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Memo on planning conflict

Doug Neil

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MEMORANDUM

Date: December 15, 1976

To: Neil, Doug

From: Alan *AW*

Subject: OPD/BUREAU OF PLANNING CONFLICT

I have had an opportunity to review the submittals of both the Office of Planning & Development and the Bureau of Planning. In addition, as Doug knows, he and I have had quite a few conversations on the subject of the ongoing conflict between OPD and the Bureau of Planning. In my view, the bureau review process and the start of Neil's second term represents both an opportunity and a responsibility to attempt to resolve once and for all what has become a chronic and, I believe, a deteriorating situation.

We probably all share the following assumptions:

1. A major priority in the second term will be neighborhood activities, particularly neighborhood stabilization efforts, schools, and housing. These priority areas all fall under the purview of the Community Development Programs of the City and require a sound, efficient, and high-gear Office of Planning & Development and Bureau of Planning -- if efforts are to succeed.
2. The Bureau of Planning currently has underway a number of significant activities which could well determine the shape of Portland and the Metropolitan region in the next 25 years.
3. The relationship between OPD and the Bureau of Planning has deteriorated to an unacceptable point. This is not to assess blame, rather to recognize that efforts to structure a compromised accommodation in what is essentially a personal or personality problem are beginning to create structural and institutional problems to the community development activities of the City.
4. The bureau review submittals of OPD and the Bureau of Planning reveal different strengths and weaknesses in the two operations. Different people may read these submittals differently. I believe that the OPD submittal is hopelessly deficient and

represents an acknowledgment of a total failure on the part of that office to understand its function, its purpose, its role, its priorities. The absence of a work program on the part of the administrator is difficult to explain; on the other hand, the submittal of the Bureau of Planning shows a lack of management skill or attentiveness.

5. Because of the tremendous reliance which must be placed on these two operations in the next four years and because of the obvious personal problems involved and the questions of both institutional and personal deficiencies, this problem needs attention and resolution. It is my feeling that if the Office of Planning & Development and the Community Development activities were lodged under another Commissioner then Neil would simply not tolerate the existence of such an incoherent, uncoordinated, and frustrating operation and we would all be upset at the Commissioner's willingness to permit the situation to continue without taking strong and decisive action. I believe that we should demand no less ourselves. Further, I believe that if we are to make a move, the current bureau review and start-up time for a second term is the optimum timing. For that reason I recommend the following:
 1. Removal of Gary Stout as administrator of the Office of Planning & Development. There are several options in terms of his future. He could be encouraged to find work elsewhere -- potentially in Washington with the new administration. He could be demoted to the Economic Development director's position; he could be referred to the Housing Corporation as a staff director. Obviously, this is a matter that should be discussed with Gary and choices presented to him.
 2. I would solicit Mike Lindberg to see if he would be interested in taking the position.
 3. I would consult with Ernie Bonner to see how he would react to a demotion from director of the Bureau of Planning to a position as director of the Comprehensive Plan activities. It has been reported that Ernie has said that he sees himself not as a Planning director but rather as a chief planner in charge of Comprehensive Planning. In my view, his submittal in the bureau review process reflects this general role. Because the Comprehensive Planning is, in my view, the most important activity of the City government over the next two years, it should receive full time attention of our most talented planning staff. I feel that the effort is understaffed and undermanaged. By placing Bonner directly in charge of the effort without bureau director responsibilities we improve

the likelihood that the product would be useable. We also resolve a fundamental problem in Bureau of Planning -- that is the lack of management capability.

4. I would solicit Doug Wright's interest in becoming director of the Bureau of Planning.

I would be happy to discuss this or any other solutions that you may deem appropriate. However, I feel strongly that decisive action must be taken to deal with what is an untenable situation given our reliance upon OPD and the BOP for products for a successful second term.