

Prepare for

THE PURGE: CHARTER REFORM

Teach-In:

- **What has happened so far** w/ the Charter Reform Commission
- **The Commission's Jan 17th PURGE** of potential reforms on the table
- **Important proposals in danger** of being eliminated
- **How to support:** coalition letters and talking points
- Your questions, priorities, & ideas



*Tuesday
January
13th
8-9pm*

ZOOM RSVP:
bit.ly/FRLA13



FairRepLA.com

Agenda

1. Background: Charter 101
2. Commission: Creation & Appointments
3. Recap: 1st 6 Months & Final 3
4. What's on the table: 4 Main Buckets
5. January 17th: What's in Danger & How to Help
6. Opening Up: Your Issues, Questions, & Thoughts

Slides w/ links will be posted! Video will be on our Youtube

Background

Basics of LA's City Charter

- A city charter is the city's version of a constitution
- Changing a city charter is done through a charter amendment ballot measure & has to be approved by majority of voters.
- May be placed on the ballot by:
 - Easy Way: LA City Council's majority vote (8/15 members)+Mayor
 - Hard Way: Initiative petition signed by 15% of registered voters in the city (319,558)
 - Third Way: Elected charter reform commission
 - Fourth Way: Appointed charter commission → LA City Council

Basics of LA's City Charter

- A lot of our current city charter is based off the 1925 charter.
 - Most recently revised in 1999
- Successful Charter Reform:
 - Wide/diverse coalition
 - Importance of community-based organizations
 - Clear messaging in voter engagement & civic education

Charter vs. Ordinance

Not every problem has a Charter solution!

- The Charter is for broad structural issues
 - Outline who has what power/responsibility
- Ordinances (laws)
 - More precise details
 - Issues of *slightly* lesser importance
 - Need for flexibility to make adjustments

City Structure

The Charter has broad discretion over the organization of the City and can create new roles, offices, and powers.

- City Departments and Offices – Sec 500
- City Officers – Sec 202
- Appointment and Removal of Officers – Sec 203
- Powers and Duties of Elected Officers – Sec 231
- Boards of Commissioners – Sec 501

Governance

- Council Size – Sec 241
- Redistricting – Sec 204
- Code of Conduct for Elected Officials – Sec 209
- Frequency and Process for Council Meetings – Sec 242
- Exempt Actions – Sec 245
- Elections – Sec 400
- Eligibility for Office – Sec 407
- Eligibility to Vote – Sec 408
- Recall and Removal – Sec 430
- Initiative Process – Sec 450
- Referendum Process – Sec 461
- Campaign Financing – Sec 470
- Ethics Commission – Sec 700
- Neighborhood Councils – Sec 900

Other Issues in Charter

- LAPD
- Board of Education
- Budgeting Process
- Parks & Rec
- LADWP
- Civil Service
- Retirement & Pensions

How did we get here?

- 2022 Fed Tapes → Expansion & IRC
- Summer 2023: Realization of issues impacted by expansion & need for deeper conversation
 - Some Reforms went to 2024 Ballot
- September 2023: Motion from Harris-Dawson, Krekorian & McOske to create charter reform commission & establish periodic charter review
- June 2024: Charter Commission Ordinance Approved by Council

Charter Reform Commission

Commission Power

- Advisory, does not have power to place measures directly on the ballot
 - Some cities, like Portland, allow their commissions to place measures directly on the ballot.
 - LA's *elected* charter reform in the 90s had this power.

Key Council Files

CF 23-1027:

- Motion
- [CLA's Report](#) on Charter Commission Basics
- Department Reports on Reforms

CF 23-1027-S2:

- Ordinance

Scope of Review

- Some commissions are limited to a specific area of focus
 - Municipal Reform Commission 10+ years ago
- City Council has approved a list of items they would like the commission to evaluate, but has authorized a full review of the charter.
- This is our first *comprehensive* review of the charter in 25 years.

Big Ticket Charter Items

- Council size
- Delivery of services
- How often council meets (3→1 per week?)
- Moving from an annual budget to a 2 yr budget cycle
- Neighborhood Councils
- Vacancies & suspensions of elected offices

Long List of Other Items for Review

Over 3 pages of issues identified

(see Attachment B and Amending Motions in Council Files):

- Airport & Harbor Commissions
- Controller & Chief Administrative Officer Responsibilities
- Personnel Department & Hiring Practices
- Planning
- Adjustments to deadlines for action

Other Reforms?

Anything within the city's authority

(aka doesn't violate state/fed law or constitution)

Examples:

- Ranked choice voting
- Lowering voting age
- Allowing non-citizens to vote and/or serve on commissions

Value of Engagement

- **Sets the stage:** vast majority of initial recommendations likely to be approved by council
- **Much easier** to influence commissioners
- **Very difficult** to advance new ideas **after commission**

Council might be reluctant to take up some reforms, but:

- **It puts elected officials on the spot** to do so
- Commission process **provides legitimacy to policy recs** and demonstrates public backing
- **Makes it harder for City Council** to walk things back

Commissioners

8 Appointed by Elected Officials

- 4 appointed by **Mayor Karen Bass**
 - Raymond Meza, Melinda Murray, Christina Sanchez, & Robert Lewis
- 2 appointed by **Former Council President Paul Krekorian**
 - Mona Field & Ted Stein
- 1 appointed by **Former Pro Tem Harris-Dawson**
 - Martin Schlageter
- 1 appointed by **Pro Tem Blumenfield**
 - *****Jason Levin***Appointed in December, approval pending**

5 Appointed by Initial Commissioners

- Open Application
 - Staff ended up selecting 20 finalists
- Initial commissioners chose next 5
 - Carla Fuentes, Andrea Mac, Michael Yap, Diego Andrades, & James Thomas

Interim Chair → Chair: Raymond Meza Jr.

How it's gone so far

- Tight Timeline
 - Made worse by enormous delay w/ initial appointments
- Lots of presentations, very little deliberation
- Barely scratched policy surface
 - Lots of details remain TBD.
- L/o power over staff & Budget
 - L/o Council Discussion
 - Outreach Plan
 - Transparency Motion
 - Some more engaged than others
- Fair Rep LA Presentations:
 - Council Size (3 Models)
 - bit.ly/FRLA825
 - Removal/Discipline of Elected Officials
 - bit.ly/FRLA925

POLITICO

California | California Playbook | California Climate | California Decoded | Re

Karen Bass' curious absence from a push to clean up Los Angeles City Hall

The mayor's inaction on a key commission has critics questioning her commitment to overhauling city government after a series of scandals before she took office.



A protest sign is held up in a city hall chamber. The sign reads: "YOUR POLICY IS RACIST NOT JUST YOUR LEAKED AUDIO". A microphone is positioned in front of the sign. In the background, a person is seated at a desk with a nameplate that says "ATTENTION! Please adjust the microphone to be pointed at your chin. This will help your comment to be clearly heard."

[Politico Story](#)

Remaining Calendar

2026

- Policy Committees wrap up work by end of this week
- Ad hoc Committee meets 1/17 & 1/31
- Full Commission decides on what to advance (early Feb)
- Flush out Details
- Final Language
- Final Report
- **No later than Apr 2: Submission to council**
- June 16: Last day for request to City Attorney
- **July 3: Last day to adopt resolutions**
- Nov 3: General Election

Govt. Structure - 4 Main Buckets

Reforms:

- Council Size
 - Meeting Schedule
- Elections
 - Ranked Choice Voting
 - Voting Age
- Financial Responsibilities
 - Controller, CAO, CFO
- City Attorney
- Public Advocate
- Independent Redistricting tweaks
- Ability for youth &/or non-citizens to serve on Commissions

Takeaways:

- Firm commitment to send a recommendation on Council Size
 - Debating 3 options
 - Committee asked to narrow at 1/14 meeting
 - Groans from the Council
- CAO vs. Controller Tug of War
- City Attorney
 - Growing support for splitting office up
- Skepticism re: additional electoral reforms & new office of Public Advocate

Better Govt. - 4 Main Buckets

Reforms:

- Removing / disciplining elected officials
 - Options to address Fed Tapes type of scenario
- Filling Vacancies
- Neighborhood Councils
- Ethics Reforms
- Anti-Corruption Measures
- Charter Preamble

Takeaways:

- Consensus on need to prioritize issues re: vacancy, removal, suspension etc.
 - Lots of details remain TBD
- DONE pretty much M.I.A. on Neighborhood Council Reform.
 - Current Reforms very superficial
 - Should see some more soon, hopefully.
- Many Ethics Reforms sent but will probably be significant trimming.

Planning & Infrastructure - 4 Main Buckets

Reforms:

- Reform Board of Public Works
- Realign Depts → Infrastructure
- Capital Improvement Programs
- Land use/development & Council's role

Takeaways:

- Council Discretion over land use unlikely to go away
- Potentially eliminating Area Planning Commissions
- Public Works to seems here to stay
- Reluctance to truly empower a head of Public Works
- Seeming disinterest in more comprehensive housing reforms
- Procrastination on subject of guaranteed funding
- Support for CIP

Budget & Personnel - 4 Main Buckets

Reforms:

- 2 year budget
- Budget process
- Hiring Practices
- Personnel
- Retirement System
- LAPD Accountability
- Periodic Charter Review
- AI Procurement

Takeaways:

- Strong Support for 2 year budget & CIP
- Lots of details to figure out as far as schedule and public engagement
 - CAO vs. Controller Tug of War, the sequel
- Delays in meet and confer process w/ Labor
 - Competing visions of labor reforms between City Depts/EAA/CCU

List of All Reforms

List of all reforms:

- Commission is working on it...
- FRLA List - [Link](#)

Most recent staff reports:

- [Government Structure](#)
- [Better Government](#)
- [Planning & Infrastructure](#)
- [Budget & Personnel](#)

What is on the ropes?

- LAPD Accountability
- Neighborhood Council Reform
- RCV & Multi-Member Districts
- Lowering Voting Age ([FRLA Memo](#)) ([Staff Memo](#))
- Public Financing of Elections
- Elected Office of Public Advocate ([Unrig LA Memo](#))

The New Committee

Assignments:

- Ted Stein (Chair)
- Raymond Meza Jr.
- Melinda Murray
- James Thomas
- Diego Andrades
- Christina Sanchez

What to expect?

- Very long meetings that extend late into the evening
- Should be significant reduction of issues on table

Ad Hoc Committee Meetings:

- **Saturday 1/17**
 - Government Structure
 - Planning & Infrastructure
- **Saturday 1/31**
 - Better Government
 - Budget & Personnel
- Maybe More?
- **Full Commission will have final say on these recs**

How to Help: bit.ly/FRLA26

- Submit written comment (by email 3pm day prior to meeting)
- Attend a Meeting
 - Zoom Comment Available for City Hall Meetings
 - Upcoming
 - Weds 1/14 4pm - Govt Structure Committee
 - Thu 1/15 2pm - Budget and Personnel Committee
 - Sat 1/17 9:30am - Ad Hoc Committee
 - Wed 1/21 3pm - Full Commission Meeting (Van Nuys City Hall)
- Talking Points on Major Items will be Added by 1/15
- Sign coalition Letter: bit.ly/FRLA1L
 - Lowering Voting Age for LAUSD
 - Public Financing of Elections
 - More to come (email fairrepla@gmail.com to suggest any additions)

Your:

- Issues
- Questions
- Thoughts