

A REPORT OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE REVIEW COMMITTEE  
TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL, CITY OF DOVER  
March 21, 1989

## INTRODUCTION

On September 6, 1988, the Mayor and Council of the City of Dover appointed a committee of nine community business leaders to review the administrative structure of the city. The committee was tasked to evaluate the existing reporting diagram and recommend reporting changes that would increase efficiency and assure effective operation of the city.

The committee has met on a regular basis during the intervening months. The committee has interviewed current department heads, previous mayors and council members, and the city attorney. These public servants have been both candid and constructive in their comments about what has and has not worked in the past and about their views of how the city should be organized.

From these discussions and its own deliberations, the committee has made a number of findings which led to two basic recommendations and several alternatives for implementing the first recommendation. These findings and recommendations are reported here.

## FINDINGS

\* The city's administrative structure has worked well in the past and still allows the city to function in an acceptable manner.

\* The successful operation of the city, however, appears to be the result of the personal quality of the people involved (both elected and appointed). Their ability to give considerable time and their willingness to cooperate with each other have been key factors. The structure has been of minor importance.

\* As the city grows, the number of problems that must be addressed will increase. There will be more issues about a wider variety of subjects, many of a technical nature.

\* These growth-related problems are already beginning to appear.

\* Under the existing city structure, coordination of city activities and implementation and enforcement of city

regulations is difficult. These difficulties will intensify as the city grows and as issues become more complex.

\* The existing structure (in which most of the city's department heads report to the entire council), in practice, results in less, not more, leadership and less accountability.

\* If the current administrative structure is continued after the change to election by districts those responsible for the overall operation of the city will report to council members who are responsive to only small geographic segments of the city.

\* The role of the mayor -- one of only two public officials who will be elected "at large" under the new district voting -- will become mostly ceremonial in the near future. This could dramatically reduce the impact that citizens can have on the overall operation of the city.

\* With changing demographics (especially age, type of employment, length of residency, and family status), fewer people will be willing to run for public office. Those who are elected may be unable to give the time and may not have the expertise to deal with the city's day-to-day problems. Under these conditions, council will be most appropriate as a legislative body.

\* A simpler reporting structure could be the first step in streamlining the city's administrative procedures to provide "one stop shopping" for city permits, approvals, and services. With streamlined operations, residents and outsiders alike could find it more efficient and less time consuming to do business with the city.

\* The existing reporting structure probably is not best suited to take the City of Dover successfully into the next decade and the twenty-first century.

## BASIC RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION I: The day-to-day operation and management of the city should be in the hands of a full-time professional manager. That professional manager should report to one elected official who is responsive to the entire city population (i.e., elected at large).

The key consideration in this recommendation is that there should be one clear simple chain of command so that all the resources of the city (whether brain power, man power, equipment, or finances) can be managed most efficiently and cost effectively for the overall long-term benefit of the city population.

RECOMMENDATION II: City Council should establish specific objectives for administration of the city and identify the measurements to be used in judging the effectiveness of operations. Using measurements determined by Council, the City Manager should evaluate each department at least annually and formally report the results of the evaluation to Council through the Mayor. Similarly, the Mayor should evaluate the City Manager at least annually and formally report the results of that evaluation to Council.

#### ALTERNATIVES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATION I.

ALTERNATIVE I: City Council functions in a legislative and oversight manner with no direct responsibility for day-to-day management. The department heads of the city, with the exception of the Police Chief, report to a hired professional City Manager who reports to the Mayor. The Police Chief also reports directly to the Mayor. The City Manager and the Police Chief are both hired and fired by the Mayor, with the advice and agreement of Council required.

ALTERNATIVE II: City Council functions in both a legislative and managerial/administrative role. The department heads of the city, with the exception of the Police Chief, report to a hired professional City Manager who reports to the President of City Council. The Police Chief also reports directly to the Council President. The City Manager and the Police Chief are both hired and fired by the Council President, with the advice and agreement of the full Council and the Mayor required.

ALTERNATIVE III: As a slight variation on either Alternative I or II, auditing, inspection, and assessment functions can report either through the City Manager or directly to the chief elected official. If these functions report through the City Manager, clearly identified and legally sanctioned "dotted lines" should exist that hold both the City Manager and these department heads responsible for performance.

#### CONCLUSION

The committee believes that the structure suggested in its basic recommendation --

- \* will cause the city to operate most efficiently and successfully as it addresses growth-related pressures of the future;

- \* will result in strong leadership and accountability for the operation of all city departments;

- \* will give the total electorate a higher degree of influence in both the overall policies set for the city and in

how those policies are implemented operationally; and  
\* will allow the city to continue to operate with part  
time elected officials well into the future while assuring  
that day-to-day management will be in the hands of qualified  
personnel.

This committee did not feel itself bound by either the  
current structure or any previous recommendations. However,  
its recommendation is not significantly different from the  
recommendation made by the Charter Review Committee in  
February, 1986.

At that time, the position of Council President did not  
exist. Therefore, that committee recommended that the major  
city functions report to the Mayor. Their reasoning,  
never-the-less, fits either of the alternatives given by the  
current committee.

After stressing the weakness and confusion inherent in  
having a city's operational department heads report to the  
entire council, the Charter Review Committee also said:

"Strong political leadership seems necessary to  
control growing complex population centers. Why?  
Here is the issue of 'chemistry' and 'environment'  
and perceptions and feelings. Voters seem to need  
a mayor to give information and guidance -- an  
elected mayor -- a champion of the people. This  
kind of leadership is usually absent in the  
council-manager form of government. (Professional)  
managers are often perceived to be 'outsiders' and  
not committed to the real welfare of the city.  
Mayors tend to be regarded as 'sons or daughters of  
the city' -- deeply committed to city welfare and  
devotedly beholden to the 'family' of voters.  
Factually, this is debatable. Nonetheless, it is a  
perception, and perceptions often carry greater  
power than truth."

This committee agrees with that reasoning.

Further following the recommendations of the previous  
committee, this committee also believes that the citizens of  
Dover will be best served in the future if the city maintains  
the separate duties and functions of the executive branch  
(mayor and administrative offices) and the legislative branch  
(city council). The committee, however, feels that the  
importance of that separation is secondary to the importance  
of having one official who represents the whole electorate as  
"CEO" for the city.

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