



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Raul Peralez

**SUBJECT: UNFAIR ELECTIONS AND
STRONG MAYOR INITIATIVE**

DATE: June 29, 2020

Approved by:

Date: 6/29/2020

RECOMMENDATION

Convene a Charter Revision Commission to inclusively and publicly consider any charter changes regarding our governance structure for a future ballot measure beyond the November 2020 election.

DISCUSSION

This memorandum is a follow up from my memorandum dated June 23, 2020, because since then, this topic has become even more convoluted, highlighting how recklessly this proposal is being put together without proper community engagement. This hasty approach was again highlighted by City Manager Dave Sykes in a supplemental memorandum issued earlier today.

Mayor Liccardo stated in his original memorandum from June 19, 2020 that he supports making “modest but long overdue changes — the low hanging fruit—”. Although the Mayor conveniently opted not to spell out what those modest changes were, five different memos have now provided clarity, *clear as mud*, on what those changes should be, highlighting yet again the impulsive nature of this effort.

The original Fair Elections Initiative website touted that democracy should be for all of us and not just special interests and that “Democracy works best when it reflects all our voices, no matter what we look like or what's in our wallets.” Conversely this “*unfair elections and strong mayor initiative*” has specifically cut out the community. It is ironic to see the hypocrisy in this new effort. Now that the initiative failed to qualify for the ballot, we have a rushed effort to cobble together a compromise with no community input. Less than a year ago, Mayor Liccardo spoke out against and voted down an effort to align the Mayor’s election to the Presidential

cycle. Yet today somehow we are to believe he simply had a change of heart. I call foul. What we do have is government and politics at its worst.

So how can we remedy this? Simple. Slow down and honestly engage the community before placing anything on the ballot as was recently asked of us by the League of Women Voters.¹

Since 1915 every single time we changed or attempted to change the structure of our City Council or the power and structure of our government, the Charter Revision Commission was formed to allow for robust community engagement lasting typically over one year before anything was placed on a ballot. Last Wednesday, Mayor Liccardo argued that a Charter Revision Commission has not been utilized every time we have changed our City Charter, a statement that is correct but also misleading. The Mayor referenced two previous initiatives from the November 2018 election, Measures S and U, and the efforts for reforming the Independent Police Auditor's office being considered for this November election. The problem is that none of those initiatives affected the structure or power of the City Council, so the Charter Revision Commission wouldn't have been the appropriate body to engage anyways. In fact, Measure S modified our construction procurement and bidding process in which we engaged developers, builders and the general community extensively before moving forward on the ballot. Measure U removed the Mayor and Council from the process of setting our own salaries and went through an extensive community process via our Salary Setting Commission. Additionally, the Independent Police Auditor's suggested changes have gone through several years worth of community engagement and legally-required negotiations. Lastly, Vice Mayor Jones has suggested his Blue Ribbon Commission be considered acceptable as community engagement, but only after placing this initiative on the November ballot. Not once, whether it was a change to the structure of our government, or for any other charter change, have we recklessly made the changes first and then created a commission and community engagement process to clean up our mistakes afterwards. This is not good governance nor the level of transparency or engagement our community deserves.

I leave anyone interested in supporting these efforts with one question: what exactly is your rush that justifies skipping over adequately and appropriately engaging our community?

¹ League of Women Voters. "Re: Strong Mayor Initiative, Item 3.10, June 30, 2020 City Council meeting". Received by Council District 3. 29 June 2020.