follow.
- A full time council may be more professional and have a better grasp of total city issues and the operation of the city.
- A full time council may be a better balance to a mayor and to city staff.
- A full time council may encourage individuals who would not otherwise run because of the economic and time restraints of a part time position and the need for full time employment.
- A part time council may have broader representation of individuals with more varied background due to presumably a larger council size and the costs of running for office.
- A part time council may encourage more people of more varied backgrounds to run as “public service”.
- A part time council may set an attitude of public service as compared to the attitude of a job to be protected.
- A part time council may have more rapid turnover (1/4 to 1/3 of the council each election cycle) with more new blood.
- A part time council can be very stressful for those who have full time jobs, especially for those with families, which can be a discouraging factor.
- A part time council can be stressful on low and moderate income members due to economic costs and the need for evening meetings, e.g. child care, which can be a discouraging factor.
- A full time council may be populated by “professional junior politicians” in a minor league waiting for the opportunity to progress to a major league position.

- A full time council may be more susceptible to professional lobbying.

b. Alder Terms (2 v 4 years).

- If we go to a full time council, a four year term may be more reasonable.
- It takes a year “to learn the city”.
- Two year terms may make alders more “responsive” to “neighborhood” and/or “district” pressure.
- A four year term may allow alders to take a more city wide view and be less susceptible to “neighborhood” and/or “district” pressure.
- A four year term may encourage more people to run for office.
- There seems to be council burnout at six years. Will this lead to appointed positions in the middle of a second four year term.

c. Number of Alders/Districts.

- Some cost issues.
- Dependent upon full time or part time.
- Cannot be coterminous with county board seats due to redistricting; will work at best only for a short time.
- Smaller number of districts may limit minority representation.
- Larger districts may discourage potential candidates.
- Larger districts may insulate alders from “neighborhood” and/or “district” pressure

d. Staggered Terms.

- Makes more sense if we go to four year terms.
- If we go to four year terms, may allow for more stability.
- Do we want the alder elections to be off-cycle from the mayor’s election.
- Do we have multi-alder districts with staggered terms or do we have even/odd staggered districts.