Joint City Council and Sunshine Reform Task Force Study Session
November 30, 2006

Questions and Comments

A. Calendar Disclosure

1. What kind of information should be included in the calendar? The City should have clear guidelines.
2. Will it be two calendars or an integrated calendar with redactions for personal appointments?
3. What kind of resources are needed to make sure the calendar is accurate?
4. Will it be feasible for Councilmembers to remember every conversation/meeting they have that are not scheduled in advance?
5. Issues concerning what is required of calendars may implicate the physical security of Councilmembers, the privacy of the individuals that Councilmembers meet with, speculation by media or the public as to blank time slots, and fodder for future campaigns.
6. Consider requiring Councilmembers to be posted at the end of the week.

B. Council Memos

Concern was expressed by several Councilmembers that since their memo is a response to feedback from the public and to the staff report that shortening the timeline for their memos may cut off public input. In addition, these memos set forth a motion from which the Council can have a discussion which in many instances would be too complicated to do verbally at the meeting.

C. Disclosure of Labor Negotiation

Labor negotiations have a big impact on the City budget and the public should be aware of this impact before the Council votes on an agreement. Perhaps the City should allocate an amount in advance for labor cost. Disclosure should include all aspects and not just salary information (Mayor Elect Chuck Reed)

D. Reform Proposal - Projects of Significant Public Interest

1. Agreed with Brownstein's comments on the need to have detailed information and analysis of proposals for major public subsidies (Councilmember Cortese).
2. Welcomed input on what kind of matters should be heard in the evening versus a day meeting. Does the Taskforce want all documents including contracts attached to the staff memorandum or would an "executive summary" be sufficient (Councilmember Chavez).

E. Reform Proposal – Expanding Speaking

Providing a particular group (e.g. neighborhood organizations) more time than another member of the public may run afoul with First Amendment and Equal Protection issues. Perhaps a spokesperson should be appointed to speak on behalf of a group (Councilmember Pyle)

F. Ancillary Body

1. Should organizations that receive a large amount of money from the City be required to meet Sunshine requirements because of the extent of the public investment? If the goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of how an organization is using the City funds - would the better approach be to audit the organizations rather than subject them to the Sunshine requirements? When considering the kinds of bodies that should be Sunshine also consider other mechanisms to monitor performance such as audits (Councilmember Chavez).

G. Enforcement

Perhaps the Rules Committee or a subcommittee of the Council should play a larger role in enforcement until it is determined whether a long-term open government Committee will be established (Mayor Elect Chuck Reed).

H. General Questions/Comments

1. Is consideration being given to providing information in multiple languages (Councilmember Nguyen)?
2. The Task Force recommendations should allow for some flexibility, identify the problem it is trying to solve, and some way to evaluate whether the reforms have fixed the problem (Councilmember Williams).
3. A goal of Sunshine should include learning how to engage broader stakeholder participation; the General Plan may be the best opportunity (Chavez).
4. Consider developing a Councilmember 101 (Councilmember Williams).
5. The City should review the pilot program in 6 months and periodically thereafter (Mayor Elect Chuck Reed).
6. The Task Force should look at what meetings should be conducted during the day and evening to improve public access. (Councilmember Chavez).
7. Integrate an evaluation of the public's opinion on openness and transparency in the City's Community survey, and set benchmarks on how you measure success. Benchmarks should be clear and measurable. (Councilmember Chavez).
8. The ordinance and recommendations should be crafted with an orientation toward solving a problem and not "gotcha" oriented (Councilmember Chavez).
9. Concern was expressed regarding disclosing labor negotiations and labor law requirements; employee privacy rights with regards to salary information and disciplinary actions (Public Comment - Erik Larson)
10. Concerned was expressed on auditor oversight; advocated an accountability function on reports going to Council; real time accounting needed (Public Comment - David Walls