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## **Economy & Efficiency Commission Presentation**

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*Editorial Note: Although every effort has been made to insure the accuracy of the material in this presentation, the scope of the material covered and the discussions undertaken lends itself to the possibility of minor transcription misinterpretations.*

### **PRESENTATIONS BY**

**Mr. Miguel Santana, Chief of Staff, Supervisor Gloria Molina, 1st District**  
**Mr. John Hill, Chief of Staff, Supervisor Yvonne Burke, 2nd District**  
**Ms. Alisa Belinkoff-Katz, Chief Deputy, Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, 3rd District**  
**Mr. Curt Pedersen, Chief of Staff, Supervisor Don Knabe, 4th District**  
**Ms. Kathryn Barger-Leibrich, Chief Deputy, Supervisor Michael Antonovich, 5th District**

**Los Angeles County**

***Topic: Public Policy Issues, Concerns and Challenges of the Districts in 2007***  
**March 1, 2007**

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Chairman Ikejiri welcomed the panelists and, due to her having another commitment, asked 3rd District Chief Deputy, Ms. Alisa Belinkoff-Katz, to lead off with her remarks to the Commission.

### **Third District Presentation**

Ms. Katz began by stating that the 3rd District believes that governance is the most important current issue facing the County. She cited recent motions by Supervisors Yaroslavsky and Knabe, one proposing the rehiring of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), David Janssen, with expanded powers, and the other a draft charter amendment for next year's ballot, creating a permanent County CEO position.

The 3rd District is also very focused on the Metrocare plan, which brings the operations of Martin Luther King and Harbor-UCLA medical centers into a unified system of care. On a wider scale, Ms. Katz noted that the County's health care system continues to grapple with fiscal stability, due in part to a threatened \$200 million loss in reduced Medicaid payments and the need to treat uninsured patients. Additionally, the federal government has proposed placing requirements on local governments to clean up the flow of pollution carried to the ocean in storm water runoff, which would cost hundreds of millions of dollars. She also raised the homeless issue for which the County has appropriated over \$100 million.

In regard to issues specific to the 3rd District, Ms. Katz referenced reports of high bacteria counts in the surf of local beaches, particularly in Malibu, and the efforts to locate the source of the bacteria. The 3rd District is also working on reducing traffic congestion by various traffic management and control efforts.

Opening the floor to questions Commissioner Hill asked Ms. Katz whether she thought that the proposed change in the County governance structure would impact the recruitment of candidates for the CAO/CEO position. Ms. Katz replied that she thought it would have a "very positive impact" on recruitment efforts by

increasing responsibilities and establishing clear lines of authority and accountability. Commissioner Baltierrez then asked Ms. Katz to comment on Mission College's land use issue. She believes that there was no longer a conflict between the college's expansion plans and the County.

Commissioner Fuhrman asked her for suggestions on how the Economy and Efficiency Commission might assist in sorting through the various governmental structuring options. Ms. Katz proposed that the Commission might be useful in collecting information on delegating authority, and specifically in Los Angeles County, how an expansion of authority given to one executive would impact communication between Supervisors and various County departments. Mr. Pedersen remarked, and Ms. Katz concurred, that he could see a role for the Commission in devising a more holistic approach to the delivery of constituent services. Mr. Hill agreed that this would be an opportunity to review the governance system as a whole, not only the duties of the person in the Chief Administrative Officer position. Mr. Santana remarked that the reconfiguration of the CAO position is an experiment as it would significantly change County governance with unknown outcomes. Since benchmarks have not been established to measure actual improvement in the delivery of County services, there may be a role for the Commission in helping to develop them.

### **Second District Presentation**

Mr. Hill commented that many of the issues that were brought up by Ms. Katz mirrored the concerns of the 2nd District. By way of example, he related Supervisor Burke's deep concern for the successful resolution of Martin Luther King (MLK) Hospital status. He went on to express concern over the status of education, citing statistics to support his position. Mr. Hill stated that Supervisor Burke and her staff have been working to find ways to break that cycle of violence that poor education fosters.

Supervisor Burke is also working to remove the early questions regarding past felony convictions from the County's employment application. She believes that postponing this questioning will encourage applicants with felonies on their records to enter the application process with less trepidation, thus increasing the possibility that they'll be considered for County positions. To illustrate, Mr. Hill cited that in 1998, 38,189 parolees (30% of all State parolees), returned to Los Angeles County, with a majority of them returning to the 2nd District.

Mr. Hill also cited gun violence as another issue of great concern in the 2nd District. He noted that gun shot injuries add up to \$2.3 billion in lifetime medical costs, one half of which is subsidized by tax payers. Gun violence is a public health issue, he said, citing the statistics that since 1979, 101,413 children and teens have died from gun violence in the United States; this translates to a mortality rate for youths of 235 per month. Mr. Hill went on to suggest that the Commission might play a role in lessening this trend by uncovering the root causes and possible solutions for such an epidemic of gun violence, and examining the other issues that are taking a toll on disadvantaged communities. One way to reduce the number of kids in the foster system is to try and get them placed in the care of relatives. As a result, in part, of the vacuum left by absentee fathers Supervisor Burke has established a "fatherhood program," aimed at getting fathers reconnected to their community and back into their homes.

### **First District Presentation**

Mr. Santana began by outlining the efforts that Supervisor Molina has made to create a sense of civic identity for those living in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. In an effort to ensure that these residents receive the same level of service as residents of incorporated areas of the County Supervisor Molina recently established a "County Hall in East", which brings together County services. Hopefully, other such "County Halls" can be established throughout the unincorporated areas. A related priority is creating general plans for unincorporated areas to track future development objectives.

Mr. Santana feels that accountability is another aspect in improving the sense of community of unincorporated areas. It is therefore difficult to hold anyone accountable for the fair or unfair allocation of County funds for services in these areas. In an attempt to mitigate this situation, Supervisor Molina has been working to establish thresholds for services levels so that there is a sense of equity for the unincorporated areas.

Mr. Santana then went on to address the issue of Succession Planning. Because fewer college graduates chose to make government service a career, all levels of government will pay a price. He believes that more can be done to attract candidates, including providing incentives such as housing and student loan forgiveness. Issues of retention are just as important to preserve a stable workforce. Mr. Santana believes the Commission could play an important role in laying out the stakes involved, as well as proposing possible solutions to a problem that reaches all levels of government. He feels an additional area of attention for the Commission may lie in studying the role of commissions within the County.

Homelessness is a condition wherein many of the strategies being employed are experimental. Mr. Santana feels that part of the problem is the high degree of variation in the causative circumstances. It would be helpful to have an analysis of the various segments of the homeless population with an eye towards devising strategies that will address specific situations. It would also be helpful to have all of the areas of the County take ownership of the problem. Mr. Santana believes it is possible that the Commission could help the Board discover new ways of managing the variables involved.

Mr. Santana also recognized that health care is an ongoing problem in the County. The focus on preserving the County health care system within such a challenging environment has meant that there has been much greater attention to short term fixes at the loss of considering long range innovations to address the structure of the system and how it can be improved over time. This is another area in which the Commission could assist the Board.

#### **Fourth District Presentation**

Mr. Pedersen commenced by concurring with the remarks of the previous speakers, especially with regard to the treatment of unincorporated areas, governance and storm water run off. He mentioned that the first and fourth districts have been working together on joint projects including shuttle services and community centers. With respect to the County governance issue, he reiterated that Supervisor Knabe would continue to make this issue a high priority.

Regarding storm water run off, Mr. Pedersen offered that the 4th District with both the Los Angeles and San Gabriel River, has been looking at ways to fund recent mandates. He concurred that the estimated costs of clean-up were high and that attention is needed to identify the sources of contamination. Mr. Pedersen suggested that the Commission could play a role in creating an educational campaign geared to making the public aware of the costs (environmental and monetary) of pollutants entering storm drains. A related issue of import to Supervisor Knabe is the distinction between public and personal health. In an attempt to address these issues, Mr. Pedersen pointed out Supervisor Knabe's recent motion addressing both the lack of prompt reporting of sewage spills on area beaches and the increased risk to public health that occurs when beaches are not immediately closed.

Job creation as a priority in the 4th District has been exemplified by the public-private partnership between oil companies and Harbor Junior College that has led to over 100 students being trained for well-paying jobs for the ports. Mr. Pedersen suggested that both the County and the Commission could play a role in encouraging and assisting in these types of public-private partnerships in the future. Another potential area of Commission involvement could be in looking at ways to increase the participation of quality service providers under contract to the County. There are measures that could be taken to make working with the County less onerous for providers that have proven reliability.

Mr. Pederson then mentioned that the District is working with State legislators to enact stronger enforcement measures and to give the District Attorney additional tools to track down parents who are not paying child support. Without such enhancements, there will be a continued drain on County welfare resources.

#### **Fifth District Presentation**

Ms. Barger began her remarks noting the almost universally shared priorities among the five supervisors and their staffs. Concerning the issue of providing equitable services to the unincorporated areas, Ms. Barger in

referencing a 1996 Commission report said that she would like to see efforts to devise a means of quantifying how the monies paid by taxpayers in the unincorporated areas are returned in the form of services provided. This methodology could then be employed in order to determine if taxpayers in the unincorporated areas were in fact subsidizing the services of those in incorporated (contract) cities. Because the unincorporated areas are largely dependent on basic services and amenities financed by the General Fund, they bear the brunt of the budgetary cuts.

As an introduction to the issue of County governance and the role of the CAO, Ms. Barger then referred to the County's Annual Report which gives the reader an excellent overview of County expenditures, separated into segments such as human services, cultural, etc. Ms. Barger commented that although Supervisor Antonovich has clearly expressed his skepticism regarding the shift of responsibilities from the Board of Supervisors to a County executive, he acknowledges that it is the will of the majority of the Board, and wants to be part of the discussions that will eventually lead to a measure being put before the voters. His main concern is the plight of the residents of the unincorporated areas who view their supervisor as their de facto mayor. Determining how this relationship will be altered by the restructuring of County governance should be fully addressed before the plan is presented to voters. Ms. Barger sees a role for the Commission in using previous work as a basis for studying County governance as a whole.

Ms. Barger then discussed the issue of fraud in Section 8 Housing in the Antelope Valley. Supervisor Antonovich's office has invested discretionary funds in conjunction with the County, and the cities of Palmdale and Lancaster, to put an enforcement team into the field. To date the team has been successful in uncovering fraud, thus clearing the way for worthy applicants to move up the list. She believes that if the Commission were directed to address this problem on a countywide basis, deserving families would benefit from the program.

Regarding transportation, Ms. Barger touted the success of signal synchronization in the 5th District. She suggested that an expanded program or using such approaches as reverse-flow lanes or incentives for rescheduling deliveries to non-peak hours could help alleviate traffic congestion throughout the County.

### **Commissioner's Questions**

Vice Chair Barcelona asked Mr. Santana about recent reports of corruption in the city of Cudahy. Mr. Santana explained that such situations are disruptive to the collaboration the District has strived to establish. Since the Supervisor's offices do not have enforcement power, they are often relegated to the sidelines to await a resolution of the matter.

Chair Emeritus Philibosian remarked that he saw a tremendous overall benefit to providing more convenient services for business owners, whose investments will create economy-expanding jobs and increase the tax base, to the benefit of the entire community. He then asked the other deputies to speak to any similar projects they have in the works in their own districts.

Ms. Barger began by mentioning that the 5th District has an Incubator Program wherein County owned offices provide a base of operations for small business entrepreneurs. One such entity has been successfully established in Alta Dena and the District has plans for additional incubators. The District has centers that house satellite operations, but many services were curtailed due to budget cuts.

Mr. Hill referred to the centers in the 2nd District that focus on providing social services, but it is hoped that the existence of new buildings will spur economic growth by providing a new customer base. The District would welcome ideas by the Commission as to how to promote such economic development. Supervisor Burke is also working to develop the Vermont Corridor, and has a program in the Florence/Firestone area (together with the 1st District) that works on beautification issues. Regarding unincorporated areas, Mr. Hill mentioned Supervisor Burke's concern and action over a situation in which the unincorporated city of Lennox saw a steep increase in gang violence after the Sheriff's Department shifted resources to the City of Compton. The 2nd District is very concerned about what goes on in the unincorporated areas.

Mr. Pedersen returned to the discussion of one-stop centers for outlying communities. He noted that

Supervisor Knabe is a believer in web-based systems, and doesn't think it is necessary to construct buildings in order to facilitate the issuing of permits to home and business owners. If such a system could be established by the County, it would truly be a one-stop entity, with the maximum convenience for the permit seeker.

Mr. Santana suggested that whatever system is in place, attention should be paid to making it easily understood by the public. He noted that when a member of the public comes into the "County Hall" center that has been established in the 1st District, they first meet with a generalist who explains the steps in the process of getting proper permits. This is in contrast to the bureaucratic maze many citizens find themselves in when dealing with myriad County departments.

Commissioner Fuhrman asked Ms. Barger if the Commission recommendation concerning the creation of budgets for the unincorporated areas had ever been implemented. Ms. Barger said that it hadn't been, but acknowledged, along with Mr. Santana, that the CAO has produced budgetary pie charts that incorporate some general information. Mr. Santana stated that he knows the CAO agrees in theory that this information would be important to ascertain, but he believes the development of these numbers is not currently feasible. Commissioner Fuhrman offered that it is possible that recent changes in the County information systems could make the process much easier than it was in the past.

Commissioner Fuhrman then referred to recommendations that addressed the existence of "islands" of unincorporated areas that exist in the midst of incorporated cities. Ms. Barger and Mr. Pedersen commented that they are each working within their districts to resolve these anomalies, but have come up against strong resistance by the residents who prefer to remain in an unincorporated area. The deputies agreed that ultimately, these issues must be settled by a vote of the people affected.

Commissioner Baltierrez asked Ms. Barger to address the issue of traffic congestion resulting from the continuing development in the Antelope and Santa Clarita valleys. Ms. Barger suggested that this might be another possible area of study of the Commission. Her own ideas for possible solutions ranged from the specific (straightening path of Metrolink through that area to shorten travel times), to the general (accepting that this is a regional problem that must be solved through the investment of regional funds). Mr. Hill added that job creation in the inner city would preclude the need for residents in that area to have to commute and suggested that as another possible subject for study by the Commission.

Chairman Ikejiri thanked all of the panelists for participating in this enlightening presentation.

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