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To: Government Structure Work Group Members  
From: Barry Clegg, Jill Garcia, and Greg Abbott  
Subject: Report on Interviews with Former Elected Officials

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On behalf of the Government Structure Work Group, we conducted a series of interviews with several former elected officials who had previously served the City of Minneapolis in the offices of Mayor and Council Member (including service as Council President). The focus of these interviews was to gather their first-hand experiences within the current government structure, personal observations about the strengths and weaknesses of this current structure, and any recommendations for possible improvement.

These former elected officials agreed that the City's government structure is unusual, not easily classified in most of the standard models recognized in the field of public administration today. It has elements of the original aldermanic system that gave almost all power to the City Council combined with a not-too-weak but not-too-strong mayor complemented by a quasi-manager position (titled City Coordinator), all mashed together. As one of these former officials said: *"I don't know that any of us would deliberately design a structure like what we have in place today. The fact is, democracy only works when people want it to work; when people don't want it to work, it stops. This system depends on individuals who share a commitment to making it work."* Fundamental to that level of collaboration, compromise, and coordination is the concept these elected officials captured in the aphorism: There is never a last act. That important philosophy was shared among former Mayors and Council Members, meaning that they would commit to governing in a manner that would never lead to a permanent division or confrontation or conflict that prevented future collaboration, compromise, or coordination for the better interests of the City (both the enterprise and the community).

This report presents a summary of the feedback received from the City's department heads.

### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**1. How would you rate the effectiveness and efficiency of the current mayor-council structure?**

The former elected officials all agreed the City's diffused system of authority is complicated and requires more internal work—collaboration, communications, compromise—to ensure the enterprise operates effectively. The system was perceived as being highly accessible and responsive to the public, but also vulnerable to the individual personalities of the Mayor and Council Members.

**a. What are the best attributes of the current structure?**

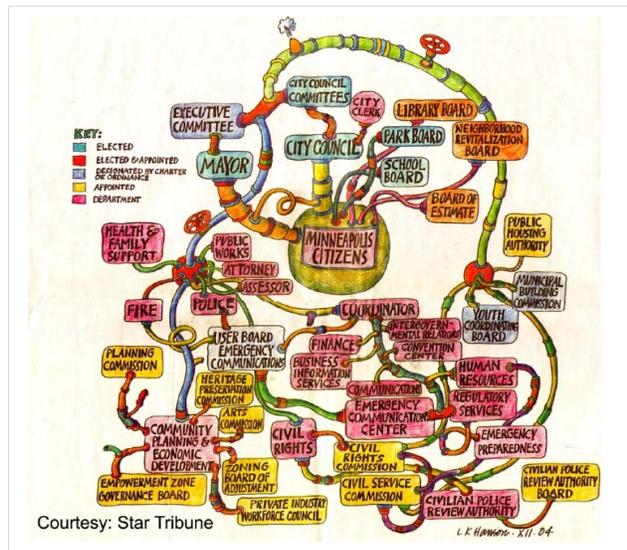
There was agreement that the diffused nature of the City's governance structure resulted in the enterprise being highly porous, thereby providing significant opportunities for community access, engagement, and direct participation. As a consequence, the City is perceived to be responsive to the public, particularly through the Council Members. There was universal agreement that this increased level of public engagement was a significant benefit to the community. The fact that executive functions are shared between Mayor and Council demands a high degree of continuous communication, collaboration, compromise, and coordination between them; these policymakers must work closely together to achieve shared goals. In practical terms, that means that any policy proposal, programmatic decision, or processes must have the approval of the Mayor and at least seven Council Members. This system of shared powers was thought to increase public trust and access as well as government transparency.

In the past, there was an unspoken understanding that the Mayor was responsible for providing an overall direction, a vision for the future of the City. The Council was responsible for refining that vision and adding the priorities and needs of their respective wards. Some former officials noted that, as they gained experience inside the system, they learned to appreciate some of the benefits of the City's diffused structure. Because it lacks a centralized power center, much more time must be invested by all key stakeholders to reach agreement on any decision point. That investment of time and resources paid dividends down the road because decisions had been thoroughly vetted, were deliberated publicly, and benefitted from multiple perspectives, including Mayor, Council Members, department leaders, and the community.

**b. What are the biggest drawbacks to the current structure?**

The biggest drawbacks to the existing structure are the direct opposite of its perceived benefits; specifically, (1) the lack of a centralized executive authority to provide direction across the operating departments and a clear chain of command and (2) the vulnerability of the system's design to individual personalities.

One former elected official recalled an image produced by the Star Tribune (see right) which depicted the City's organizational structure as a type of Rube Goldberg machine—a contraption intentionally designed to perform a simple task in an indirect and overly complicated way. Reflecting on that image, former City officials noted that many changes had been made over the years, changes that were intended to improve performance, streamline the administration, and address some of the challenges from the past. However, it was noted that many of those intended improvements, despite best efforts, appears not to have been successful, proving that the lack of a good underlying structure can overwhelm and defeat even very consistent reform initiatives that are supported by mayors and councils in their day. One former official noted: "It's truly amazing the City succeeds despite the existing structure."



Several of the former officials indicated they did not believe that the City's current structure helped elected officials or senior staff to achieve the objective of effective and responsive government. Many noted that the current structure is highly dependent on individuals willing to work together, and strong personalities can undermine a system designed for shared power. When individuals do not work well together, that is a problem for the City enterprise and, by extension, for the community. The Mayor cannot make unilateral decision on policy, and that is a good thing; policymaking is improved by the involvement of multiple voices and different perspectives. However, the Mayor also lacks the ability to direct the administration in the process of implementing, enforcing, and evaluating policy decisions or directives, and that is a weakness that can have serious consequences—especially if individual Council Members wish to involve themselves in the day-to-day operations of service delivery. That type of inappropriate behavior can undermine the effective functioning of the City enterprise. It is a significant challenge to be effective in such a highly diffused, fractured environment. One former official offered that the line between policy and operations—between legislative and executive functions—is frequently posed in clear-cut terms; but in the City of Minneapolis, that division is very thin and, in some circumstances, may not exist at all. And inevitably, when that separation of legislative and executive functions is unclear, it leaves the system open to abuse. The challenges is both the flaws in the system's design as well as the personality clashes of individuals in specific offices at specific times.

Former officials also indicated that the ability for policymakers to achieve consensus was also impacted—both positively and negatively—by the way in which wards were drawn. This is an important issue that receives very little public attention, but which can have a disproportionate impact on the ability for policymakers to work together on identifying and agreeing on shared goals. The needs of the different neighborhoods can

impact how Council Members position themselves on various policy issues. The impact of how wards are drawn can play out in the relationships and alliances that develop among Council Members and between the Council and the Mayor.

**2. How does the current mayor-council structure operate in the real world, as opposed to how it looks on paper?**

One former elected official, responding to this question, quipped: *“That’s like asking someone to evaluate the effectiveness of the federal government by reading the constitution. In the real world, based on the charter, it’s about governance. It’s about the process of governing—that’s the focus of this conversation. But from what I can tell, it’s not working very well.”*

**(a) How is direction given to departments: by the Mayor; by Council committees; by individual Council Members?**

Former elected officials agreed that, based on their experiences, directions to departments were given by the Mayor, by the City Council and by the Council’s committees, and by individual Council Members. And most agreed that was part of the problem.

Though not the chief executive, the Mayor has formal and informal powers in the City enterprise, sometimes very direct, as with the police department, but usually indirect and informal. The Mayor has the greatest impact through influence and persuasion. Here again, the keys to achieving desired outcomes are the ability to collaborate, communicate, and compromise. The Council’s standing committees are like miniature commissions in setting policy and providing guidance or direction to departments. Through the public work of those standing committees, the public can become very involved in the City’s policy processes and administrative operations. Council Members work with departments on developing policy issues, which are brought forward through the standing committee system. The committee system is the appropriate forum for Council Members to work with staff—within established policy parameters.

Sometimes individual Council Members have become too involved in the administration of a department, sometimes at levels that are inappropriate (e.g., front line staff). This is nothing new; as noted, it is a vulnerability of the design of the current governance structure. Still, all former officials agreed that individual Council Members should not be involved in the day-to-day operation of departments and should not be giving direction to staff, and this prohibition should be clearly stated in any charter revision. There must be a recognition of the established chain of command within the administration by policymakers. Former officials noted that in prior years staff were aware of the need to get a majority vote from the Council before taking direction. The City Council must hold its Members accountable for not interfering in department operations. Former officials indicated that the Council must operate with a culture of accountability, and noted that the Council President has a lot of authority in this regard because that individual shapes which Council Members will serve on the different standing committees and sets the tone for how the Council and its committees operate.

**(b) How are conflicts resolved?**

Some former officials half-jokingly said the City Coordinator was most often called upon to resolve conflicts. The City Coordinator was seen to be responsible for day-to-day operations, and policymakers respected (and appreciated and benefitted from) that arrangement.

Still, a majority of former officials expressed doubt the City had the capacity for legitimate conflict resolution among elected policymakers, or between policymakers and departments. That was again a fact that the system was vulnerable to strong personalities, and personality clashes could have enormous impact on the system. One former official noted a personal philosophy that helped to ameliorate this challenge, summed in the phrase: *“There is never a last act.”* With this idea in mind, policymakers learned to get past personal disagreements because there was always another issue (another vote) in queue where partnership was required; those policymakers considered too doctrinaire or too rigid impeded partnership and collaboration, to the detriment of the City enterprise and, potentially, to the community. Referring to the idea that *“There is never a last act,”* Council Members functioned as if the final vote on any issue was the end, and any friction or disagreement was firmly focused on issues, not on people or personalities. And, equally important, policymakers were always keenly aware of the fact that all their actions and interactions were done against the backdrop of the electorate. Said one former official: *“We were all aware that each of us had been elected;*

*we all had election certificates, and that demanded respect.”*

**(c) Do personalities, as opposed to position and formal role, play a part? Do they overwhelm formal process?**

Former officials were unanimous in agreeing that the City’s structure was heavily impacted by personalities. In the past, policymakers recognized this fact and, together with staff, agreed to make the structure and systems work so that the City enterprise could operate effectively. The need for discipline and clear boundaries was respected by policymakers (and staff) in the past.

Some policymakers expressed their belief that, based on their experiences, the system seemed to work best when there was alignment between the Mayor and City Coordinator. They described an operating system in which the Mayor partnered with the City Council in identifying a shared agenda of policies and priorities and then acted as the primary conduit of those policies and priorities to the City Coordinator who marshalled the internal resources needed to drive progress on that shared agenda. All former officials agreed that a shared agenda between Mayor and Council was critical to the success of the City; absent a defined, shared agenda, there is no common focus for the City’s elected policymakers and no means to drive teamwork (collaboration, cooperation, compromise, etc.).

These former officials also noted the important role of the Council President within this system. From their experiences, the role of Council President was primarily that of being a listener and a facilitator; it was the job of the Council President to work most closely with the Mayor in developing the shared agenda and then, afterward, for driving progress and results on that shared agenda among the Council Members. So, the Council President was primarily focused on ensuring the success of the Council, attending to its operation and the needs of the Council Members. In prior years, there was a standing check-in that involved the Mayor, Council President, and City Coordinator that helped to ensure alignment with the shared agenda across the entire enterprise.

Based on past experience, the former officials noted that the Mayor often had to form partnerships with individual Council Members, most often around specific policy issues. In some cases, close divides on the Council were reflective of good policymaking, with greater transparency even if there was disagreement among key players at the time. A healthy tension between the Mayor and Council (and even among Council Members) often led to better policy results or outcomes for the community. But it was always important to remove personalities from those debates and votes. Coalitions on the Council formed and reformed frequently around various policy issues, and they changed from issue to issue. That reinforced the importance of the mantra: *“There is never a last act.”* Even when coalitions on the Council shifted, there was still a shared agenda and a sense of shared priorities.

Another issue where the former elected officials unanimously agreed was on the appointive term of Charter Department Heads. The existing two-year term was a holdover from the days when the Mayor and Council also were elected to two-year terms. Although the elective terms were changed from two years to four years the terms for the Charter Department Heads were left unchanged. Former officials agreed that in order to support a common focus on a shared agenda, the entire “team” needed to be in place for the full term; thus, they supported amending the charter to provide that Charter Department Heads would be appointed to serve four-year terms that aligned with the elective term of the Mayor and Council.

While the former elected officials acknowledged the potential for negative impacts caused by differences in personalities, they agreed there was likely little in the way of charter change (structural reform) that could remedy that concern. Most indicated they had read the report on interviews with current department heads, indicating that although its contents were upsetting, they were nonetheless unsurprising. Some of the former officials offered that they interpreted that report to express the staff’s concern about the future direction of the City in the face of so many challenges; some of it was, indeed, related to government form and structure, but it was equally about the condition of the City in the wake of so many overlapping and unprecedented crises. In terms of how to address inappropriate behavior by elected officials—that is, interference in the administration and operations of departments—former officials offered the following possible approaches: (1) codify expectations and standards of acceptable behavior in the Council’s rules; (2) codify expectations and acceptable behaviors in the City’s code of ethics; or (3) codify in the charter a prohibition against administrative interference (similar to that which is in place in the City of Duluth). Most indicated that a charter prohibition seemed extreme and likely avoidable in preference to some possible change in the City’s code of ethics and/or the Council’s rules.

**3. How well do you think the current mayor/council structure has proven to be resilient (or not) over the past year during multiple crises (e.g., COVID health pandemic, civil unrest and disturbance, and related financial pressures)?**

The former elected officials said the City's performance during the past year—in the face of so many significant crises—did not seem to reflect a government structure that was very resilient. They said the City appeared to be disjointed and that, publicly, it appeared that it was difficult for the Mayor and Council to reach decisions. Some of that related to the impact of the worldwide health pandemic; in addition, however, the former officials noted that government did not appear to function well in a virtual environment, a significant factor to be considered in determining whether or not the City's governance structure is or is not resilient.

To some, the crises over the past year have demonstrated that a strong leader is important to the City in terms of its ability to respond to and to meet public needs, demands, as well as the ability to provide a unified direction for the City enterprise. Former officials noted there was an obvious division between the Mayor and the Council which was not helpful in such difficult circumstances. They further noted that there was a division amongst Council Members, too, which also wasn't helpful and added more stress and strain on the City enterprise and the community. The City's structure can certainly be elastic to address challenges, but most agreed it did not appear to be that way now.

As a comparison, some of the former elected officials recalled the City's response to significant budget crisis (2008-2010) when Local Government Aid was sharply cut, presenting difficult financing choices to policymakers at that time. That experience, they said, required that the Mayor and Council come together, overcome differences, collaborate, and address the challenges facing the City to avoid a financial disaster. Today, they said, it felt like the City's elected officials did not share that same sense of shared commitment to the City's best long-term interests. The City appeared to be floundering.

Another issue many of the former officials identified as a challenge to good governance was the potential negative influence of social media. This simply was not a factor for some of the former officials, whose service pre-dated Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms. They acknowledged that the reality is that today social media is a dominant force for engagement; however, it can also be exclusionary and not allow all voices to participate in the City's processes. More and better systems for engagement and inclusion were needed, and many expressed some doubt about whether technology had been truly beneficial to good governance.

Returning to the issue of personalities, one former official noted that this year has been a moment in the City's history when its government structure was not working the way it was designed; that is, the system was designed to force compromise and collaboration between Mayor and Council, and that wasn't always happening, even in the face of overwhelming stressors on the community. Thus, the more important question, potentially, is whether the government structure and system is the most critical issue or whether the biggest challenge is the inability or unwillingness among a unique set of individual elected officials to achieve consensus on shared goals. All of the former elected officials expressed concern about the present state of the City. They agreed that public service is a noble calling and pointed out that in prior years elected policymakers have reflected that spirit of service and the importance of tending to the long-term wellbeing of the City. More recently, they see more divisiveness in the City's leadership, more fragmentation in its leadership as well as a reduction in the continuity of both its elected and appointed leaders. Some indicated that in the past, the City's elected leaders valued the community's other institutions and tried to collaborate with them for the benefit of all residents; that included partnerships with the county, school district, state and regional agencies, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and the private sector and local businesses. They indicated that they didn't see that same level of partnership or collaboration with other community sectors today.

**4. How does Minneapolis compare to other jurisdictions with which you are familiar? Pluses and minuses?**

In some ways, the open, accessible and diffused structure combined with the fact that Council's standing policy committees are the locus of both policymaking and enterprise operations makes the Minneapolis structure akin to a commission form of government, like Portland (OR). Some see this as a strength of the City's current governance structure: it provides individual Council Members both the opportunity and means to have significant impact on the City's policy priorities as well as its operations, and this means individual Council Members have access to real power, something that simply is not available to city councils (and individual members) in other government systems. Moreover, the close relationship that develops between Council Members and their constituents—in which the Council Members function as intermediaries and ombudsmen for their constituents—was noted by some as a positive aspect of the current structure. For these reasons, some former officials preferred the current system, even while acknowledging its shortcomings.

The majority of the former elected officials expressed some level of concern about government systems which placed primary (or most) authority in a mayor or manager. Such systems might be more efficient, but there was a belief that such efficiency was gained at the loss of greater opportunities for meaningful engagement and participation by the community. They agreed that the modern council-manager system appeared to work well in smaller, less complex jurisdictions; however, the majority of the officials interviewed did not support a council-manager system for the City of Minneapolis.

Overall, the former elected officials concurred that more clarity and a stronger delineation between legislative and executive functions was needed. The majority preferred that executive functions be vested in an elected official (mayor) rather than an appointed official (manager) so that the public was assured, as President Harry Truman famously stated, of knowing where the buck stopped. In other words, there was a clear preference to make the Mayor accountable for the City's operation through the administrative departments. That would provide a clear line of accountability between the voters and the Mayor. The City Council would continue to have the lead role in policymaking as the legislative body and would continue to be expected to provide meaningful opportunities for the public to participate in those processes. Similarly, the Council Members would continue to act as ombudsmen for their constituents. There was a strong consensus among all former officials that the charter must preserve the checks and balances between the Mayor and Council; neither side of that equation should be weakened to the advantage of the other. Having clarity around roles and responsibilities is an important step to important reforms.

**5. Do you think a line item veto (on expenditures) for the mayor would be a plus or a minus? Why?**

All former elected officials were unanimous in stating that the Mayor should not have line-item veto power. The Mayor already has broad veto powers, which is appropriate for an executive model. But granting the Mayor a line-item veto would further diminish the system's design to force collaboration and compromise between the Mayor and the Council. While some former officials indicated that they might be able to tolerate a line-item veto, it was seen as a tool that would only discourage consensus-building among elected policymakers.

**6. Do you think there is truth to the "14 Bosses" slogan? Do you think a different structure would improve accountability? What exactly?**

Former officials agreed there is a challenge for departments inherent to reporting jointly to the Mayor and the Council, the "14 bosses" trope. Some former elected officials explained that the issue of "14 bosses" missed the connection department heads have, through the City Council, to the entire community. In that way, department heads had far more than "14 bosses" since the City Council is the embodiment of that full community. The real challenge, they indicated, was getting the 14 elected policymakers and all 22 operating departments aligned and working together on a shared agenda.

Many of the former elected officials indicated this challenge had been successfully bridged by City Coordinators in the past; those City Coordinators helped to convene, organize, and follow-up on directions from policymakers to the departments. The City Coordinator was positioned to facilitate work with the other Charter Department Heads (peers) and to directly supervise the management functions of the enterprise, which were appointed by and reported to the position of the City Coordinator. And, as stated earlier, when there was alignment between the Mayor and City Coordinator, the system tended to work very effectively.

Some former officials noted that, in prior years, there was an informal mentorship between the more senior, experienced Council Members and the newly-elected Council Members. That kind of informal mentorship helped

to develop new Council Members so that they could more quickly get up-to-speed and be effective, value-adding members of the City Council and better support their constituents.

With respect to the department heads, former elected officials indicated that performance evaluations had been conducted by the Executive Committee in prior years (for Charter Department Heads). The Executive Committee was the place where department priorities and work assignments were discussed, agreed to, and evaluated.

- ***One way to refocus the shared agenda is to amplify the one citywide elected position (Mayor) by giving it more responsibility (power) to provide political leadership. That would leave the Council to concentrate on its policymaking and representational functions. Wouldn't that structural change provide the clarity that most have agreed is necessary with respect to executive and legislative roles and responsibilities?***

Minneapolis is a populist community; there is a very long and strong tradition whereby residents want and expect their representative (their Council Member) to be working for them in the power dynamic at City Hall. They want their representative to have the power to achieve results and make things happen. It is a holdover of the original aldermanic system of government. Multiple efforts over many years to change it have all failed, in large part because of the perception that reform would diminish the power of the City Council and, more importantly, the role of individual Council Members in representing their wards and their constituents. Council Members have been positioned as the champions of the common good, and reform proposals that strike at the Council—which would be perceived as diminishing its primary authority in the City's governance structure—have never received much support in Minneapolis.

Culturally and politically, there are two major dynamics playing out: first is the widespread dissatisfaction with government, generally, from the national level to the local level, and the implications of that level of disconnect and dissatisfaction and second is the move away from prescriptive means of change to more collaborative systems and structures that empower all segments of society in collective decision-making. Still, most of the former elected officials agreed the time is ripe for charter change and, for some is long overdue. Acknowledging that Minneapolis is a populist community, it will be important to explain that there is nothing inconsistent or incompatible with the diffused community-building function of a legislative council balanced by an effective, centralized executive function under the mayor, all of which would continue to be directly elected by and accountable to the people. This would enable the City Council to continue playing its leading role in the City's policymaking functions and to provide meaningful opportunities for the community to engage and participate in those processes. At the same time, individual Council Members would still serve as the representatives of their wards and constituents, responding to requests for assistance and facilitating interactions with government agencies. It would also enable the Mayor to work with the City Council to build a shared agenda which would help guide the day-to-day operation of the City enterprise in delivering City services and programs.

The former elected officials encouraged the Charter Commission's work group to evaluate structures in other jurisdictions, and were pleased to hear that interviews were being arranged with representatives of the state's other first-class cities: Duluth, Rochester, and St. Paul. Lessons learned from other cities could help Minneapolis to develop a potential new structure that would be uniquely tailored to this community while still reflecting some of the best practices from comparable jurisdictions.

## **7. What other suggestions do you have for improving the current mayor/council structure?**

While the former elected officials interviewed differed on a preferred governance structure, there was agreement that improvements to the core management function of the City enterprise was needed. Some offered that, based on their own experiences inside the current structure, there are limits on the impact that Council Presidents and Council committees can achieve in this regard. Council Presidents are elected by the Council, not by voters; they lack the citywide endorsement of the electorate; only the Mayor is elected by and represents all voters. Any effort to clarify roles and responsibilities between legislative and executive functions need to reflect that fact.

There was discussion about the change in government structure in St. Paul, from a commission to a strong mayor, and the fact that the quality of candidates for that office significantly changed; by elevating that position and giving it more centralized authority, different types of candidates were attracted to the office, beginning with George Latimer, the first person elected after the transition to a strong-mayor system. The role of mayor in St. Paul is to articulate the vision and the direction of the city and to appoint the department managers to implement

that direction and achieve the goals expressed by the mayor and City Council. The change in government form there focused on the roles and responsibilities between the executive and legislative functions, similar to what the Charter Commission is now undertaking in Minneapolis. Some former officials suggested that one of the challenges today may be a lack of understanding (or agreement) among the Council Members about what their legitimate roles and responsibilities are. Defining these roles and training and mentoring the Council Members in those roles is important. All agreed that the City needed to focus on attracting qualified, sincere people to serve in the City's elected positions (Mayor and Council).

Most of the former officials who participated in interviews expressed interest in a combination of executive mayor and city administrator (similar to the Duluth model) in order to embed professionalism in the executive functions of the City; responsive to the elected Mayor, but with the added benefit of a qualified public administrator. In concert with the concepts of embedding more professionalism in the executive function of the City, there was unanimous support for the appointed terms of Charter Department Heads to be changed to align with the four-year elective terms of the Mayor and Council.

- ***Do you see the ability for structural change to preserve the openness and accessibility now provided by the City Council while alleviating the administrative functions that currently occupy a significant portion of time for Council Members; that would allow the Council Members to focus on policymaking and representative functions?***

Most agreed it was possible to achieve this balance between an executive mayor and a legislative council; however, some used their elected experiences to emphasize that curtailing all engagement by Council Members in department operations had a negative impact on both policymaking and constituent representation (services). That's because the ability to develop better, more responsive, more effective or cost-efficient services and programs necessitated contact, cooperation, and collaboration between policymakers and departments. If Council Members were restricted to a purely policymaking function without the ability to provide administrative direction they would be less effective in performing legislative and representative duties.

A few former officials said it was important to clarify the extent of an individual Council Member's ability to direct or influence department operations. Based on personal experience, at least one former official stated that some Council Members perceive that they are "in charge" of departments and that they have the authority to direct those departments and to hold them on a short leash. Ironically, this inappropriate behavior actually relieved the department heads of accountability since an individual Council Member had interfered in their ability to lead, direct, and manage the operation of their department. In that situation, how does the Council hold management accountable in the face of interference by one or more of its Members? Who is responsible for the department's operations, actions, or decisions in that case? From a public accountability perspective, who is responsible for getting things done? Who does the public hold accountable for performance? How much additional cost is added to the taxpayer's bill for the decentralized structure that is currently in place? While all agreed that having engaged Council Members functioning in an ombudsman capacity and facilitating access for constituents was a positive outcome of the existing structure, that failed to address key issues of government efficiency and effectiveness. For those reasons alone, some countered, the charter needs to be clarified in terms of the role of the City Council with respect to the operation of the City's departments. These questions underscore the need for executive accountability to the community for government performance. And again, clarity on those important points and the separation and definite delineation of roles and responsibilities between executive and legislative functions does not diminish the important role of the City Council (and Council Members).

A few of the former elected officials suggested that the Charter Commission drop the term "strong mayor" since this tended to present an unintentional binary choice: either a strong Council *or* a strong Mayor, but not both. That phrasing can be interpreted by some to imply that the goal is to diminish the City Council in preference of strengthening the Mayor. Assuming that is not the case, they recommended using more precise but neutral and factual terms; e.g., executive mayor and legislative council.

The former elected officials urged the Charter Commission to continue examining comparable

jurisdictions and to evaluate other government structures, recognizing the need for a structure that can be tailored to Minneapolis, one that reflects compromise and that provides the needed clarity and role definitions in clear terms for the public. They also recommended that any proposed charter change be narrowly focused and not too wide-ranging; they suggested that any change be focused on the executive-legislative delineation.

At least one former official also encouraged the Charter Commission to consider what problem was being solved by proposing any change in government structure. It would be important to ensure there was agreement (1) that there was a problem and (2) the best remedy to that problem. That will undoubtedly require public consultation before any final decision whether or not to frame a proposed charter amendment. It was noted that the Citizens League was celebrating its sixtieth anniversary this year, and the first issue it studied after being created was the government structure in the City of Minneapolis. Over those sixty years, the Citizens League, the League of Women Voters, the University of Minnesota, and many others had evaluated the City's government structure and published reports and recommendations, which all contributed to a series of ideas about potential reform that are possible common themes over multiple years. That would be a good starting point for building community awareness about the issues associated with the unique structure currently in place in Minneapolis and the opportunity for improvements through a potential charter amendment.