

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
CITIZENS ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY COMMISSION**

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June 12, 1974

Honorable Board of Supervisors  
Los Angeles County  
383, Hall of Administration  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Gentlemen:

SUBJECT: APPOINTING AUTHORITY AND OPERATING RESPONSIBILITY  
OF THE ARBORETA AND BOTANIC GARDENS  
AND THE OTIS ART INSTITUTE

In May, 1973, the Board of Supervisors requested the Economy and Efficiency Commission to conduct a study of seven commissions where the commission itself operates as the head of the department and appoints the chief executive reporting to it.

In February, 1974, you requested the E & E Commission to report within three weeks on Supervisor Ward's proposal to transfer the authority to appoint the Director of Planning from the Regional Planning Commission to the Board of Supervisors. We submitted our task force report on March 19. The report strongly supported the proposal, and you unanimously approved it.

This is the second report of the task force assigned to study the department head commissions. It deals with recommendations concerning two more commissions - the Arboreta and Botanic Gardens and the Otis Art Institute. The task force consists of (Mrs.) Mary Jane Kidd, Chairman; Dr. Robert Downey, Catherine Graeffe, Joseph A. Lederman, and William J. Moreland.

## I. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section of the report we summarize the task force's recommendations. In the following sections we explain in greater detail our reasons for making them.

### Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

The ordinance governing the operation of the Arboreta should be revised to make the following changes:

1. *Transfer the authority to appoint the Director from the Board of Governors to the Board of Supervisors.*

The Board of Governors and the Executive Committee of the Board each attend four 2-hour meetings a year. It is clearly impractical to hold the Board of Governors responsible for the day-to-day management of a department employing 147 people and controlling assets of \$75 million. Only the Director is in this position. Consequently, the Board of Supervisors should appoint the Director and he should be delegated responsibility to manage the Arboreta under the direct supervision of the Board.

2. *Redefine and clarify the responsibilities of the Board of Governors.*

The present ordinance says almost nothing about what duties the Board of Governors should perform. The ordinance should specify clearly the respective duties of the Board of Governors and the Director. In particular, it is important that the Board of Governors be held responsible for maintaining and coordinating an effective fund-raising and volunteer work program for the Arboreta.

3. *Redefine and clarify the responsibilities of the Director.*

In addition to standard managerial responsibilities, the ordinance should delineate the responsibilities of the Director to approve, subject to the supervision of the Board of Supervisors, how funds or special gifts affecting the operation of the Arboreta should be used.

4. *Reduce the membership of the Board of Governors from 25 members to 15.*

The 25-member Board is too large a group to deliberate and render effective decisions. Reducing the membership to 15 will bring the size of this group more in line with the duties and objectives we have proposed for it.

5. *Eliminate the \$25 stipend to members of the Board of Governors. (Requires a change in the Salary Ordinance.)*

The Board of Governors of the Museum of Natural History receive no stipend. We recommend the same practice for the Arboreta.

6. *Clarify qualifications for membership to the Board of Governors.*

In appointing members to the Board of Governors the Board of Supervisors should clearly ascertain that potential candidates are truly interested in promoting the activities of the Arboreta and are willing to devote their time to this cause.

Otis Art Institute

With respect to the ordinance governing the Otis Art Institute we make the following recommendations.

1. *Continue without change the present authority of the Board of Governors to appoint the Director.*

Transferring the appointing authority to the Board of Supervisors could seriously endanger the Institute's present accreditation as an art school. Traditionally, schools of higher education are governed by a Board of Governors

or Trustees. This concept is thoroughly entrenched in practice and tested through experience. Consequently, we conclude, the reasons which led us to recommend that the Board of Supervisors appoint the Directors of Regional Planning and the Arboreta do not apply to the Director of the Otis Art Institute.

2. *Specify the responsibilities of the Board of Governors with respect to fund-raising.*

The present ordinance is silent on the subject of whether the Board of Governors should be held responsible for fund-raising activities and for coordinating fund-raising plans with the volunteer citizens group supporting the Institute. The task force believes firmly that the Board of Governors of Otis, like the Board for the Arboreta, should be held responsible for these activities.

3. *Eliminate the \$10 stipend to members of the Board of Governors. (Requires a change in the Salary Ordinance.)*

We make the same recommendation for Otis as for the Arboreta. This follows the practice at the Museum of Natural History, where the Board receives no stipend.

4. *Clarify qualifications for membership to the Board of Governors.*

Some general language should be inserted into the ordinance on the qualifications of governors which will provide a guideline to the Board of Supervisors in making appointments. Most important, potential members should have a clear understanding of what the college is about and the temperament and interest to serve it effectively.

## II. ARBORETA AND BOTANIC GARDENS

The department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens maintains three major facilities:

Los Angeles State and County Arboretum, Arcadia  
Descanso Gardens, La Canada  
South Coast Botanic Garden, Palos Verdes Peninsula

The purpose of the department is to provide education and enjoyment to the public in the areas of plant care and development, landscaping and associated horticultural and botanical subjects, and to conduct research and study in these same areas. The Arboreta also grows and tests plants from all parts of the world for the purpose of introducing those which are suitable to the Southern California area.

The Board of Governors, meeting every third month, is appointed by the Board of Supervisors with each Supervisor appointing five members for three-year terms. These members are subject to the supervision of the Board of Supervisors and are charged with the management and control of the department in accordance with County Ordinance.

The President is elected by majority vote, and he appoints four members to an Executive Committee from the Board of Governors. The Executive Committee meets at such times as necessary between meetings of the Board, seldom exceeding eight meetings in any one fiscal year. Members of the Board of Governors are paid a stipend of \$25 for each meeting attended.

The day-to-day administration of the Arboreta is assigned to a Director who is appointed by the Board of Governors and performs his functions under its general supervision. He directs a staff of approximately 147 employees with an annual operating budget of \$1.5 million.

There are four volunteer citizen groups supporting the three facilities which the Arboreta operates. These supporting groups operate as non-profit foundations with members paying dues ranging from \$10 to \$1000 annually. The four groups and their membership are: The California Arboretum Foundation, 2500 members; the Descanso Garden Guild, 300 members; the South Coast Botanic Garden Foundation, 250 members; and the Southern California Camellia Society, 300 members. These organizations provide assistance by fostering the goodwill and support of the general public and by soliciting funds through donations. Further, they assist the Director and the Board of Governors by raising and selling plants, making and selling craft items related to plants, putting on flower or plant shows, maintaining various vending concessions and machines, performing as tour guides, and teaching or assisting in the conduct of classes.

#### Task Force Recommendations

The ordinance governing the operation of the Arboreta (Ordinance Number 4099, Article IV-A) should be amended to make the following changes.

1. TRANSFER THE AUTHORITY TO APPOINT THE DIRECTOR FROM THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The task force takes the position that the Director should be responsible for the activities and success of the department, and the Board of Supervisors should hold him directly accountable on all matters concerning the department. Accordingly, the Board of Supervisors, following the civil service process, should appoint the Director, and he should perform his responsibilities under its direction. The Board of Governors should be divorced from its role as department head and should take no part in the supervision of departmental operations or in the selection of departmental personnel.

The Board of Governors and the Executive Committee each attend four 2-hour meetings a year. Together, these two groups are in attendance a total

of 16 hours each year for the purpose of directing the management and control of a department with an asset value of approximately \$75 million, consisting of 750 acres, employing 147 people and having an annual budget of \$1.5 million.

To the task force, considering this limited annual attendance, it is clear that to hold the Board of Governors accountable for the operations of the department is impractical. Only the Director is in a position to maintain effective day-to-day control and direction of the department. Consequently, we strongly believe that the Director should be delegated the responsibility to manage the Arboreta under the direct supervision of the Board of Supervisors, and he should be assigned the authority necessary to carry out this responsibility.

2. REDEFINE AND CLARIFY THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Except for stating that the department shall be "under the management and control of a Board of Governors," the present ordinance says nothing about what specific duties the Board of Governors should perform. With the transfer of the appointing authority to the Board of Supervisors and the managerial responsibility to the Director, the task force believes that the ordinance should clearly specify the respective duties under this new arrangement of the Board of Governors and the Director.

Accordingly, we recommend that the ordinance be revised to identify specifically six principal responsibilities of the Board of Governors. These are:

1. *To advise and provide support to the Board of Supervisors and the Director in the general management of the department, with particular regard to the development of Arboreta policies in all facilities and the determination of departmental goals and programs.*

2. *In conjunction with the Director and the supporting organizations to establish goals and plans as to fund-raising activities to be targeted for the forthcoming year.*
3. *In conjunction with the Director and the supporting organizations to develop a master plan establishing priorities for allocation of contributed funds to Arboreta programs.*
4. *To solicit funds and donations for departmental programs.*
5. *To coordinate the fund-raising activities of the Board of Governors and the supporting organizations in achieving fund-raising goals.*
6. *In conjunction with the Director and the supporting organizations to study and evaluate new programs and how they may be funded.*

It is clear from the above that the task force believes that it is a particularly important responsibility of the Board of Governors to develop and coordinate an effective fund-raising and volunteer work program. Since the County's general fund support is limited to a basic operating budget, the Arboreta could not possibly have achieved the eminence it now enjoys among institutions of its kind without the aid of private donations and the vast amount of free volunteer work contributed by members of the supporting organizations. Thus, it is critical to the continued success of the Arboreta that these programs be effectively maintained and encouraged by the Board of Governors.

### 3. REDEFINE AND CLARIFY THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE DIRECTOR

As noted in the previous section, the task force believes that the ordinance also needs to delineate clearly the duties of the Director. Under our proposal he will be accountable directly to the Board of Supervisors for the general management of the department. This includes the development of short and long-range operating plans, the appointment and supervision of personnel, the establishment and maintenance of an effective organization structure,

the evaluation of personnel performance as well as operating programs, and the control of costs within a prescribed budget. In addition to these standard managerial responsibilities, we recommend that the ordinance delineate five other important duties which we believe will establish an appropriate relationship between the managerial responsibility of the Director and the fund-raising and other activities of the Board of Governors and the four supporting organizations. These are:

1. *To approve the assignment of funds collected by the Board of Governors and the supporting organizations to be used on Arboreta projects.*
2. *To approve, prior to acceptance by the Board of Governors or a supporting organization, certain potential donations, monetary or non-monetary, such as land, facilities, artifacts, or other gifts of a special nature. These would be defined as donations carrying a specific stipulation about their use or of such a special nature that they would require a significant change in the policies, operation, or budget of the Arboreta.*
3. *To organize and convene, as appropriate, a general coordinating committee - consisting of the Director and members of the Board of Governors and the four supporting organizations - to insure that fund-raising activities and volunteer work programs of the five groups are effectively coordinated to the best interest of the department as a whole.*
4. *To receive and review a statement of finances provided to him each month by each supporting organization.*
5. *To request that the Auditor-Controller conduct a financial audit of the four supporting organizations at least once a year to verify conformity to accepted accounting principles concerning the collection, maintenance, and disbursement of funds.*

As department head, the Director is accountable to the Board of Supervisors for all programs and projects affecting Arboreta facilities. He cannot be held accountable if he does not control how funds or special gifts affecting the operation of the Arboreta are used.

The Board of Governors and the supporting organizations have the explicit purpose and responsibility of supporting the objectives, goals, functions, and needs of the department through volunteer services and fund-raising programs. Therefore, while the Board of Governors or each supporting group should recommend how the funds it raises or the gifts it receives ought to be used, the Director should make the final determination as to whether the recommendation of the Board or supporting organization is in line with Arboreta policy and fosters its best interest. We should note here with respect to the supporting organizations that while the Director is given approval authority over the recommendations of the organization, he cannot transfer the use of funds or gifts from the facility of one to another, without the approval of the supporting organization itself.

4. REDUCE THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS FROM 25 MEMBERS TO 15

The 25-member Board is too large a group to deliberate and render effective decisions. The task force therefore recommends that the Board of Governors be reduced to 15 members.

Historically, the County has had problems with commissions whose size makes it difficult and cumbersome for them to perform their duties effectively. In addition to prolonging deliberations and hindering decision-making, commissions of excessive size also add to the administrative work and costs of the department which is required to make the necessary preparations for meetings, keep members informed of current events, and satisfy requests for information or analysis from various members.

Investigation of other Los Angeles County commissions reveals only five whose membership exceeds 15. Furthermore, none of the other commissions which operate as department heads contains more than 15 members. In this

regard it is significant to note that three years ago in February, 1971, the Board of Supervisors reduced the membership of the Human Relations Commission from 25 members to 15.

As we have noted above, the Board of Governors of the Arboreta has a vital role to play in the successful operation of the Arboreta. We believe strongly that reducing the membership of the Board of Governors to 15 will bring the size of this group more in line with the duties and objectives which we have proposed for it.

5. ELIMINATE THE \$25 STIPEND TO MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS (Requires a change in the Salary Ordinance, Article 45, Section 450.2)

Among the seven commissions which operate as department heads, three can be considered as essentially concerned with cultural functions - the boards for the Arboreta and Botanic Gardens, the Otis Art Institute, and the Museum of Natural History. Among these, the governors of the Arboreta receive a stipend of \$25 for each meeting; the governors of the Otis Art Institute receive \$10 a meeting; and the governors of the Museum receive nothing.

Since each of these boards performs essentially the same function - although in different cultural fields - there appears to be no logical reason for this inconsistency. Whether one believes the governors should or should not receive a stipend it seems clear to the task force that the three boards should be treated in a uniform manner.

Our recommendation is to follow the practice of the Museum of Natural History and eliminate stipends for the other two boards. We believe that if a citizen is sincerely interested in the cultural programs and activities of these departments, as all board members should be, he will be more than willing to serve as a governor without the expectation of receiving a stipend.

6. CLARIFY QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The task force does not believe that it is possible to develop rigid qualifications for members of the Board of Governors, such as those established for professionally oriented commissions. However, it is clear that those members who are most effective are those who have demonstrated interest, ability, and willingness to contribute their time and effort in support of the department and the Director.

We therefore recommend that in appointing members to the Board of Governors the Board of Supervisors take care in ascertaining that the potential candidates are truly interested in promoting the activities of the Arboreta and are willing to devote their time to this cause.

In two instances, however, we believe that the ordinance should be revised to establish specific criteria for membership on the Board.

First, we recommend that a member of a supporting organization who is serving as an officer or director of that group should be prohibited from serving at the same time as a member of the Board of Governors. We believe that members of these groups may very well serve effectively on the Board of Governors, but we believe strongly that if they are appointed to the Board, they should be required to resign from any official position with the supporting organization while they serve on the Board of Governors.

The interest and concern of the Board of Governors should be directed to the department as a whole and to the needs of the three separate facilities without bias or favoritism towards any single facility. We believe, therefore, that disqualifying officials of the supporting groups from serving on the Board of Governors will enhance the ability of the Board of Governors to act in an impartial manner regardless of which facility or program is involved.

Second, we recommend that the term of office for governors be changed from the present three-year term without limitation on number of terms to a three-year term limited to two terms. We believe, however, that a member having served two terms should be eligible for reappointment after one year has elapsed from expiration of his previous three-year term.

This recommendation is designed to bring new experience periodically onto the Board of Governors and to avoid the danger of certain established views and practices becoming so entrenched that any new idea or practice is automatically excluded from consideration. At the same time, any member who has demonstrated a dedicated interest in serving on the Board will have an opportunity after a year's interim to serve for another two terms.

This approach, we believe, strikes an appropriate balance between the dangers of unlimited service of Board members and the disservice to the department which could result if a member who had served two terms with distinction could not again serve however much he desired to devote his time to this civic cause.

### III. OTIS ART INSTITUTE

The County established the Otis Art Institute as a professional school of art in 1918. Previously, in 1916, General Harrison Gray Otis, founder of the Los Angeles Times, had deeded the property which included his family residence to the County with the provision that it be used in the furtherance of education in the arts.

Today the school is accredited to grant the bachelor and the master of fine arts degrees by the California State Board of Education, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and the National Association of Schools of Art. Total enrollment at the Institute during any one semester is approximately 300 students.

A Board of Governors of 15 members, appointed by the Board of Supervisors, is charged with the management and control of the Institute, subject to the supervision of the Board of Supervisors. The governors serve for three-year terms and receive a stipend of \$10 for each meeting attended.

The Board in turn appoints a Director who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Institute under the general supervision of the Board. He directs a staff of 27 with an annual operating budget of \$698,000.

Similar to the volunteer groups supporting the Arboreta, there is also an organization of volunteer citizens who are incorporated as a non-profit organization called the Otis Art Associates. This group has a membership of approximately 350 who support the Institute by contributing their time and financial assistance to Institute programs. Members pay dues ranging from \$15 to \$1000 annually.

The Otis Art Associates is governed by a Board of Directors who, in conjunction with the Board of Governors and the Director, determine suitable

objectives and projects needing support. These currently include scholarships, student material funds, gallery exhibitions, visiting lecturers, library acquisitions, and special equipment needed by the school.

Task Force Recommendations

With respect to the ordinances governing the Otis Art Institute (Ordinance Number 4099, Sections 200-206 as amended) we make the following recommendations.

1. CONTINUE WITHOUT CHANGE THE PRESENT AUTHORITY OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS TO APPOINT THE DIRECTOR

Transferring the authority to appoint the Director from the Board of Governors to the Board of Supervisors - as we recommended for the Regional Planning Commission and the Arboreta - could seriously endanger the accreditation of the Otis Art Institute by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges and the National Association of Schools of Art.

This point is emphasized by William A. Lewis, Director of the Commission on Accrediting of the National Association of Schools of Art. In a letter, dated May 3, 1973, to Andreas Anderson, former Director of the Institute, Mr. Lewis stated: "The replacement of the authority of the established Board of Governors by an action of the Supervisors dangerously risks the accreditation granted Otis by both the Western Association and the National Association of Schools of Art, I would fear. The overall national accreditation policy observed by the concerned agencies, and recognized by the U. S. Office of Education is most respectful of the independent position of the governors, trustees and regents of the nation's schools." The task force has confirmed that officials of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges hold a similar opinion.

Traditionally, throughout the United States, schools and school systems of higher education are governed by a Board of Governors, Trustees, or Regents. According to this concept the members of these boards are lay citizens selected to insure impartiality, integrity and responsiveness to the best interests of the educational institutions which they govern. This concept is thoroughly entrenched in practice and tested through experience. In California the structure is employed in our two great public university systems - the University of California and the State universities - and, so far as we know, in every private college or university. We see no reason to recommend an exception to this long established practice for the Otis Art Institute.

Consequently, we conclude, the reasons which led us to recommend that the Board of Supervisors appoint the Directors of Regional Planning and the Arboreta do not apply to the Director of the Otis Art Institute.

For these reasons the task force recommends no change in the present appointing and governing authority of the Board of Governors.

2. SPECIFY THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS WITH RESPECT TO FUND-RAISING

Unlike the ordinance governing the operation of the Arboreta, the ordinance covering the Otis Art Institute is reasonably clear in delineating the respective duties of the Board of Governors and the Director of the Institute.

Section 201 of the ordinance states: "Subject to the supervision of the Board of Supervisors of the County, the Institute shall be under the management and control of a board of governors . . . The board of governors shall have charge and control of the administration and maintenance of the Institute."

Section 206 delineates the duties of the Director: "Said Director shall be responsible for and have charge of all administrative, financial, and personnel matters of said Institute, subject only to the general supervision of said Board of Governors."

The ordinance, however, is silent on the subject of whether the Board of Governors should be held responsible for soliciting contributions and donations and for coordinating fund-raising plans and activities for the Institute. The task force believes firmly that, as with the Board of Governors of the Arboreta, the Board of Governors of Otis should be held responsible for such activities.

The taxpayers of Los Angeles County contribute a substantial amount of County general fund monies to the maintenance and operation of the County's cultural departments - in particular, to the Museum of Art, the Museum of Natural History, the Arboreta and Botanic Gardens, and the Otis Art Institute. While these cultural departments provide important services and certainly enhance the cultural life of the community, we believe the taxpayers have a right to expect that private persons and groups who are concerned with fostering interest in the arts and sciences should contribute a fair share of the cost of supporting these institutions. Consequently, to solicit funds and donations and to coordinate the fund-raising activities of supporting organizations, we believe, should be assigned as one of the principal responsibilities of the Board of Governors of these institutions.

We recommend, therefore, that the ordinance governing the Otis Art Institute be revised to identify the following responsibilities of the Board of Governors:

1. *In conjunction with the Director and the Otis Art Associates to establish goals and plans as to fund-raising activities to be targeted for the forthcoming year.*
  2. *In conjunction with the Director and the Otis Art Associates to develop a master plan establishing priorities for allocation of contributed funds to Institute programs.*
  3. *To solicit funds and donations to assist students and the Institute in its services to the community.*
  4. *To coordinate the fund-raising activities of the Board of Governors and the Otis Art Associates in achieving fund-raising goals.*
  5. *In conjunction with the Director and the Otis Art Associates to study and evaluate new programs and how they may be funded.*
3. ELIMINATE THE \$10 STIPEND TO MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS (Requires a change in the Salary Ordinance, Article 70, Section 700.2)

The reasons for the task force recommendation to eliminate the current stipend for the Board of Governors of the Arboreta and that of the Otis Art Institute are presented in detail under Recommendation 5 covering the Arboreta. There is no need to repeat them here.

4. CLARIFY QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

As with the Arboreta, the task force recognizes that to develop rigid qualifications for the Board of Governors of the Otis Art Institute is impossible. Nevertheless, we believe some general language can be inserted into the ordinance on the qualifications of governors which will provide a useful guideline to the Board of Supervisors in making appointments. We suggest the following:

"In making appointments to the Board of Governors of the Institute the Board of Supervisors will screen potential candidates to secure members with the following general qualifications. Board members should have demonstrated a high caliber of leadership in their professions as well as a deep interest and knowledge of education. It is essential that board members have a clear understanding of what the college is about and the temperament and interest to serve it effectively.

"It is important that board members represent various segments of the community such as business, the professions and the arts to provide the necessary bridge between the Institution and the community and to bring expertise and interest to Otis. Finally, the Board of Governors should be composed of men and women who are recognized by their success in those activities and interests of special significance to the Institute."

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Jane Kidd". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

MRS. RAY KIDD  
Chairman, Task Force on Department  
Head Commissions

MJK:ml