

Creation of a New Department of Planning and Development Committee on Law and Government Hearing

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DAG respectfully asks that the Committee on Law and Government use its powers to staunch the flow of ill-advised and unnecessary charter changes, especially as embodied in Bill 140721. Your Committee is in many ways the most serious one in Council, as it looks after the very structure of our local democracy, and it is a committee made up of serious people for the serious tasks.

I would guess that 95% of voters in the upcoming elections will put fixing the school system among their very top priorities this year. We depend on Harrisburg for that, and we cannot afford to look like BUMPKIN CITY - amending our local constitution at every whim.

Today you are considering a charter change to create a Commission on Women, an idea that already sounds like something from maybe 1974, not 2015. A commission on Pre-K instead of hunkering down and making it happen. And a charter change to the City Planning Department that has been advanced without substantive consultation with people who do the work of planning in our city, or experts in the field who could advise on best practices. Rather, the public was shown a list of mostly Western cities, without commentary, to convince us to just go along. Sacramento, Flagstaff Arizona - Coconino County.

A wise former city executive likes to say, "If you want to look like you are doing something, reorganize." That's what this flood of charter changes looks like, to the voters and maybe even more important, to Harrisburg, where we get our school funding.

This chart looks like a big money waster. You have a DIRECTOR, then a FIRST deputy director, then a DEPUTY director, then (and someone was too embarrassed to write this out on the chart), an EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.



Then you have one position in the Mayor's cabinet singled out for approval by the City Council - the Director of Planning and Development. This in a city that needs development and a better tax base. A city that whose arcane custom of Councilmanic prerogative is already a red flag to developers - part of a maze they must navigate to build in this city. Add that to our high construction costs and you might as well invite in that governor from Florida and say, really, you all are better off building elsewhere, creating jobs elsewhere.