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COUNTY COUNCIL

Testimony for G.E.T. Committee December 17, 2019

Submitted by Nick Drance

Comments regarding items:

1. GET-11(30) LITIGATION MATTERS (SPECIAL COUNSEL AUTHORIZATION: CLIMATE CHANGE LITIGATION) (GET-11(30))
2. PROPOSED CHARTER AMENDMENT (ESTABLISH AN OFFICE OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR AND PROVIDE FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF THE MANAGING DIRECTOR AS THE COUNTY'S CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER) (GET-10(5))

Item 1.

We all agree that the Mayor's initiative is right and appropriate. Generally, government and business interests are blinded by their preoccupations with short terms gains at the expense of long-term sustainability, indeed, our very survival. The fact of the matter in my view, is that it's going to take something so catastrophic, beyond what we've already seen, to make business and government respond appropriately. So, to take the initiative definitely at this time, is the way to go. For us, as individuals, our concerns are local and urgent. We find ourselves in a position where we must protect our own first.

Our strategic and fiscal priorities must focus on all the things that the Mayor has cited. He's completely right.

I'd like to see that a budget amount be established for his initiative with the following parameters. There's no sense in re-inventing the wheel. We are among hundreds of other cities, states and towns, indeed all island nations. They have already done the heavy lifting along with organizations like Earth Justice and others, to recognize the cost of the consequences we face by inaction.

Our own Corporation Counsel is equipped to work with those other entities and in fact, I consider it their responsibility. Our task is merely to join with others who, as I say, have already done the heavy lifting for us. We must conserve our financial and managerial resources to deal with the new realities we face here locally. I know from experience that we must always be prepared to re-invent our strategies every few years. Our world changes that fast. That does not apply however, in the case of the objectives set forth in Countywide and Island Plans. These are broad, visionary statements based on the values expressed by residents and they should be followed, as was intended.

Let us focus on taking care of ourselves and exercise fiscal responsibility as we do so. For example, Council Member Sugimura called for an analysis for Upcountry Cesspool Replacement based on State Act 125 in 2017. This is an example of stewardship as well as long term fiscal

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responsibility in every respect. This issue is in her district and while there could possibly be an incremental, potentially unpopular financial contribution required by her constituents, the fact remains, as she accurately stated, that the health of our water supply must be assured in the long term. That's a better use of financial resources in addressing environmental needs than hiring outside counsel. It's a tough problem that needs our full attention.

The Environmental Resources Department deserves support in order to tackle this issue, which it considers itself unable to handle due to a lack of guidance by the State. Perhaps outside resources in this area would be a more effective use of funds. As I say, others before us have done the heavy lifting. Let us recognize them and focus on our own welfare, locally.

I agree with the Mayor's initiative wholeheartedly as long as we utilize existing resources in the most cost-effective way.

Item 2.

I would find minor revisions to this resolution acceptable in the spirit of teamwork, but I see it correct, as written. In my view, Chair King has composed this resolution in an objective, unbiased way. It follows the best of widely accepted convention. I applaud her professionalism in crafting this resolution which fairly allocates powers between the executive and legislative branches. It efficiently addresses the administrative and managerial requirements of the County, much like the current objectives-based Council Committee structure. It respects the talents and skills of an effective organization. Just as this particular Committee, being comprised of all 9 Council Members, provides an efficient and fair structure, a County Manager function does that for the County as a whole.

The proposed structure duplicates the best corporate arrangement we've come up with so far. In this Resolution, The Mayor is the CEO, the new position serves as COO. The County Council is the Board of Directors. I've reviewed the Charter changes. I second guessed the powers and limitations it bestowes upon all entities and it appears balanced and appropriate. If you have an issue with one or another aspect of it, I ask you to talk it over among yourselves and come to agreement so that the County can take advantage of all the benefits this structure provides right away. We need to join the majority of our fellow municipalities in establishing this form of government for ourselves.

Mahalo for all the effort you have expended and all that you have accomplished this year. I wish you a very Merry Christmas season and the best wishes for a healthy and happy New Year.

What Does a County Administrator Do?

A county administrator's job is to oversee the daily operations of a county government. You are the go-between for the county board of directors and the various departments, such as sanitation, water reclamation, and health administration. As a county manager, your duties include creating and reviewing budgets for the different departments; discussing local issues with department heads, clients, and the public; attending public hearings and city council meetings and being present during emergency situations. You are often at board and department meetings, and you do outreach to secure more investment, such as new construction or job creation, from private industry and the state government.