

Notes for Presentation to

OXNARD KIWANIS MEETING

Thursday, April 6, 1972, 7:30 A.M.

I. Introduction

Pleasure for me to join you this morning and discuss some of the responsibilities and challenges facing me as a City Councilman here in Oxnard.

II. Council-Manager Form of City Government

A. Background

The Council-Manager form of government is an extension of the local reform movement of the early twentieth century. The goal of that movement was to eliminate the corruption and inefficiency which permeated the administration of municipal services at that time by placing "administration" on a professional and neutral basis which is free of graft and special political favors. This professional administrator, in turn, is directed by a group of elected representatives. The Council-Manager form of government has served this purpose well and is now utilized by more than half the cities in the U. S. which have a population of greater than 25,000; it has been used here in Oxnard since 1946.

B. Structure of Oxnard's City Government

Registered voters elect five individuals to represent them on the City Council; Councilmen are elected "at large" rather than by councilmatic districts; four year terms of office are staggered so councilmatic elections are held every two years; Councilmen receive a token salary and compensation for city business related expenses. The City Council appoints a City Manager who serves at its pleasure; the City Manager appoints the balance of the City staff with the exception of the City Attorney, who is appointed directly by the Council, and the City Clerk and City Treasurer, who are elected by the citizenry.

### C. Advantages of Council-Manager Form of Government

The Council-Manager form of government centralizes authority and political responsibility in a group of individuals, the City Council, which is directly accountable to the citizenry for its actions thereby helping to assure that decisions will reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. Secondly, this form of government centralizes administrative responsibility in a professional manager who has the training and experience to carry out Council decisions in the most efficient and economical manner possible.

## III. City Council Responsibilities

### A. Introduction

② The purpose of city government is to provide a means for community residents to use in obtaining those things needed for a healthy, pleasant, and self-fulfilling life by pooling their material and human resources. The City Council's overall responsibility is to see that city government effectively fulfills this purpose.

### B. Role of City Councilmen in Policy Formulation

It is the specific responsibility of the City Council to determine what action city government should take; that is, to determine the level of municipal services which should be provided by city government. The formulation of policy by the City Council includes four basic tasks:

1. Determining the needs of the community.
2. Determining the values, attitudes, and aspirations of the community with respect to these needs.
3. Determining which of the needs can be met within the restraints of available funds and practicality.
4. Taking action to effectuate the desired policy.

### C. Role of Chief Administrative Officer in Policy Formulation

The primary responsibility of the City Manager is to determine how the policies adopted by the City

Council are to be best implemented. However, he has the additional responsibility of bringing alternative policy recommendations to the City Council for consideration.

D. City Budgets

The City's annual operating budget and the five-year capital improvement budget are the primary means by which the City Council sets policies; that is, selects the level of municipal services to be provided by city government.

E. Additional Expressions of City Council Policy

In addition to the adoption of the budgets, the City Council is continuously setting policy during the year in a number of different ways. Examples of such policy making would include decisions on: City-County Airport Agreement, Redevelopment Projects, Parking Lot Landscaping Program, Business License Tax Program, Various General Plan Elements, Establishment of Ventura County Association of Governments, Industrial Waste Ordinance, Water Rate Structure, Agricultural Preserves, and countless other matters.

F. Day-to-Day Activities

In addition to the consideration of broad policy decisions, the Council is deeply involved in the day to day activities of city government. The Council's weekly agenda regularly includes such items as annexations, planning matters (subdivision and parcel maps, planned development and special use permits, zone changes, variances, specific land use and circulation plans, etc.), consideration of bids, award of contracts, consideration of pending state legislation, and ordinance amendments to nearly every section of the City Code.

G. Review of Administrative Functions

Although the City Manager is responsible for the administration of City Council decisions, Council members are nonetheless responsible for generally overseeing



administrative functions to see that they are consistent with Council established policy.

H. Informal Contact with Public

In addition to the formal City Council meetings held each Tuesday, members of the City Council are constantly in contact with local citizens on a more informal basis; such contacts include various meetings and ceremonial functions and personal contacts with individual citizens.

I. Overall Workload

The responsibilities outlined above make rather heavy demands on the time of all City Councilmen. Although the position of Councilmen is considered "part time", it should more realistically be viewed as "around the clock" job when considering the many meetings, individual contacts, and extensive background reading necessary to keep pace with the work flow of city government.

IV. City Councilman as Reflector/Leader of Community Opinion

In determining the level of municipal services to be provided by local government, City Councilmen must remain sensitive to the needs and aspirations of local residents and reflect these feelings in their decisions. However, Councilmen must also provide leadership in providing impetus and guidance to efforts to meet local needs, must bring local resources to bear on existing problems and develop city-wide support of these community improvement efforts.

V. Limitations Upon City Councilmen

A. State and Federal Legislation

Both the State and Federal government have adopted legislation and guidelines which limit the discretion of City Council in making decisions; the State has been especially active in this area and continues to mandate various programs for city government.

B. City Council Representation

The individuals elected to the City Council often represent differing interests, opinions, and goals.

Therefore, the success of individual Councilmen to initiate projects and programs which they feel are needed is dependent upon their ability to convince fellow Councilmen of the desirability of such action.

#### VI. Challenges Facing Oxnard's City Council

During the months and years immediately ahead, the Oxnard City Council will be facing a number of difficult questions, such as:

What should be the nature and extent of the growth predicted for our community?

How can the community's housing needs best be fulfilled?

What action can be taken to reduce local pollution in all its various forms?

What elements should a balanced transportation system include?

What can be done to reduce crime, especially the tragic problem of drug abuse?

What role should V.C.A.G. play in the City's future?

What can be done to increase citizen participation in city government?

The resolution of these questions constitutes a formidable task for members of this and future City Councils.

#### VII. Conclusion

Serving on the City Council is a unique challenge, offers much satisfaction and many frustrations, and is certainly a full-time job.