

LOS ANGELES COUNTY
ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY COMMISSION

ROOM 163, HALL OF ADMINISTRATION / 500 WEST TEMPLE / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012 / 974-1491

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May 20, 1975

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

Gentlemen:

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGE
IN THE ARBORETA AND BOTANIC GARDENS ORDINANCE

On December 31, 1974, the Board of Supervisors requested the Economy and Efficiency Commission to review our previous recommendations which resulted in a comprehensive revision of the Ordinance governing the department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens. The Board's request was generated, in particular, by a report from several members of the Board of Governors that it was having difficulty mustering a quorum for its regular business meetings.

The task force, under the chairmanship of Mary Jane Kidd, which made the original recommendations, has met with the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors to discuss the situation. Mrs. Kidd and the commission staff have also conferred with Francis Ching, the Director of the Arboreta. In addition, Mrs. Kidd attended the regular meeting of the Board of Governors in April of this year. As a result of these meetings, the task force submits the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1.

The Ordinance should be revised to allow directors, but not officers, of the four voluntary citizen supporting foundations and societies to serve on the Board of Governors.

Analysis

We made the original recommendation to prohibit officers and directors of the supporting groups from serving at the same time on the Board of Governors in order to promote the impartiality of the Board of Governors with respect to the three separate facilities.

Since each supporting organization is associated with a single facility - the Arboretum, Descanso Gardens, and the South Coast Botanic Garden - we were concerned that officers or directors of these institutions could show bias toward their facility rather than concern with the department as a whole.

The Executive Committee has persuaded us, however, that the exclusion of directors was too strict. The Executive Committee agrees that the officers of the supporting organizations should continue to be prohibited from serving at the same time on the Board of Governors because of their active efforts in support of one facility and their natural tendency therefore to favor its interests.

The Executive Committee does not believe that the same criteria should apply to directors of these Organizations. We agree. While generally associated with one facility, the directors play a considerably less active role in its activities than the officers. At the same time, as directors they have demonstrated their interest in the goals and programs of the Arboreta. They therefore provide a valuable pool of experienced and interested citizens for appointment to the Board of Governors.

We conclude that this change would not endanger the ability of the Board of Governors to direct its interest and attention to the department as a whole rather than to any single facility.

Recommendation 2.

No other change should be made in the present ordinance.

Analysis

Several members of the Executive Committee and the Board of Governors reported that the recommendations to transfer the authority to appoint the director from the Board of Governors to the Board of Supervisors and to eliminate the \$25 stipend to board members are the principal reasons why the Board of Governors has had difficulty in obtaining a quorum at its recent meetings.

First of all, we should note that there are currently three vacancies on the Board of Governors. To alleviate the quorum problem, we urge the Supervisors, therefore, to fill these vacancies as soon as possible. With respect to transfer of the appointment authority, our recommendations simply provided legal status to existing fact. The Board of Supervisors appointed the present director of the Arboreta in 1970 by instructing the Board of Governors at a public meeting that Mr. Francis Ching was its choice and requesting ratification of this decision by the Board of Governors.

Thus, our recommendation made no real change in the operating authority of the Board of Governors. We continue to believe that the Board of Supervisors should appoint the director and should hold him directly accountable on all matters concerning the department.

The principal role of the Board of Governors, on the other hand, should be to advise and provide support to the Board of Supervisors and the director in the general management of the department, in the determination of departmental goals and programs, in the coordination of fund-raising activities, and in the allocation of contributed funds.

We believe that any current member of the Board of Governors who is not interested in serving in this capacity should offer his resignation to the Board of Supervisors. We also believe that the Board of Supervisors, in making an appointment to the Board of Governors, should determine that potential candidates are truly interested in promoting the activities of the Arboreta and are willing to devote their time to this cause.

With respect to elimination of the stipend, we made our previous recommendation on the basis of consistency among County commissions and boards. Three boards in the County can be considered as essentially concerned with cultural interests. These are the boards for the Arboreta and Botanic Gardens, the Otis Art Institute, and the Museum of Natural History.

At the time of our recommendations, the Governors of the Arboreta received a stipend of \$25 for each meeting; the Governors of the Otis Art Institute received \$10 a meeting; and the Governors of the Museum of Natural History received no stipend. Since each of these boards performs essentially the same function - although in different cultural fields - we recommended that the stipend be eliminated for the other two boards. During our study of the Natural History Museum, the Board of Governors expressed complete agreement with the policy of no stipend for its members. Mr. Gurdon Woods, Director of

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the Otis Art Institute, also reports that his board has voiced no objection to the recommendation to eliminate its stipend. We continue to believe, therefore, that as a matter of consistency the three boards should be treated alike.

We should add that the ordinance allows members of the Board of Governors of the Arboreta to be reimbursed- for mileage to and from all meetings. The department has now initiated a standard accounting procedure for reimbursing those members who request it for their mileage.

Very truly yours,

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

MJK:ml