

**K e n R i g s b e e, P. E.**

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March 8, 2012

The Honorable City Council  
City of Austin

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen of the Council:

I regret that a previous commitment prevents me from attending your public briefing on the 2012 Charter Revision Committee's final report. Having been honored to be appointed to this committee by Mayor Leffingwell, I respectfully request the opportunity to explain two votes I cast while on the committee.

At the committee's second meeting I observed the following:

On April 17, 1973 our Council asked the people, shall we have a council of 11 (6 by district + 5 at large), and the people said NO by 63%.

On April 1, 1978 our Council asked the people, shall we have a council of 9 (8 + 1), and the people said NO by 71%.

On January 19, 1985 our Council asked the people, shall we have a council of 9 (8 + 1) and the people said NO by 57%.

On May 7, 1988 our Council asked the people, shall we have a council of 9 (8 + 1), and the people said NO by 57%.

On May 7, 1994 our Council asked the people, shall we have a council of 9 (8 + 1), and the people said NO by 52%.

On May 4, 2002 our Council asked the people, shall we have a council of 11 (8 + 3), and the people said NO by 58%.

In view of this history I asked my fellow committee members and those who spoke before us, please tell me what has changed in Austin since 2002, or for that matter since 1973 that causes us or our Council to conclude that we need to change our system contrary to the directives of the People? Council, I heard "I want..." and "we need..." and "every other progressive city has single member districts", but not once did I hear what has changed since the people last spoke.

I also asked my committee and those who spoke, who is being damaged by our current system? I heard that various ethnic minorities were being damaged. I was reminded that even I complained that Southwest Austin was underrepresented. I heard other parts of the community were underrepresented. None of whom or which was a result of the current at-large system. The system is not at fault.

Consequently, I announced then that I would vote against any change in our system for electing council members because I am convinced that it would be contrary to the directives of the People. And, when the question of recommending changing our system was posed to our committee, **I voted NO and the other 14 members of the committee voted YES.**

Following discussions at the committee's final action meeting the question of whether to recommend a council of 10 + 2 hybrid + 1 at large, I voted NO with the majority of 8 against 7 who voted yes. Thereafter, the question of recommending a council of 10 + 1 was posed. In the order of voting, I was next-to-last, and as the votes were taken I concluded that had I abstained as would have been reasonable, the committee would have been "hung" on a tie-

vote. That would likely have precipitated another several months of meetings which would likely not result in any changes, **so I voted YES in favor of recommending a 10 + 1 council.** The purpose of this letter is to emphasize to the Council that I do NOT favor the 10 + 1 recommendation, but rather that debate cease on this matter.

With due respect, I believe that this issue should NOT be presented to the People of Austin again. I don't think the Council has sufficient justification to re-ask the question.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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Ken Rigbee