

Northeast District Council
4534 University Way NE, Seattle, WA 98105
(206)-233-3732
<http://northeastdistrictcouncil.wordpress.com/>

October 3, 2016

Council President Tim Burgess and
Members of the Seattle City Council
600 4th Avenue, Second Floor
P.O. Box 34025
Seattle, Washington 98124-4025

Re: Abandoning District Councils and Creating a Community Involvement Commission

Dear Council President Burgess and Members of the City Council,

The Northeast District Council (NEDC), representing 15 community groups, has reviewed and discussed the Mayor's July 13 Executive Order on community engagement which would eliminate funding for the city's district councils. For the past several months, NEDC has discussed issues relating to district councils and district election of councilmembers. NEDC designated a subcommittee to develop comments consistent with the consensus reached at our meetings.

The NEDC has a long history of working effectively with public officials on important public policy and budget issues. Our purpose, as stated in the NEDC bylaws is to "provide a forum for consideration of common concerns including physical planning, budget allocations and service delivery and for the sharing of ideas for solution to common problems." Member organizations provide a representative and an alternate. These representatives elected by their own member organizations provide direction to NEDC on the various issues. It is a truly grassroots effort with volunteers contributing hundreds of hours each year. Membership on the NEDC represents the demographics of northeast Seattle. The City should not abandon this valuable resource to city officials.

In response to the Executive Order in reference to "diversity," the NEDC continues to support diversity and the goals outlined in the Executive Order:

- Improve and expand inclusive outreach and engagement, as well as the creation of more equitable representative systems that are more reflective of, and accessible to, communities throughout the City of Seattle.
- Create well-designed, responsive and culturally-relevant public involvement plans.
- Build community capacity for meaningful participation and authentic outreach and engagement.
- Provide a wide range of opportunities for obtaining information and involvement in decision-making processes.
- Achieve greater equity with meaningful involvement of under-served and underrepresented communities.

Belvedere Terrace Community Council
Hawthorne Hills Community Council
Inverness Community Club
Laurelhurst Community Club
Matthews Beach Community Council

Portage Bay/Roanoke Park Community Council
Ravenna Bryant Community Association
Residents of Magnuson Park
Roosevelt Neighborhood Association
Roosevelt Neighbors' Alliance
University District Community Council

University Park Community Club
View Ridge Community Council
Wedgwood Community Council
Windermere North Community
Association

- Effectively and efficiently manage the use of all resources, including community members' time.

These goals can be accomplished without abandoning the minor funding provided to staffing for district councils and the City Neighborhood Council. The NEDC is frustrated that city resources have not adequately addressed these goals and that you have not reached out to the district councils to address a way to move forward or to address the 2009 audit recommendations. We urge postponement of the proposed ordinance for one year to allow a joint discussion and development of a plan on how to move forward in a manner that respects Seattle's neighborhoods and retains the important role that community groups play in addressing the many issues facing our city.

The NEDC is in full support of expanding outreach and community engagement. But, this effort should not stifle the voices of Seattle's neighborhoods. The proposed ordinance calls for "more equitable community involvement." How can this be accomplished if a segment of the community is excluded? The proposed ordinance deletes the word "neighborhoods" from the work of the Department of Neighborhoods. This does not make sense. Why call it the Department of Neighborhoods if DON has no role in encouraging community involvement from Seattle's neighborhoods?

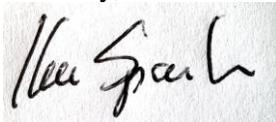
The role of DON in encouraging district council participation in finding solutions to their problems is changed so that the role of DON would be to "resolve and respond to issues and challenges facing their communities." The NEDC objects to this top down approach. The DON staff person should transmit or facilitate transmission of the positions of their respective district council—not advocate for their own resolution and response to issues.

After decades of work on neighborhood plans in this citizen-driven effort, all references to neighborhood planning have been deleted in the proposed ordinance. The City is risking significant reputational credibility with this proposed change.

The proposed Community Involvement Commission is yet another example of top down governance with members appointed by the mayor and city council. It seems that the Executive Order and proposed ordinance is merely a way to stifle community involvement from the district councils and CNC with hand-picked members that would likely support the mayor and city council agenda.

The NEDC urges you to reject the proposed ordinance and delay consideration of any changes for one year and to work with the CNC and district councils on an equitable system that respects all segments of our communities, including Seattle's neighborhoods and district councils.

Sincerely,



Ken Sparks, Co-Chair
8611 Inverness Drive NE
Seattle, Washington 98115
206-628-4400
Ken.Sparks@ms.com



Jeannie Hale, Co-Chair
3425 West Laurelhurst Drive NE
Seattle, Washington 98105
206-525-5135
jeannieh@serv.net

cc: Mayor Ed Murray, Kathy Nyland, DON Director