
Government Effectiveness Committee



January 19, 2006

Committee Members

- **Chair Gary Solomon, Crescent Bank and Trust**
- Una Anderson, New Orleans Neighborhood Development Collaborative
- Jim Brandt, Public Affairs Research Council
- Bob Brown, University of New Orleans
- Hon. Jackie Clarkson, District C
- Michael Cowan, Human Relations Commission
- Mark Drennen, GNO Inc.
- Kenneth Ferdinand, Regional Planning Commission
- Janet Howard, Bureau of Governmental Research
- Yvonne Mitchell-Grubb, MG Consulting
- Robert Montjoy, CUPA, University of New Orleans
- Rev. Kevin Wildes, S.J., Loyola University



Vision and Mission

To ensure effective government responses to the challenges facing post-Katrina New Orleans; to foster government that is ethical, efficient, transparent and adequately and fairly funded.



Introduction

- Pick key and timely targets for change
 - Identify examples of methods already implemented in other cities
 - Specify the steps necessary to put practices in place
 - Establish a timeline for taking steps
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History of Corruption & Inefficiency

Future of Ethics & Efficiency

Vision & Mission

To ensure effective government responses to the challenges facing post-Katrina New Orleans; to foster government that is ethical, efficient, transparent and adequately and fairly funded.

Introduction

“The critical task of city government is making businesses and citizens believe that investing in its future makes sense.”

— *Stephen Goldsmith,*



Introduction

Parts:

- Infrastructure
- Housing and urban planning
- Culture
- Health care and social services
- Economic Development
- Public education

Whole:

- Clean and effective city government



Ethical City Government

Goal:

To build trust in city government by achieving transparency (no more deals behind closed doors).



Ethical City Government

Recommendations:

1. Fill Inspector General position
2. Appoint Ethics Review Board
3. Enact whistle-blower protection
4. Require disclosure of interests by public officials and by lobbyists
5. Require high-visibility reporting



Ethical City Government

Ethical government presumes transparency, which requires that:

- Public business should be conducted in public.
- The public has a right to participate in meetings and access to records.
- Public officials must report conflicts of interest.
- Public officials must disclose financial interests.
- There is effective oversight.



Ethical City Government

Recommendation 1: Inspector General

- The City Charter authorizes the City Council “to create an office of Inspector General.”
- That office has never been filled.

Action: City Council ordinance within 30 days.



Ethical City Government

Recommendation 2: Ethics Review Board

- City Charter states: “Prior to July 1, 1996, the Council shall by ordinance establish an Ethics Review Board.”
- The board has not been appointed.
- *Action: City Council ordinance within 30 days.*



Ethical City Government

3. Enact whistle-blower protection.
4. Require disclosure of interest by public officials and by lobbyists.
5. Require high-visibility reporting.

Properly Sized and Efficient City Government

Goal:

To restructure city government to fit post-Katrina necessities and resources; to maximize efficiency in that restructured government.



Properly Sized & Efficient City Government

Recommendations:

6. Create a uniform, equitable and consolidated assessment system.
7. Establish one regional levee board for flood protection in Southeast Louisiana.
8. Consolidate courts.
 - Phase in consolidation of criminal/civil district courts and clerks .
 - Consolidate Municipal, Traffic, First City and Second City courts and clerks.



Properly Sized and Efficient City Government

Recommendations:

9. Consolidate law enforcement.
 - Consolidate criminal/civil sheriffs and two constables.
 - Consolidate other law enforcement agencies into NOPD.
10. Combine Recorder of Mortgages, Registrar of Conveyances, Office of Notarial Archives and City Department of Real Estate and Records.
11. Restructure City permitting processes.
12. Strengthen City Planning Commission processes.



Properly Sized and Efficient City Government

Recommendations:

13. Upgrade property condition enforcement.
14. Establish appropriate public regulations for Historic District Landmarks Commissions.
15. Create a transparent, standard, competitive professional services selection process.
16. Eliminate City Council consideration of certain decisions.



Properly Sized & Efficient City Government

Assessors:

Create a uniform, equitable, consolidated assessment system.

- One set of assessment rules
- Appeals go to centralized board
- Clear rules of appeal
- Public access to assessment information online



Properly Sized & Efficient City Government

Assessors:

- Consolidate seven Assessors into one position
- Minimum annual savings: \$800,000

Funding City Government

Goal:

To consider all options for improved funding of city government and to choose the methods that best fit New Orleans' immediate and long-term needs.



Funding City Government

Recommendations:

17. In the short term, use available federal money, such as supplemental CDBG funds, to pay for city government options.
18. Implement sound budgeting practices and financial oversight.
19. Broaden property tax base.
20. Implement a new revenue source by reallocating a portion of state income taxes generated in Katrina and Rita disaster areas, directing 50% to parish of domicile and 50% to parish of employment.



Funding City Government

Options for increasing revenues:

- Expanding the universe of property on tax rolls
- Raising existing rates
- Introducing new forms of taxation, fees & charges
- Reallocating millages
- Seeking assistance from the state and/or federal government
- Borrowing money



Funding City Government

Broaden the property tax base:

- Create fair and equitable property assessments locally and statewide.
- Tighten exemptions for nonprofits in accordance with recommendations in BGR report.
- Place New Orleans in same position as other municipalities with respect to homestead exemption.
- Rely on federal and state incentives rather than local tax abatements and diversions.



Funding City Government

Re-examining exemptions for nonprofits:

- Eligibility not based on ownership of property
- Targeting exemptions to specific uses
- Improving administration of the exemption



Demand that city government works in the interests of of all, rather than only a few.

