

CINCINNATI ELECTION REFORM COMMISSION

FINAL REPORT

MARCH 10, 2004

Donald J. Mooney, Jr., Chairman

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1. Overview

The Cincinnati Election Reform Commission includes representatives of Cincinnati's three political parties and appointees of Mayor Charles Luken. The Commission was asked to consider a number of election and structural reform proposals, including whether our City Council should be elected by Districts, whether Cincinnati should return to proportional representation voting for Council elections, and whether there should be changes with respect to the powers of the Mayor. (Resolution, Attachment A.)

Over the last fifteen years, Cincinnatians have voted on several changes to the way City officials are elected and City government is organized.¹ The most recent change was adopted in May 1999. For the first time since the creation of the Council/Manager form of government in the 1920's, Cincinnatians authorized the direct election of the Mayor. The directly-elected Mayor initiates the selection and removal of the City Manager. The City Council retained the power to approve the selection or removal of the City Manager. Under that system, the City Manager reports to both Council and the Mayor.

Another proposal that has been debated in Cincinnati over two decades, but which has never appeared on the ballot, is election of Council members by District. Since the creation of the Council/Manager form of government in the 1920's, Cincinnati City Council has consisted of nine Council members, elected at large, either by proportional representation, or since the mid-1950's by the current 9X system.

In undertaking its work, the Commission considered and studied proposals for enhancing the power of the Mayor, District elections for Council members, proportional representations, and other less significant changes. Each of our proposals had varying degrees of support as

¹ See Attachment B, List of Election Reform Issues on the Ballot and Outcomes.

noted below. Our proposals reflect the belief by many of us and among many members of the community that Cincinnati needs more accountable and effective governmental and political mechanisms to respond to the serious challenges our City faces.

Our Charter members have prepared a Minority Report which will either be attached to this Report or separately provided to Council. The Minority Report indicates the extent to which members of the Commission join in that Report.

2. The Purpose and Goals of the Commission

When we began our work, the Commission identified our mission, strategies and goals for evaluating proposals to make our election and governmental structures more effective for these times.

(a) Cincinnati Election Reform Commission Mission

The purpose of the Commission was to determine whether Cincinnati's current electoral system is serving the City well, and, if not, recommend a better system to City Council and the Public.

Possible Alternatives To Be Studied:

- Election of Council by District
- Election of Council by Proportional Representation
- Executive Mayor
- Other Alternatives or Combinations Proposed by the Public

(b) Cincinnati Election Reform Commission Strategies

- Conduct Public Hearings
- Solicit Public Input

- Consult Experts
- Evaluate Systems Used in Other Cities
- Examine Options Such as District Elections, Proportional Representation, Combined District and At-Large Systems, and Executive Mayor

(c) **Factors To Consider In Deciding Whether An Election System Serves Cincinnati Well**

- Accountability
- Representative/Inclusive
- Equitable
- Easily Understood
- Encourages Higher Voter Turnout
- Reduces the Dollars Required to Run a Campaign
- Ability of Voters to Make Informed Decisions
- Demands and Promotes Leadership by Elected Officials
- System Is Efficient and Effective
- Encourages Competition
- Encourage Regional Cooperation

3. The Commission's Effort to Seek Out Citizen Input and Expert Advice

During October and November 2003, the Commission conducted three public hearings at locations in Bond Hill, Westwood and Oakley for the purpose of soliciting citizen input. The hearings were broadly publicized and relatively well attended. The Commission hearings were telecast over City cable so as to further discussion in the community about the possibility of election and structural changes for the City. While there was no effort to scientifically measure input received at these public hearings, a slight majority of those in attendance appeared to favor

the election of Council members by Districts. But some citizens did express support for maintaining the at-large system for Council elections and proportional representation.

The Commission recognized that input received at public hearings would not necessarily represent the views of all our citizens. As a result, we commissioned a public opinion poll done by Public Opinion Strategies, a polling organization which has conducted public opinion polling in Cincinnati since 1993. A summary of the Public Opinion Strategies Poll, conducted January 13 and 14, 2004, is attached hereto as Attachment C. A separate section of this report discusses aspects of that poll many of us considered to be significant.

The City Council resolution creating the Commission asked that any recommendation calling for District elections include appropriate maps. To draw District maps, the Commission obtained the services of Mr. Bob Dykes of Triad Research in Cleveland, Ohio. Mr. Dykes is a recognized expert in legislative apportionment. We asked Mr. Dykes to prepare maps showing fifteen, nine and six Districts, which would preserve to the extent possible neighborhood boundaries, create relatively compact Districts, and comply with applicable federal law. During the course of this work, the Commission rejected outright a fifteen-district proposal. The Commission approved for Council's consideration two District maps: one showing nine Districts and one showing six Districts. These separate maps are attached hereto as Attachment D.

Finally, the Commission sought information on systems used by other comparable cities in America. We identified and obtained the services of Craig Wheeland, Ph.D., from Villanova University, a nationally recognized expert in local government structures. Dr. Wheeland prepared a report and supplemental report for us along with a Power Point presentation. Those items are attached hereto as Attachment E.

In order to obtain these professional services, the Commission, by resolution, solicited financial supports from a number of local business and civic organizations. The Cincinnati Business Committee and the Greater Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce have graciously assisted the Commission with the financial support needed to pay for these professional services.

4. A Summary of the Polling Information

The polling by Neil Newhouse showed that the political environment in Cincinnati is not a positive one. Voters overwhelmingly believe (by a margin of 63% to 28%) that the City is off on the wrong track. And two-thirds of voters believe the city is falling behind other similar communities. A strong majority (by a margin of 56% to 38%) believe that the current City Manager system does not work well. The sentiment for change runs across partisan, geographic and racial lines in the City. In fact, only 15% of self-described Charterites believe the current system could be kept as is. The hard part is determining what type of change a majority of citizens will support.

There is majority support for an executive mayor being in charge of city government with the support of a professional manager, citing a belief that the change would make the mayor more accountable to the voters and give him/her the authority to get things done.

On City Council election reforms, voters are more divided, but a majority do believe the current 9X system makes it difficult to hold individual members accountable. When presented with electoral options, 43% supported district systems and 33% supported continuing 9X. Regardless of their preference for districts, nearly two-thirds of voters do agree that district elections will increase accountability of individual City Council members to voters, and will give neighborhoods better representation because they will have their own Council member.

In short, the polling showed that the voters of Cincinnati are not satisfied with the current affairs of the City, desire change, and seem willing to support a strong Mayor and district election system for City Council.

5. A Summary of Dr. Wheeland's Report

Dr. Wheeland confirmed that the form of government impacts local government performance. The nature of the institution influences how elected officials will act. Ambiguity and conflict over responsibilities can result in officials not acting appropriately due to conflicting understandings of their roles.

Dr. Wheeland's report provides a nationwide perspective on the institutional features of U. S. city charters, particularly those with more than 250,000 residents. There are two principal forms of city government for larger U.S. cities:

The Council/Manager Form

In its traditional form, this system features a relatively small Council, elected at large, with a professional Manager appointed and removed by Council, in charge of the city administration. In this form, the Mayor is usually a member of Council, not directly elected. Dr. Wheeland describes this system as a "unification of powers" with Council exercising legislative powers and executive powers delegated to an appointed Manager. In cities with a population over 250,000, forty percent use the Council/Manager form or variations.

The Mayor/Council Form

This form follows the separation of powers concept used in the state and federal systems. The City Council holds legislative power and approves the annual budget. The Mayor exercises executive power, directing the city administration and choosing (and removing) department heads. In cities with a population over 250,000, sixty percent use the Mayor/Council system,

most frequently in conjunction with Councils elected by district, or by a mixed system of district and at-large Council members.

Dr. Wheeland's report lists the advantages and disadvantages of both systems. The national trend has been away from the traditional Council/Manager system in larger cities, with further empowerment of Mayors to enhance their ability to provide more focused political leadership. Attachment F shows the forms used in the largest American cities.

Cities such as Albuquerque, Oakland, and Philadelphia using the Mayor/Council form have enhanced professional leadership by creating a Chief Administrative Officer position to assist the elected Mayor.

Cincinnati is unusual among larger cities, with a Manager initially selected by a directly elected Mayor, but reporting both to Council and the Mayor. Dr. Wheeland notes that "giving the Mayor a general veto power in Council-Manager cities and the power to nominate the City Manager and initiate the Manager's removal creates rules that can make it difficult for the Mayor to lead Council and for the City Manager to respond to both the City Council and the Mayor when conflict is present." (Report, p. 15.)

Dr. Wheeland observed that our existing system is set-up to fail because the City Manager has to report to both a Mayor and nine Council members. This unusual Council/Manager system arose from compromises made in 1999, when the initial "Strong Mayor" initiative was proposed. Those compromises have caused the lack of institutional clarity that results in ten people claiming to be the Manager's boss and directing his/her activities. Throughout the nation, professional City Managers continue to provide professional city management in a strong mayor system as a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or Deputy Mayor. A CAO appointed by the Mayor could still be an ICMA credentialed manager, with a

graduate degree, experience in municipal government and a commitment to the ICMA code of ethics. Such a CAO would be required to have forty hours of continuing education per year in seventeen core competency areas.

6. Commission Recommendations

(a) Change to a Mayor/Council system, with the creation of a “Chief Administrative Officer” position

Dr. Wheeland identified three potential strategies for addressing the basic structure of our City government:

- (i) Maintain the status quo, hoping that citizens’ satisfaction with city government will improve with time.
- (ii) Return to a more traditional “Council/Manager” relationship between the Mayor, City Manager and Council, with the Mayor returning to City Council and having no greater reporting relationship with the City Manager than other members of Council.
- (iii) Further empowering the Mayor by adopting a more traditional Mayor/Council form of government, with professional management provided by a Chief Administrative Officer appointed and removed solely by the Mayor.

By a vote of 10-3, the Commission recommends this last alternative, shifting to a Mayor/Council form. The current system, with the City Manager reporting both to the Mayor and Council, is confusing, ineffective and inefficient. This structure not only frustrates efficient administration but fragments leadership. Citizens do not know on whose desk “the buck stops” when

contentious decisions are made. The present system has not helped the City cope with the variety of challenges we have faced in recent years.

For instance, we believe that an appointed City Manager as CEO has limited ability to bridge our City's racial divide. Leading a city involves more than directing staff, preparing budgets and monitoring contracts. Strong mayors can tackle tough issues through use of the bully pulpit, political capital and moral courage. A strong Mayor can speak to and for the people and provide critical solutions, roles an appointed Manager cannot fill. Dr. Wheeland cited Philadelphia as one example where then-Mayor Ed Rendell avoided racial conflict through strong political leadership to defuse a brewing crisis.

Citizens expect strong leadership from the Mayor. To provide that leadership, that office must have the authority that will allow him or her to perform to the expectations of the citizens. With the authority to take charge of the City administration through the appointment of a CAO and other key department heads, the Mayor will be fully accountable to the citizens, with real authority to make strategic decisions for the City that can then be carried out by the administration. The Mayor can be the true leader of the City, while Council members can concentrate more on constituent services in their neighborhoods, and passing laws and the budget as the legislative body of the City.

Our specific recommendations on this issue are summarized as follows:

1. The Mayor will be the Chief Executive Officer of the City.
2. The Mayor shall appoint and can remove without Council approval a CAO who would report to the Mayor. The CAO would have the type of professional credentials required of the City Manager under Section 1, Article IV of the current Charter ("shall be appointed solely on the basis of his or her executive and

administrative qualifications and need not, when appointed, be a resident of the City or State”). In essence, the CAO will be the Chief Administrative Officer of the City, with duties and responsibilities for the overall management of the City, under the direction of the Mayor.

3. The CAO will have those administrative duties assigned by the Mayor to assure the efficient operation of the City.
4. The Mayor will have the power to appoint, without Council approval, the Administrative Officers identified in Article IV, Sections 5, 6, 7, and 9 (City Solicitor, Director of Finance, Director of Public Utilities, Superintendent of Water Works), and other department heads and administrations currently appointed by the Manager.
5. The Mayor will continue to have the power to appoint members of the Boards and Commissions, but without Council “advice and consent.”
6. Mayor’s Legislative Role. The recommendation is that the Executive and Legislative roles be separated, with the Mayor responsible as an executive for the administration of the City with the assistance of the CAO, and the Council responsible for the legislative function. As a result, the Mayor would no longer chair Council meetings and appoint the chairs of Council committees. Instead, the City Council would organize itself, would name a President of Council, to preside at Council meetings, and a President Pro-Tem, to preside at Council meetings if the President of Council is unavailable.

7. Issues of Succession. There would no longer be a “Vice Mayor.” The CAO would have the powers and perform the duties of the Mayor during the Mayor’s absence or disability (the current role of the Vice Mayor).

“In the event of the death, removal or resignation of the Mayor,” a member of Council designated in advance by the Mayor (similar to Council designations of successor appointment) would become Mayor. There need be no change in the election procedures at Article III, Section 3, with respect to the timing the special election in the event of the death, removal or resignation of the Mayor.

8. Method of Election. We do not recommend any changes in the method of electing the Mayor. There should continue to be a four-year term, with a runoff “open” primary in September and a general election in November.

The Commission has prepared draft Charter language showing how the current provisions of the Charter with respect to the Mayor and City Manager would be changed. (Attachment G.) The Solicitor should be asked to develop a full proposal for Charter amendments to implement this recommendation.

Changes also would be required in the City Administrative Code. Any Charter amendment language could simply require a change in the current Administrative Code substituting the title “Mayor” for “City Manager.” Council would continue to have the power to amend the Administrative Code by a super-majority vote as allowed in the current Charter.

7. Council Elections

There was only a slight (7-6) majority in favor of changes in the manner in which Council is elected. We heard the following arguments during our public hearings and from a

number of other experts we consulted, including former Mayor Eugene Ruehlmann, former Council member and Governor Jack Gilligan, and former Council members Marian Spencer and Bobbie Sterne.

(a) Proportional Representation

Our Charter members organized a presentation supportive of returning to the proportional representation system for electing Council members which had been used in Cincinnati from the mid-1920's through the mid-1950's. Proportional representation allows voters to rank candidates for City Council from one to nine with "first place" votes receiving greater weight than "ninth place" votes. The major argument for proportional representation is that it allows smaller constituencies within a city's population to identify and elect a favorite candidate, even though that candidate might not have the support of the majority. Proportional representation was on the ballot in Cincinnati in 1988, 1991 and most recently in 1993, and was rejected each time.

By vote of 10-3, the Commission did not recommend reverting to proportional representation. The arguments made against proportional representation concerned the complicated and (for some) confusing methods for counting ballots in a proportional representation system. Our research indicated that proportional representation is utilized in only one city in the United States (Cambridge, MA). Further, the argument that proportional representation does a better job of assuring minority representation seemed to some of us to be no longer compelling in light of changes in population and voting patterns over the last ten years.

(b) The Current 9X System

Since the mid-1950's, our nine-member Council has been elected at large with the nine candidates receiving the most votes elected to Council. Advantages identified with respect to

this system include that Council members must campaign throughout the City and must build relatively broad coalitions crossing racial, neighborhood, and class lines, in order to assure their election. This requires successful candidates to show concern for all City neighborhoods and the overall health of the City. Critics of the 9X system come in many instances from neighborhoods that believe that they have routinely been underrepresented on Council. These critics point out that most Council members generally come from a relatively small number of City neighborhoods; for example, North Avondale, Mt. Lookout, and currently Bond Hill. In particular, some neighborhood leaders on the west side of the City contend that their neighborhoods have been under-represented on and disregarded by Council.

Other arguments made against the 9X system include the high cost of running for election citywide, which necessarily limits the number and types of candidates who can run. Further, some opponents of preserving the 9X system believe that successful at-large Council candidates sometimes ignore the concerns of constituents for better quality City services in their neighborhoods. With its large field of candidates, the 9X system allows a candidate to be elected to City Council with a small minority (approximately 33%) of the citywide vote. As a result, the 9X system does not easily allow voters to hold candidates accountable for their actions/inaction and does not allow clear electoral choices as a head to head race would permit. By a close vote of 6 for and 7 against, the Commission rejected preserving the 9X system.

(c) Election of Council Members by Districts

Proponents of District elections who appeared before our Commission argued that Council members elected from relatively small geographic areas would be more focused on improving the quality of the neighborhoods they represent. Neighborhood and constituency groups who believe they are not represented well by the 9X system express the view that District

elections would assure that their neighborhoods are better represented by Council members more accountable to the neighborhoods they represent.

Some of us believe that in a system with an executive Mayor and Council Districts, the Mayor could focus more on the overall best interests of the City. Council members could work with the Mayor and the City administration to make sure that services are properly delivered to their Districts. Such systems work effectively in many successful American cities with the type of racial diversity we enjoy in Cincinnati. In fact, if the City adopts a mayor/council form of government, we would be one of a very few large cities that elects Council at large unless we adopt some form of district elections.²

Those of us who supported the District plan believe that Cincinnati would be better served with Council members elected from neighborhood-based Districts. Many Cincinnatians currently live in poor and/or segregated neighborhoods (Districts). These communities contend they exercise little power in the current at-large Council election system. Powerlessness in poor and/or segregated neighborhoods results partly from the inability of residents of these neighborhoods to successfully elect candidates to council and hold them directly accountable.

Neighborhood-based districts allow similarly situated Cincinnatians of comparable social stature, economic means and political interests to bring together their collective power on Election Day – aggregating, organizing and leveraging their political interests – to define and determine their own political leadership and hold that leadership accountable with the ultimate electoral sanction, a direct vote. District elections would provide a logical entry point for citizens involvement in local government. A Cincinnatians who wants to serve his or her neighborhood and City should not be expected to compete City-wide and raise \$100,000 plus to

² Of all cities above 330,000 population, 21 elect Councils at large; 42 by District; and 37 have a Mixed District/At-Large system. (Dr. Wheeland's Supplemental Report.)

have a chance to win. This requirement makes for a terribly high barrier for local government participation.

Moreover, the financial costs of running for Council are exorbitant. According to the October 2002 report of Ohio Citizen Action, 26 candidates spent \$1.9 million during the 2001 Council campaign. The nine winning candidates spent an average of more than \$168,000 per candidate, or nearly 80% of total dollars raised. Incumbent candidates raised 3.7 times more than non-incumbents. The result can be Council members overly reliant on wealthy contributors and special interests, and largely immune from defeat due to the financial and name recognition advantages that are necessary in the at-large system.

Courts have consistently struck down government imposed campaign spending limits as unconstitutional. Serving as a form of *de facto* campaign finance reform, neighborhood-based Council Districts address this seemingly intractable problem in a practical manner.

Neighborhood-based Districts will drastically change the financial dynamics of Council campaigns. By reducing to a more manageable amount the number of residents that Council candidates must reach in a campaign - to around 37,000 for nine Districts - the financial threshold of campaign dollars needed to effectively compete for Council seats will be significantly lowered. Under the proposed form, Council candidates cannot justify to either their contributors or constituents a need for large expenditures for television and radio advertisements. Council campaigns would necessarily become more "grass-roots" oriented. Quality candidates in touch with voters could win election through hard work and grass-roots campaigning. Money would no longer be the most important factor.

As executive power in the Office of Mayor increases, legislative power should be fairly shared throughout each Cincinnati neighborhood. Consolidation of executive power and

dispersion of legislative power is wholly consistent with our republican form of government, and its separation of powers.

Opponents argued that Districts would necessarily “divide” or “balkanize” the City, pitting neighborhood against neighborhood. Some expressed the concern that downtown, which is a significant source of City revenue, would necessarily be ignored by a Council elected by Districts. But many believe that the current 9X system already balkanizes the City. It balkanizes the City where Council members support the political interests of those who helped them get elected. In our at-large system, those municipal interests may not be wholly based on geographic constituents, but relate to the demands of the interest groups or contributors providing the base of a member’s electoral support.

True, some neighborhoods believe they have been well-served by the current 9X system. That may be because those neighborhoods have long been well represented on Council. For example, from 1967 to 1997, 135 council seats were available. Of 135 council seats available, 81 (60%) were filled by residents of just four (8%) of Cincinnati’s 52 neighborhoods: Mt. Lookout, North Avondale, Westwood and Clifton.

During that same 30-year period, 32 (61%) of Cincinnati’s 52 neighborhoods did not have even one of their residents elected. This historic trend illustrates that the ability to be elected to council has been substantially concentrated or “balkanized” into only a few neighborhoods.

For these reasons, by a vote of 7 for and 6 against, the Commission recommends a system of electing nine Council members using nine Districts. We attach a map which we believe would be an appropriate method of dividing the City into Districts. (Attachment D.)

The District election system we recommend would include the following elements, subject to the drafting of specific Charter language with the help of the Solicitor:

- (i) Nine Districts. The District map should preserve to the best extent possible neighborhood boundaries, should be relatively compact, and must comply with federal court guidelines concerning standard deviations of population and racial balance. We believe the attached map complies with these legal requirements. (Attachment D.)
- (ii) Elections. Council elections would remain non-partisan, with a non-partisan primary in September every two years, on the same date in September used for the mayoral election every four years. The top two vote getters in the primary would face off in the general election in November in their District. This would assure each Council member wins at least fifty percent of the vote in the District.
- (iii) Petitions. There should be a downward adjustment in the number of signatures obtained necessary to qualify for the ballot, since Council candidates would not be running citywide.
- (iv) Apportionment. Every ten years, following issuance of census data, the nine-member Council would appoint a Reapportionment Commission, with each incumbent Council member allowed one appointment. The commission would have one hundred twenty days to recommend to Council a new District map for the City reflecting population changes. If the map was not adopted within thirty days by the City Council, the power

of redrawing the District boundaries would go to the Mayor, who would have sixty days to issue a map that would control in subsequent elections until the next decennial census. (A similar approach appears in the Cleveland Charter.)

- (v) Initial Districts. A majority of the Commission believes that the maps attached to this report would be fair and appropriate. However, if Council places a nine-District proposal on the ballot, it should consider whether or not the reapportionment procedure recommended above should be used to establish the first set of District boundaries. The disadvantage in such an approach (as opposed to simply including an initial map as part of the Charter amendment proposal) would be to delay for several months after a Charter amendment vote the establishment of District boundaries. Further, some citizens may be reluctant to vote for a Charter amendment proposal creating nine Districts without knowing exactly where the initial District boundaries would be.

(d) The 6 District/3 At-Large Alternative

Another proposal which the Commission considered, but did not support, was a “mixed” system, with six Council members elected by District and three Council members elected at large. Some have expressed the view that such a system might well provide a balance between better neighborhood representation while having at least some Council members focused on the City’s interest as a whole. As indicated in Dr. Wheeland’s report and charts, a number of cities comparable in size to Cincinnati with strong Mayors use a mixed system including both District

and at large Council members. Attached to this report as Attachment D is a six District map we recommend if Council chooses to place this type of “mixed” system on the ballot.

(e) **Council Salaries**

Cincinnati Council members are now paid two-thirds the salary of Hamilton County Commissioners, amounting to more than \$57,000 annually. Dr. Wheeland’s survey shows that the average Council salary in cities over 200,000 population is \$23,735 in Council/Manager cities, and \$39,061 in Mayor/Council cities. If Council members are elected by District, it was the view of the Commission that the level of salary now in place would no longer be appropriate. District Council members would not be required to spend significant amounts of time traveling throughout the City to meet with constituents. Instead, their focus would be on their neighborhood Districts.

In addition, some have expressed the view that as Council positions have turned from part time to full time in recent years, based in large part upon the relative size of the salary, Council members have lost a “big picture” focus on overall City policy and have become more directly involved in attempts to “supervise” the City Manager, department heads, and various City employees. To some, this micro-management by Council members creates the impression that the City administration is so bogged down in responding to the demands of Council members that important City projects and initiatives have been delayed or frustrated. The Commission cannot make a meaningful judgment as to whether these concerns are legitimate. However, the Commission did vote by 7 – 4 (with two abstentions) to recommend reducing Council salaries to one-third the amount paid to Hamilton County Commissioners. This would amount to a fifty percent reduction in Council salary.

(f) Term Limits

In 1991, the citizens of Cincinnati voted to impose eight-year (4 terms) term limits on Council members. Term limits were not a subject that Council's resolution asked our Commission to consider. Nor did we receive significant input one way or the other on the issue of term limits during our public hearings. There was no term-limit question asked in the poll. However, in his report to the Commission, Dr. Wheeland noted that many cities do not have term limits for Council members and the Mayor. He further observed that term limits can have the effect of prematurely removing experienced leadership from a City Council. By a vote of twelve to one, the Commission recommends ending term limits for Council members as part of any proposal to elect Council members by Districts. The Commission does not recommend changing the eight-year term limit for the Mayor.

8. Conclusion

A majority of this Commission believe that significant changes are required to facilitate stronger and more accountable leadership for our City. Our most significant recommendation is a change to a Mayor/Council form of government, with the Mayor clearly in charge of the City administration, assisted by a professional Chief Administrative Officer. Just more than half of our members also support a Council elected by nine Districts, rather than the current at-large system. We believe that the citizens should have a chance to vote on these important proposals in the November 2004 election when there will be significant voter participation, generated by the 2004 Presidential election.

We offer our continued assistance in developing a comprehensive proposal for consideration by Cincinnati voters.