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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  
Edel Vizcarra  
5th District, Planning Deputy  
Los Angeles County**

**July 12, 2012**

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### **Overview of Los Angeles County**

Chairman Barcelona greeted Mr. Edel Vizcarra from the 5th District, Los Angeles Board of Supervisors, and welcomed him while turning it over for Mr. Vizcarra to speak to the Economy and Efficiency Commission.

### **Overview**

Mr. Vizcarra stated that he is the Planning Deputy for the 5th District. He stated that he handles all the land use issues in the 5th District, along with Public Works issues, housing issues, and economic development issues. He stated that prior to his current assignment; he was Planning and Transportation Deputy for an LA City Council Member where he splits his time between land use at the City in the 14th District, and at Metro dealing with transportation issues. He stated that he has his Bachelor's Degree in Urban Planning and his Master's in Transportation Planning.

### **E-Government Initiative**

Mr. Vizcarra stated that he came to the Commission to speak about e-government. He stated that Supervisor Antonovich is very fond of the work that the Economy & Efficiency Commission does and in just about every speech the Supervisor gives, he talks about the E&E Commission and the amount of money it has saved for the County. He stated that in the Supervisor's speeches, one thing you will hear is his push for e-government initiatives. Mr. Vizcarra stated that when Supervisor Antonovich spoke to the Commission in April 2011, he talked about the streamlining the permitting process. He stated that with the size and scope of the County it is very difficult to deal with every department when you come in for a restaurant permit. Mr. Vizcarra stated that you have to go through Regional Planning, the Health Department, the Fire Department, Building and Safety, and it's very daunting when you are a small business. He stated that if it is a big establishment like Wal-Mart it is easy because you can hire someone to do it for you. He stated that this is why lobbyist and consultants make so much money. Mr. Vizcarra stated that for a number of years the County has recognized that the land development process had some inefficiency and some problems that

resulted from a lack of collaborative process. He stated that the problems that come out of that can range from something as simple as a person wanting to do an addition to his/her home, he or she would go to one of the Building and Safety offices and end up getting sent to four other different places chasing the permit and approval process. He stated that departments that are traditionally involved in the land development process include Public Works, Regional Planning, Fire, Environmental Health, Parks and Recreation, and the Assessor. He stated that this group of departments formed a County team to examine and improve the land development process with the intention of recommending and implementing improved operational processes to streamline and make that experience for the customers of the land development process much better than it has been.

He stated that Supervisor Antonovich would like the Commission to figure out a way to get all of the agencies working on one system. He stated that this will help a consumer and the departments because once plans are submitted to a department they can be submitted electronically, reviewed electronically; corrections and notifications can be done electronically which would save paper, time, and money.

Mr. Vizcarra stated that he and the Commissions task force has done some research with various departments to gather more data on the PALMS Project. He stated that PALMS is the very effort that is trying to coordinate all of the agencies to get them operating on one track. He stated that the consultant that is working with the County on the PALMS Project is also working with the City of Los Angeles on a similar effort. He stated that the result came back and it has a \$20 million dollar price tag. He stated that the County has not identified the funding on the project yet. He also stated that the County has implemented a smaller version of the larger project.

Mr. Vizcarra stated that Supervisor Antonovich is very interested in e-government as a whole and wants the Commission to take a more universal approach to this project. He stated that he would also like the Commission to identify which departments are implementing e-government solutions and come up with ideas or recommendations on how we can get every department implementing e-government initiatives. He stated that during the PALMS Project the County was able to identify some departments that were already implementing e-government practices but the problem was that they were not coordinating with other department which makes it very difficult because two or three years from now, the County will be back on the same page of every department operating on different systems again.

## **Questions**

Commissioner Kalm stated that the e-government taskforce has had a couple of meetings with Edel so there has been some interaction on this and based on a work plan laid out by Executive Director Edward Eng, the taskforce feels that they can interview most if not all the County department heads and come up with a matrix of work that is being done, find out where work is not of a high priority, and also identify silo issues. He stated that based on conversations that Mr. Eng has had with the taskforce members to date, it looks like a project that is doable, it also looks like a project that is similar to other process that the Commission has taken on in the past like the Strategic Planning study.

Commissioner Kalm stated that the County CEO; Mr. William Fujioka, announced that next year is the year of IT initiatives. Mr. Vizcarra added that he had a conversation with the CEO's office during budget deliberations, and the Supervisor brought this very issue up and asked for a report back. He stated that there is direction at the CEO level to try and find the funding necessary to get a project like this off the ground.

Commissioner Padilla asked Mr. Vizarra whether he is surprised that within the last couple of years there hasn't been a motion from the Supervisor that would direct the CEO to look at this issue. Mr. Vizcarra replied that the PALMS project came from a motion looking at e-government as a whole.

Commissioner Padilla asked what does PALMS stand for. Mr. Vizcarra replied that PALMS stands for Planning and Land Management System.

Commissioner Wolowicz stated that he thought that the County would have addressed this long ago because it has been around so long. He stated that he was unsure if he should read into the earlier comments about

the prospect of a taskforce taking on a larger purview addressing a broader topic other than just the business licenses.

Chair-Emeritus Philibosian stated that the taskforce should not get ahead of themselves. He stated that Business License Automation project is something the Commission looked at a year ago and it has not become a refined operation yet. Chair-Emeritus Philibosian stated that it is a whole new ball game today due to the new e-government aspects of it. He also stated that the Commission should take it one project at a time before getting into a dispute with all the department heads on the issue of choosing their own platform, or their own customer service relations. He stated that this is a huge undertaking and it will cause a huge disruption amongst the department heads.

Commissioner Hinsche-Otto stated that the area that the taskforce took under Civil Service was very large. She stated that defining the scope of work in the beginning and be very specific about what the taskforce is looking at will be helpful. She stated that in the course of looking at issues all of the other things of importance will come out. She stated that if you stay within your scope of work the task force could say that this particular area needs further exploration and could go to the Supervisors as the next area of exploration.

Commissioner Kalm stated that there is no doubt that this scope of work has evolved. He stated that the taskforce is still evolving and he takes the Chair-Emeritus' input seriously that the task force can't over reach its charter. He stated that clearly the charter as the taskforce is now pursuing is a tad bit broader then the original plan of just looking at Business License. He stated that as the taskforce evaluated the permit issues with PALMS and based on those discussions with the Department of Public Works and Regional Planning, the taskforce concluded that a broader reach on the process of how these projects are initiated and approved should be included in the scope of work. He stated that he takes all the cautionary comments very seriously and stated that the taskforce has no intension on expanding the project beyond the taskforce's capability.

Chairman Barcelona asked Mr. Vizcarra that in his estimation, how does the Supervisor envision the Commission's task in relation to what is being discussed. Mr. Vizcarra replied that what the Supervisor is looking for is a report on how it's operating right now. He stated that the Supervisor wants to know what departments are doing, are the departments working together, and are there any recommendations on making it better. He also stated that he can appreciate that the Commission does not want to go beyond their scope or Charter but the reality is automating just the Business License isn't necessarily going to streamline the entire process because the Business License is just one small component of the entire package. He stated that from his discussion with the Supervisor he would like to get a big picture of what's going on right now. He stated that PALMS only relates to permitting process for commercial permitting. He stated that what the Supervisor is looking at is e-government processes and not just permitting.

Commissioner Kalm stated that one way for the taskforce to proceed with this project is to have Supervisor Antonovich make a motion at a future Board meeting requesting the E&E Commission to examine this issue and try to limit the scope per Chair-Emeritus. Mr. Vizcarra replied that he and Supervisor Antonovich have already spoken about doing that if that's what it will take to get this project in motion.

Commissioner Safier stated that it seems that there is a disconnect because Mr. Vizcarra and Supervisor Antonovich are trying to find out what the County is doing in regards to e-government countywide and Chair-Emeritus Philibosian is stating that the original Charter is just to look at Business License and Permitting as a small subset of that. He stated that because he is temporarily on the task force he would like more clarity on the matter because if the Supervisor is looking for more inventories and to assess that inventory he stated that he has IT expertise. He stated that by interviewing all of the Department Heads the taskforce can certainly draw the picture in terms of what the current state is and possibly make some recommendations on how to get from the current state to where the task force thinks the County should be. He stated that he is simply looking for clarity in the subset that the was initially spoken about versus looking at the broader 30,000 foot inventory level with recommendations coming out of it. Mr. Vizcarra replied that Commissioner Safier hit the nail on the head because that is exactly what Supervisor Antonovich is looking for.

Commissioner Kalm stated that the problem that he sees is the disconnect. He stated that he does not see the taskforce pursuing information technology as a subject matter. He stated that he sees the taskforce pursuing interactive web-based applications as an alternative to paper-based systems. Commissioner Kalm stated that the taskforce is not trying to become an IT Commission but is rather trying to become an Efficiency Commission.

Commissioner Padilla stated that the leverage point that the Supervisors should focus on would be the IT Commission and how much authority do they place in the CIO. Chair-Emeritus Philibosian stated that there is already an IT Commission and they should handle that. He stated that as Commissioner Kalm has already articulated what the Supervisor is looking for not just Business Licenses and not just Permits but interaction by electronic means with the constituency at how the departments are dealing with it. He stated that looking down the line and into the future if the Supervisors want the Commission to look at this type of work maybe the Commissions could have an integrated taskforce from both Commissions and an outside consultant to help.

Commission Fuhrman stated that there are two parts to this project(1) structural part and how does the Commission want to organize the County (2) how much commonality is there and is there is a common system issue, is there an e-interaction system that should be use across all departments. He stated that the structural issue may not need a consultant for that. He stated that this is a typical interview County Department Heads, interview Departmental CIO's, interview the County CIO, County CEO, and interview the Board Offices and make a structural recommendation as the Commission did with the CEO/CAO governmental changes.

Commissioner Cole asked if there is time line that the Board Office has in mind to start and complete the project. Mr. Vizcarra replied that it can be the Commission's next project after Civil Service is completed. He stated that it is definitely up to the Commission's resources and how the project can be managed. He stated that he just wanted to give the Commission an idea of what the Supervisor would like to see in terms of where the process is going but as far as the timeline it will be up to the Commission.

Chairman Barcelona expressed his appreciation to Mr. Edel Vizcarra and invited him to come back to speak to the EEC in the near future and the Commissioners applauded.

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