

THE CITY OF
PORTLAND



OREGON

MEMORANDUM

OFFICE OF
PUBLIC SAFETY

CHARLES JORDAN
COMMISSIONER

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DATE: February 25, 1980
TO: Commissioner Charles Jordan
FROM: *CA* Carl Abbott, Chairman, ONA Review Committee
SUBJECT: Final Report

The ONA Review Committee is pleased to transmit their final report for your consideration. We have appreciated this opportunity to explore the future of ONA and hope that our suggestions will be useful in the formulation of future policy.

CA:ph

cc: ONA Review Committee
Debbie Stoller*
Dell Taylor*
Mary Pritchard*
Karen Gritzka
Darl Adami
Jim Sitzman
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ONA Review Committee

Report and Recommendations February 1980

(1) Introduction

We have found high levels of support and/or satisfaction with ONA from persons involved in neighborhood association activity and increasing city-wide support over several years as citizens have become familiar with ONA and neighborhood associations.

We find a strong consensus that any ONA structure must be designed to serve neighborhood interests and agendas, and that leadership must rest with neighborhood associations and not city staff.

It is important to remember that the impact of citizen participation cannot be measured simply by the number of people who attend meetings, for the entire process of neighborhood associations raises issues, facilitates formal and informal discussion, and helps to train large numbers of citizens in ways to influence city government.

(2) WE RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY CONTINUE THE CONTRACT ARRANGEMENT WITH AREA REVIEW BOARDS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF STAFF FOR AREA OFFICES WHERE NOW IN USE.

We have found almost unanimous support for the present contract arrangement as used in four area offices. On our mail questionnaire, the contract arrangement was preferred by a margin of 34 to 4. In response to a related question, 29 replies thought that the neighborhoods should hire and define tasks for area coordinators, 22 thought that the responsibility should be shared by city and neighborhoods (with stress on primary neighborhood role), and 2 thought that the city should be solely responsible. The idea of neighborhood control of area coordinators also found strong support among ONA staff, members of City Council, and citizens who were directly interviewed.

In general, we have found a very strong belief that ONA structures "should be responsible to the associations and not the other way around". The present arrangement, which provides a dual veto over area office staff by review boards and the Commissioner-in-charge and for annual review, seems best to meet the requirements of neighborhood input, continuity, and job security.

As a secondary point, WE RECOMMEND THAT THE CENTRAL ONA OFFICE DEVELOP A SYSTEM FOR SETTING AND MONITORING WORK GOALS AND OBJECTIVES IN COOPERATION WITH AREA COORDINATORS. This is a service which the central ONA office can provide for the area review boards and for the coordinators themselves. We are not asking that the central ONA office establish work programs and priorities, but that it assist area coordinators in self-management of their time.

(3) WE RECOMMEND RETENTION OF THE ONA ORDINANCE IN ITS PRESENT FORM.

The historic trend in the evolution of ONA has been away from specific structural requirements for neighborhood associations and toward looser performance guidelines and standards. In 1973, the Council rejected the idea of highly structured District Planning Organizations after extensive discussion. In 1974, the Council rejected segments of the original ONA ordinance which established procedures for official Council recognition of neighborhood associations which submitted acceptable bylaws and whose boundaries did not overlap those of another association. In both cases, Council decided that looser rather than tighter structures best suited Portland's needs.

We find little basis in our own investigations to alter these earlier decisions. On our mail questionnaire, 41 replies opposed more precise standards for recognition of neighborhood associations and 8 replies favored more precise standards. On the specific question of whether the city should define boundaries, the replies split precisely 50-50.

The present ordinance provides performance standards which are adequate to assure democratic procedures if these standards are conscientiously followed. To assist neighborhood associations, we suggest that ONA work to develop means to assist associations in following these standards.

- . One suggestion is the use of a standard form for reporting the results of neighborhood decisions to city bureaus, including data on the vote, attendance, character of meeting, and the like.
- . Another suggestion is the provision of one or two sets of standard bylaws which neighborhood associations can adopt or modify as they please. ONA should also review neighborhood associations bylaws and point out any violations of section 3.96.030 of the ordinance.
- . A third suggestion is the continuation of efforts to educate new neighborhood association leaders about their responsibilities to their neighborhood and to the city.
- . A fourth suggestion is that ONA hold workshops for neighborhood leaders in techniques for soliciting a broad range of citizen opinions, such as neighborhood polling and election procedures for neighborhood offices that reach beyond meeting attenders.

(4) WE RECOMMEND A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN THE ONA BUDGET FOR PRINTING AND DISTRIBUTION OF NEWSLETTERS AND OTHER NOTIFICATION MATERIALS.

We find that neighborhood associations appear to be largely open and representative of the thinking of involved residents. City actions cannot and should not force involvement. However, the city can indirectly encourage involvement by facilitating communication within neighborhoods. Neighborhood associations have come to depend on ONA assistance with newsletters and notifications, and the resources available for this activity can be significantly strengthened at relatively small cost. We believe that the ongoing facilitation of intra-neighborhood and city-neighborhood communication is the most positive way to deal with the question of representativeness. This was also the single most common request in response to the question of how to strengthen area offices.

We also have two related suggestions:

- . The City should encourage neighborhood associations to include agendas and minutes of previous actions in their meeting notifications.
- . The City should encourage neighborhood associations to develop publicity and membership campaigns oriented to the needs and character of each neighborhood.

- (5) WE RECOMMEND THAT ONA DEVELOP CAPACITY FOR GREATER ORGANIZATIONAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO NEIGHBORHOODS.

Taken together, the questionnaires and interviews indicated that neighborhood activists would like to see the following from ONA; (a) continuity in ONA staff working with neighborhoods and the continued development of staff skills (b) availability of help on neighborhood leadership, including communication, block organization, neighborhood surveys, and retention of membership (c) technical advice on land use, economic development, cooperatives, and local provision of services.

ONA is already involved in citywide and area workshops on many of these issues. Such workshops should be an ongoing part of ONA activities. ONA MIGHT WORK TO DEVELOP A SYSTEM WHEREBY NEIGHBORHOODS CAN BORROW EXPERTISE FROM EACH OTHER AND FROM OTHER VOLUNTARY SOURCES THROUGH REGULAR WORKSHOPS AND PROJECT CONSULTATION.

WE ALSO RECOMMEND THAT THE CITY ESTABLISH A FUND OF \$10,000-15,000 ANNUALLY TO PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS. We envision a fund administered through the central office which area boards and perhaps individual neighborhoods can use for short-term technical advice on questions of planning, law, economic development, and self-help. This recommendation ties closely to the conclusions of the City Wide Working Committee on Citizen Participation in 1978.

- (6) WE RECOMMEND THAT ONA CONTINUE TO DEVELOP ITS CAPACITY TO MONITOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF NEIGHBORHOOD NEEDS REQUESTS.

ONA currently monitors and reports on bureau responses to neighborhood needs reports. Over the longer run, it will be useful to develop additional information in the actual implementation of these requests.

- (7) We would like to raise one additional issue without making a specific recommendation.

The Office of Neighborhood Associations is currently asked to perform a large number of functions which originate as assistance to neighborhoods or citizens but which greatly ease the activities of other city agencies. One example is the communication - citizen participation function performed for the Planning Bureau. Another example is the Neighborhood Needs process, which several bureaus now rely on in their budget-making. A third example is individual citizen referral and assistance, which should properly be a function of a general city information and service system. There is danger that such activities, which are certainly worthy in themselves, may absorb such a large portion of ONA staff time and money that it cannot properly assist the activities of the neighborhood associations themselves.

In conclusion, we would like to quote two citizen responses to our inquiries which we believe summarize the value and mission of ONA:

"This office can be a reactionary office in terms of listening and responding to neighborhood requests. It can also be an aggressive office by causing workshops on pertinent issues, knowing the concerns each neighborhood has, and offering suggestions to help solve problems and help neighborhoods build up after a decline in attendance or executive board quits functioning. It should be both of these to be completely efficient. One staff member and a secretarial service are essential to providing citizens a voice that will listen and assist or advise. It is not another layer of bureaucracy . . . but rather it is the layer of service that explains the city bureaucracy to citizens."

"Having moved to Portland from the East fairly recently, I find this system and the respect that is held for it refreshing. One of the salient features is the degree of interest which exists within the neighborhoods and the resulting motivation to meet, to challenge, etc., without a formal structure imposed by the city, but with sufficient help from the city to make the efforts effective."

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