



COUNCILWOMAN MONICA RODRIGUEZ  
SEVENTH DISTRICT

May 1, 2026

Chair Marqueece Harris-Dawson  
Rules, Elections, and Intergovernmental Relations Committee  
200 N. Spring St., Room 450  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

**RE: Charter Reform Commission Recommendations (CF: 26-0489)**

Dear Chair Harris-Dawson,

I would like to thank the Charter Reform Commission (CRC) for its recommendations to improve the Los Angeles City Charter. This is the first attempt at comprehensive charter reform since 1999; however, the Charter has been amended more than 30 times over the past 25 years.

Over the last year, I have expressed concerns about the CRC. In particular, I was concerned about the disclosure of ex parte communications and believe that much of the Commission's independence was undermined by adopting disclosure requirements so late in the process. I remain concerned about both the Commission and the recommendations submitted for Council consideration, given the limited timeframe the CRC had to act and the similarly short window the Council has if items are to be placed on the November 2026 ballot.

The CRC identified additional opportunities for further study by future commissions or the current City Council. I believe many of these items such as Civil Service Reform deserve greater focus than the current ad hoc set of recommendations, which largely do not address existing systemic issues.

While some recommendations may be appropriate for advancement to the 2026 ballot, many others require further analysis. I encourage the Committee to request that the Office of the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA), the City Administrative Officer (CAO), and other relevant departments conduct the necessary evaluations even if that means certain items are not ready for the 2026 ballot. **It is imperative that any reforms proposed and approved by voters do not necessitate further reform in 2028.**

## CRC Recommendations to Advance

- **Double Parks Funding to 0.065%**

Open space and our City park system are essential to the health and vibrancy of our communities. Over the last 30 years, investment in the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) has declined. Increasing the required City investment to 0.065% of the budget would help deliver the park system our residents deserve. This increase could be phased in over four years to mitigate impacts to the General Fund.

- **City Planning**

The City's role in land use decisions particularly related to housing has diminished due to State laws. In response, the Planning Department submitted a set of reforms to the CRC. These include establishing a Neighborhood Appeals Commission (NAC), implementing time limits within Section 245, and allowing FAR greater than 13:1 on a case-by-case basis. These proposals are reasonable. I do recommend that in order to ensure that there is geographic representation on the NAC it should be codified that there is a 1 representative from each of the current planning areas including: North Valley, South Valley, West Los Angeles, Central Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, South Los Angeles and Harbor Area.

- **Require Special Elections When More Than One Year Remains in a Term**

I was proud to introduce the motion requesting the CRC to examine strengthening rules regarding vacancies. Requiring elections when more than one year remains in a term promotes good governance and limits appointments of representatives who may lack community support or are given as political favor. I recommend strengthening this further by prohibiting any temporary appointee from running for the seat for five years, similar to Ethics Commission requirements.

- **Protected Budget and Independent Counsel for the Independent Redistricting Commission**

Removing elected officials from the redistricting process is critical. Securing an independent budget and legal counsel will strengthen public trust.

- **Modernize Commissioner Appointments**

Modernizing the appointment process should be ongoing. To ensure transparency, all appointees to commissions and boards including those not solely under City jurisdiction should complete ethics forms and make them publicly available prior to Council votes or, where no vote is required, prior to being seated.

## CRC Recommendations to Consider as Administrative Code Amendments

- This set of recommendations need to be studied further by CLA and CAO to analyze costs, impacts and relationship to existing structures. These items could also be

effectuated through Administrative Code amendments that can be done via Ordinance, allowing for greater adaptability than a Charter change.

- **Creating Director of Public Works**
- **Codifying a Capital Improvement Plan**
- **Creating a Chief Financial Officer**
- **Strengthening Neighborhood Council Powers**

### **CRC Recommendations for Further Study**

- **Bifurcate City Attorney Roles**

The Charter Reform Commission (CRC) made several recommendations to improve governance structures in Los Angeles. One such recommendation is to bifurcate the current role of the City Attorney into two roles. In the model recommended by CRC the City Attorney becomes a nonelected appointed role like a City department general manager. The City Attorney would provide legal counsel to the City, and a new role titled City Prosecutor would be created and elected by the voters to prosecute crimes. The bifurcation of the role is intended to depoliticize legal counsel but may cause the unintended consequence of undermining the independence of legal counsel.

In order to consider more than one option to improve legal counsel in the City the City Council may consider establishing an Office of Legal Counsel within the Chief Legislative Analyst. The Office of Legal Counsel could provide advice to the City Council and work on Council initiated ordinances.

- **Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)**

Improving voter participation is essential; however, RCV should not be the sole option considered. I recommend evaluating its costs and exploring alternatives such as approval voting.

- **Establish an Ethics Commission Inspector General and Executive Director**

While I support the concept, further analysis is needed regarding authority, structure, and interaction with existing Inspector General roles across departments.

- **Clarify Suspension Rules**

The CRC's recommendations do not establish a consistent standard. Increasing vote thresholds may lead to inconsistent outcomes based on political support rather than conduct. Additionally, reforms should address misconduct across all elected offices, including the Mayor, City Attorney, and Controller.

### **CRC Recommendations to Oppose**

- **Expand City Council to 25 Single-Member Districts**

Expanding the number of Council offices does not guarantee improved access or outcomes. Evidence suggests it may weaken legislative authority while strengthening the executive, which could reduce accessibility to City services. It has been proven that

expanding the number of elected Councilmembers weakens the role and strengthens the Executive, in Los Angeles that would be the Mayor. Centralizing more authority in one Citywide elected will have the adverse effect and make access to City services more difficult for residents. It is also unclear why 25 members would serve residents better than the current 15 members or a different expanded number such as 17, 19 or 21.

- **Expand Mayoral Powers**

The current balance between the executive and legislative branches prevents over-concentration of power. Expanding mayoral authority risks undermining that balance and should be avoided. At the Federal government level we are seeing what happens when the legislative branch acquiesces to the Executive Branch and we must not enable that potential in Los Angeles. A clear distinction between the legislative and executive branches protects our democracy and should not be endangered by allowing the Mayor legislative powers, and the ability to unilaterally change City departments.

- **Permit Additional Public Financing Models Beyond Matching Funds**

The current matching fund program is effective and accountable. Broadening the Charter language could lead to increased use of taxpayer funds for campaigns without sufficient safeguards. The matching fund program works. It requires candidates to meet certain criteria before providing taxpayer funds. Changing the Charter language to be vague would allow for increased public funding of candidates and their campaigns. Taxpayers do not want their resources to be used to fund people running for office.

- **Council Authority Over Police Policies (Sec. 571)**

Shifting policymaking authority away from the civilian commission risks politicizing departmental operations and undermining balanced oversight. Allowing the daily operations of the Los Angeles Police Department to become politicized by moving the policy making away from the Civilian Commission will result in a department that will struggle to address the range of viewpoints within any elected body.

- **Strengthen Removal Authority**

Granting the Council authority over City employee discipline is an overreach and risks politicizing personnel decisions that currently include established appeal processes. Politicizing it by allowing an elected body to weigh in is not appropriate.

### **Charter Recommendations to Advance Not Proposed by CRC**

- **Zero Cost Olympics**

Establishing a new section within the City Charter that codifies a "Zero-Cost Principle for the LA28 Games," ensuring that the City shall not incur unreimbursed costs associated with hosting the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games and no Legacy Fund shall be established until the City is reimbursed. This request mirrors the motion I introduced, Council File 15-0989-S66.

- **Streamlining Alternative Project Delivery Methods**

Request the CLA, with the assistance of the City Attorney and PW, to report on the feasibility of allowing for the use of alternative project delivery methods for City construction projects without the need for approval by ordinance for each individual project, and to report with recommendations to effectuate this policy, including a ballot measure for the November 2026 General Election, if necessary. This request is consistent with the motion I introduced and Council adopted related to Council File 23-1027-S11. The CRC recognized the need to modernize the Charter by removing the requirement to award contracts to the lowest bid and replacing it with best value bid is a good step but we can do more to advance efficiencies in project delivery.

The remaining recommendations warrant additional analysis to fully understand their operational impacts. As noted, it is imperative that any 2026 reforms are durable and do not necessitate further revisions in 2028.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Monica Rodriguez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Monica Rodriguez  
Councilwoman, Seventh District

Cc:  
Mayor Karen Bass  
City Attorney Hydee Feldstein Soto  
City Controller Kenneth Mejia  
Los Angeles City Council