

**REPORT
COST OF GOVERNMENT COMMISSION
COUNTY OF HAWAII
February 20, 2003**

INTRODUCTION

The Hawaii County Cost of Government Commission (COGC) was appointed in February 2002 pursuant to charter amendment 11, effective November 7, 2000, and codified in Article V, Chapter 2, of the County Charter. The amendment authorized the Mayor, with the approval of the Council, to appoint a nine-member commission to carry out the County's policy to "promote economy, efficiency and improve service in the transaction of the public business in the legislative and executive branches of the County by:

1. Limiting expenditures to the lowest amount consistent with the efficient performance of essential services, activities and functions.
2. Eliminating duplication and overlapping of services, activities and functions.
3. Consolidating services, activities and functions of a similar nature.
4. Abolishing services, activities and functions not necessary to the efficient conduct of government.

The amendment requires that the COGC "study and investigate the organizations and methods of operations of all departments, commissions, boards, offices and other instrumentalities of all branches of the county government, and determine what changes, if any, may be desirable to accomplish the policy...." The COGC is authorized "to secure directly, from any department, ... information, suggestions, estimates and statistics necessary to carry out its duties," and is required to submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the Mayor, Managing Director and Council not later than eleven months after its appointment.

The charter provision further provides that COGC members "shall be appointed to terms starting one year after the beginning of the term of the Mayor, and lasting eleven months."

COGC HISTORY AND PROCEDURES

The members of the COGC were sworn in on January 30, 2002, following their confirmation by the Council on January 24. On February 7, 2002, the COGC held its first meeting to consider its responsibilities and scope of authority under the charter, determine its plan of action, review Sunshine Law requirements, County regulations and policies affecting its operations, and to elect officers. For several months, the COGC operated with just seven members, one having resigned in May, and another in August. One replacement (Mr. Richard Rego) joined the COGC in October. Furthermore, one

member attended only one meeting during the year, due to apparent work and other commitments.

During its term, the COGC held 24 meetings (at which quorums were present at 17), adopted rules of procedure, and reviewed 22 County departments. The departments were asked to appear before the COGC and to provide an organizational chart, a statement of objectives, and an overview of functions. In interviewing department staff, the COGC sought views on: 1) what economies are believed possible; 2) what restraints, if any, inhibit achieving or implementing the economies; 3) what can be done to improve the department's efficiency; 4) what restraints, if any, inhibit the ability to achieve efficiency; 5) what can be done to improve interaction between County departments; and 6) what are the department's long-term goals and how are they to be achieved.

Draft reports on the departments were prepared by various COGC members and reviewed by the COGC. When consensus was reached on a report, it was approved for inclusion in the final report.

RESULTS

Of the 22 departments reviewed, the COGC completed work on 11 (Aging, Corporation Counsel, County Clerk and Council, Finance, Fire Commission, Fire Department, Housing, Management (Mayor's Office), Mass Transit, Parks and Recreation, and Water Supply). Reports on those departments are appended hereto.

Of the remaining 11, draft reports have been submitted but not completed on five (Environmental Management, Police Commission, Police Department, Planning, and Public Works) and work on six reports (Civil Defense, Civil Service, Data Systems, Liquor Control, Prosecutor's Office, and Research and Development) has begun, but drafts have not yet been submitted.

Each of the attached 11 reports includes a summary of the department's organization and responsibilities, a list of the relevant findings, and the COGC's recommendations, with rationale.

CONSIDERATIONS

In its deliberations, the COGC was mindful that although all services provided by the County government are important, the primary role of County government is to provide essential services related to health and safety, which are those provided by the Police Department, Fire Department, Civil Defense Agency, Department of Public Works, Department of Parks and Recreation, Water Department, Environmental Management Department, and Prosecuting Attorney. The COGC also considered the importance of good management, which can facilitate inter-department coordination and cooperation, lead by example, and help set and achieve the government's goals.

This is not to denigrate the importance of those departments, such as Finance, Civil Service, Planning, Research and Development, Corporation Counsel, and others, which serve to keep the wheels of government turning.

The COGC also considered the relationship between cost and efficiency and, in several instances, made recommendations that would increase cost in the short run, but would achieve efficiency and reduce cost over time.

Finally, the COGC acknowledges that the severe financial constraints on County government resulting from the economic downturn, inflation, and other uncontrollable factors, has already resulted in requiring departments to exercise fiscal restraint and seek economies and efficiencies. We therefore acknowledge that some of the COGC's recommendations have already been, or are being independently implemented. Nevertheless, we believe it appropriate to retain them in our report, if for no other reason than to demonstrate that the department and the COGC were of like mind.

MAHALOS

We thank all those department heads and staff who provided the COGC with information and ideas, with special thanks to Lincoln Ashida, Corporation Counsel, and staff: secretaries Paulette Cainglit, Myrle Kaloi, and Jennifer Kuali'i, who transcribed minutes, compiled agenda materials, and handled the myriad details necessary to assure our smooth operation; and Deputy Corporation Counsels Michael Kagami and Lester Ishado, who provided legal guidance for our deliberations.

We commend the attached reports for your review and consideration.

COST OF GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

Joel E. Gimpel, Chair

Members: Frances Pacheco, Vice Chair
Michael D. Barton
Dennis Ide
Dennis Maedo
Richard Rego
Denyse L. Temple
J. Jay West

