

Laurie Starkey, Matters from the Audience, Brea City Council Meeting July 6, 2010

The government of the United States of America is “OF the people, BY the people and FOR the people.” That is the how our government is designed and that is how it is supposed to work, even at the state and local level. Let’s take a look at how city government should be organized (Figure A). The City Manager and the city staff are here to serve the City Council and the City Council is here to serve the citizens. Now let’s see how Brea’s city government is actually working (Figure B). Can the kids at home see what’s missing in this picture? Of course, it’s the Brea residents who are not involved in this current organization. How do we have input? Who is working on our behalf? From what I’ve seen over the past ten months, it is the City Manager who is calling the shots, and recent votes have shown that he can count on this City Council majority to fall in line behind him without question.

I think it is totally unacceptable for our government to be operated in this manner, with so much power being given to this one person. First of all, is the City Manager “OF the People”? No, he lives in Yorba Linda and is not a Brea resident. Well, is the City Manager “BY the People”? No, his position is an appointed one so Brea residents not only have no voice in his hiring, we also can’t remove him from office if we disapprove of his performance. We didn’t vote him in and we can’t vote him out. But is the City Manager “FOR the People?” Can’t we assume that the City Manager and city staff will be acting in the residents’ best interest? Unfortunately, there isn’t much evidence to support that either.

Last week, Brea was listed by the OC Register as one of the Orange County cities that had a substandard response to public documents requests. This doesn’t seem like a City who is working in its residents’ best interest. A report was presented tonight to summarize the input from the community regarding the fire services options under consideration. Remarkably, the residents at this meeting weren’t given an opportunity to discuss the pros and cons of the various options, so how can this possibly guide the Council as they prepare to vote? Furthermore, since the various comments were not quantified or ranked in any way, the summary report did not reflect the magnitude of the various concerns listed. It is discouraging that even when input is sought, we are not asked relevant, unbiased questions and, according to some in attendance at the meeting, we are not listened to openly and fairly.

And then there's street sweeping. One year ago, the City Council majority passed a resolution outlawing parking on Brea's residential streets on street-sweeping day. There was no public hearing, no input from residents and certainly no vote from the residents as this revenue-generating policy was developed and implemented. Ever since enforcement began, residents such as me have spoken out about the hardships created by this ordinance, but our concerns have fallen on the deaf ears of a City Council majority that has refused to take any action. Somehow the City Manager still insists that there are no hardships and that Brea residents have a place to park, even though over 2,000 of us REQUIRE street parking and have permits for that reason. The recommendations in the report presented tonight by the City Manager are coming from someone who is so out of touch that he admitted at the last Council meeting regarding the enforcement program, "I don't have an opinion on whether the community thinks it's a big deal or not." How is that an acceptable position for a city government employee to take? How is it possible that the City Manager's recommendations will be in our best interest if he openly admits that he **doesn't know** what our needs are?

I would like to remind the Council that during the April 6 Study Session, there was 100% agreement among all members of the Council that there was a problem with the street-sweeping enforcement program that needed to be fixed. The minutes from that meeting read, "City Council directed Staff to attempt to develop a set of criteria for granting permanent program accommodations to residents." **You directed Staff to develop criteria for granting exemptions**, and the Staff's response given in tonight's report (three months later): No. The City staff has determined for themselves that exemptions are not necessary and that the program should continue without question for 24 months. (so actually his answer was "No, and stop bothering me about it!") Remember, the Staff's charge was NOT to determine whether or not exemptions were warranted, the entire council had already come to the conclusion that they were in fact needed. The City Manager has openly disregarded the direction from this Council. Are you going to once again accept his mandate, or are you going to take action that is in the best interest of the residents of Brea? The only reasonable solution is to make overnight passes automatically exempt. The administrative cost is zero and this addresses a major hardship. Remember, this was already given as an option but you voted it down last July. I think it's time to vote again. This is how I think Brea's city government is currently organized (Figure B)...please don't prove me right.

**How City Government
Should Be Organized**

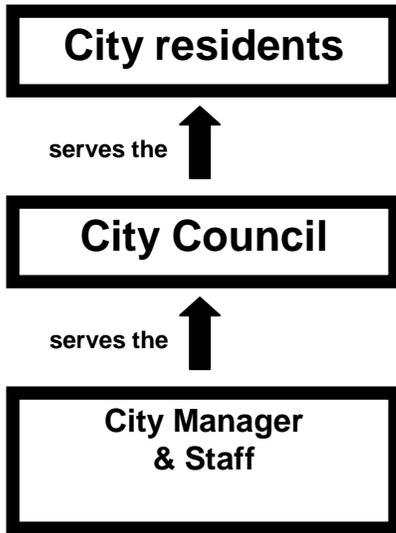


Figure A

**How Brea's City Government
is Organized**

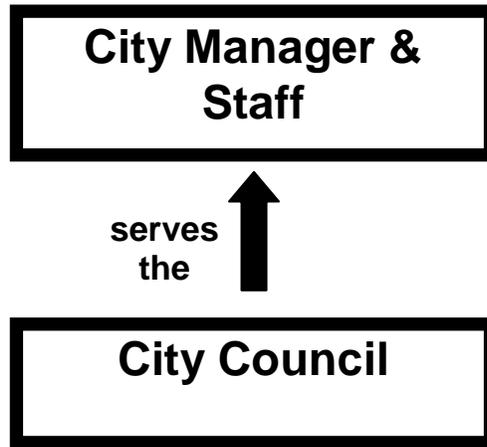


Figure B