

CITIZENS LEAGUE REPORT

No. 127

**Charter Amendment to establish a
Minneapolis City Council Administrative
Officer**

March 1961

Citizens League
545 Mobil Oil Building
Minneapolis 2, Minnesota

Approved
Board of Directors
March 15, 1961

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TO: Citizens League Board of Directors

FROM: Government Reorganization Committee, Frank Walters, Chairman

SUBJECT: Findings and recommendations on proposed charter amendment establishing a Chief Administrative Officer under the Minneapolis City Council

THE PROPOSED AMENDMENT

Generally, the proposed amendment as presently worded would establish a Chief Administrative Officer who would be appointed by and responsible to the Minneapolis City Council. The duties which would be performed by the CAO are in most respects similar to those now performed by the Coordinator. However, the present duties of the Coordinator are not as well defined, nor do they have the sanction of charter status which would be provided under the proposed amendment. Also, the CAO would be in the unclassified service, whereas the Coordinator is in the classified service. The CAO would serve for a two-year term, subject to removal by a 2/3 vote of the Council. The Coordinator serves for an indefinite term, subject to discharge for cause.

It is the contention of the Council that the proposed amendment will bring about greater coordination in the administration of functions under the Council, will lead to improved budgeting procedures, and will lessen the amount of administrative detail which now is performed by individual members of the Council. Council members themselves have described the proposed amendment as a "modest" step in the direction of setting up a city manager as it is known under the Council-Manager form of local government.

BACKGROUND AND RECENT HISTORY

During 1959 a citizens committee known as the Joint Committee on Charter Review and consisting of members appointed by the Minneapolis League of Women Voters, the Minneapolis Area Chamber of Commerce, the Citizens League of Minneapolis and Hennepin County, and the DFL and Republican parties, formulated a proposed charter amendment substantially changing the structure of Minneapolis government. This proposed amendment, which came to be referred to as the CIVIC Charter, was submitted to the voters of Minneapolis and rejected in June, 1960. In general, the CIVIC Charter would have placed executive authority and responsibility for carrying out administration under the Mayor, and would have consolidated legislative authority in the City Council.

Although many provisions contained in the CIVIC Charter became the subject of controversy, no real objection was raised to the concept of separating executive and administrative authority from that which is legislative. In fact, many opponents of the CIVIC Charter, including members of the City Council, expressed strong agreement with this concept of separation of powers.

Most of those who urged defeat of the proposed CIVIC Charter stated during the campaign their agreement with the need for major charter revision, as

well as with the concepts contained in the CIVIC Charter, and reassured the voters that if they would but reject the CIVIC Charter a new and better amendment would be drafted and resubmitted to the voters of Minneapolis in the very near future, probably within a year. Aldermen Bruce Pomeroy and Harmon Ogdahl appeared before the Charter Commission in March, 1960, and submitted a written statement which concluded: "We pledge ourselves, however, to continued efforts in the direction of bringing to the citizens of our City a revision of our city charter emphasizing executive and administrative functions in the Mayor's office and legislative powers in the Council."

During recent months the Charter Commission has requested the views of the organizations which have shown an interest in revision of the Minneapolis city charter. Without exception, those that were received reaffirmed their belief that major revision is urgently needed and that it should take the direction of the concepts contained in the CIVIC Charter. The Citizens League, in a letter to the Charter Commission dated January 10, 1961, stated "We take no final nor adamant position as to whether the major changes needed in the structure of Minneapolis city government should be brought about by means of total revision in a single document or by piecemeal change. However, we do feel that any proposed change should be consistent with these basic concepts of government we have discussed and, further, we believe that any piecemeal amendment should be part of a long-range program rather than an end in itself." We concluded this letter by saying "There appears to be general community agreement on the direction the structure of our Minneapolis city government should take. We are confident that, given the leadership of your Commission, agreement can be obtained on specific proposals to carry out these objectives. To this end we pledge our complete cooperation in working with your Commission and with other interested community groups."

Within weeks after defeat of the proposed CIVIC Charter, the Minneapolis City Council, through its Bipartisan Charter Committee, began meeting to prepare proposed amendments which would bring before the voters of Minneapolis at an early date specific proposals for charter change. The members of the Bipartisan Charter Committee have labored diligently over a period of nearly eight months, and the proposed amendment is the product of these endeavors.

As of this date, the only community organization which has taken a position either for or against the proposed amendment is the Political Action Committee of the Central Labor Union. Their position is one of "unalterable opposition" to the proposed amendment.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. The proposed amendment, to the degree it is directional, moves modestly toward establishing the office of City Manager under the Council-Manager form of government. It asks the voters of Minneapolis to confirm the continued placement of authority for administration of city functions under the Council. We express our disappointment that, despite what appears to be general community agreement that responsibility for administration should be placed in the Mayor's office, the Council has seen fit to move in the opposite direction.

2. We restate at this time our support for the Mayor-Council form of city government, containing the concept of placing administrative and executive functions in the Mayor's office and legislative powers in the Council.

3. Although the provisions of the proposed amendment represent some progress in strengthening administrative procedures under the Council, we are exceedingly disappointed that nothing more than a proposal of such minor proportions has come forth after so many months of diligent labor by the Council's Bipartisan Charter Committee. We also express considerable concern about the present wording of Section 5(c) of the proposed amendment. The language is much too ambiguous to provide any clear understanding of what is intended or of what would result.

4. We express no adamant opposition to the Council-Manager form of government. In fact, we regard this form as a distinct improvement over that which we now have. But any step in this direction should be accompanied by a proposal to provide substantial at-large representation on the City Council. No other major city which has the Council-Manager form of government elects all of the members of its chief governing body by wards.