

## DETROIT CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION

### PROPOSAL/ISSUE REVIEW SUMMARY

**ISSUE NUMBER:** GDS 9

**ISSUE CATEGORY:** Government Department & Services

**SOURCE:** Mayor, January 2010 *“Report on the Impact of the Detroit City Charter on City Service Administration”*

**RELATED CHARTER SECTIONS:** Article 4, Chapter 3

**RELEVANT ORDINANCE SECTION:**

**RELEVANT LAW(S):**

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**ISSUE/PROPOSAL STATEMENT:** Eliminate Ombudsman Office

**RATIONALE:** “The Ombudsman is established to investigate official acts of city agencies, receive and process complaints, investigate and report findings about city services, excepting matters investigated by the other municipal agencies with such powers (such as City Council, Elections, Human Resources, Police, Human Rights, Consumer Affairs).

“While municipal governments have complaint intake and resolution processes, the separation of complaint handling and institution of a high-level office of Ombudsperson is unusual (see Appendix IV). Annual appropriations for this office have been around \$1 million, with eight positions including two executives at the present time.

“Office of the Ombudsman reports, according to the 1974 Detroit Charter Commentary, are intended “to disclose any pattern of complaints that may be corrected by council action.” The 311 Call Center for city services was established to be a comprehensive source of such complaint reporting, and provides a more direct link to the executive oversight of any service systems that may be underperforming.

“In fact, with both a 311 Call Center and the Ombudsman, complaint intake and tracking is fragmented and not comprehensive. The Human Rights Department, the Board of Police Commissioners, and various units within field service departments have the mandate of complaint resolution and mediation. An Ombudsman Office represents duplication of effort as well as a less systemic approach to service problems. Further, complainants have the right to take legal actions with or without an Ombudsman Office.”- *Mayor’s Report on the Impact of the Detroit City Charter on City Service Administration, p. -4-5.*

#### **“Findings of 2005 Benchmarking Study on Local Ombudsman Function**

The International Ombudsman Institute shows only two municipal members in the United States, and few others appear to exist based on review of other city organizational charts:

- The Public Advocate for the City of New York is elected as next in line to the Mayor. She is responsible for reporting City Charter non-compliance; monitors public information efforts; presides at City Council meetings with the power to introduce legislation; is a member of retirement system and other boards; and makes appointments.
- Portland created an Ombudsman in 2001, which is housed within the Auditor's Office to report on complaints received and efforts to improve public services.
- The City of Charleston South Carolina’s Mayor appoints an Ombudsman to “give the position more credibility through the endorsement and support of the Mayor, and provide ... assessment of strengths and weaknesses in the existing systems.”
- The City of Boise Idaho’s Ombudsman investigates complaints of Police misconduct.

Anchorage Alaska and Provo Utah have an ombudsman with Detroit's description." -Mayor's *Report on the Impact of the Detroit City Charter on City Service Administration, Appendix IV, p. 8-9.*

**ANALYSIS:**

**DISPOSITION/COMMISSION ACTION:**

**NOTES:**