

## PUBLIC WORKS -- AN OVERVIEW

The Board of Public Works and the Department it administers occupies a unique role in the life of our community. Day in and day out, the most basic services of a far-flung and complex metropolis, ranging from road maintenance and repair to trash collection and disposal--are around-the-clock responsibilities of the Department's seven Bureaus, closely coordinated by the Board and its administrative staff.

This network of men and women, tools and machinery, land and facilities, reaching across hundreds of square miles, affects every Los Angeles resident. It is an infrastructure essential to the quality of Los Angeles' life, the daily beat by which this city functions, and is perceived by the world markets in which it competes.

That this infrastructure of bedrock services operates with a high degree of effectiveness and efficiency is the single dynamic yardstick by which the Department and its 5,000 employees is measured.

Services are provided, fairly and equitably. Diverse constituencies have ready access to a full-time public body to state viewpoints, and expect unbiased judgements which further the needs of the total community. Millions of dollars of bids are routinely unsealed and reviewed in open meetings under full citizen scrutiny.

This commitment to openness, established by City Charter and carried out through clearly articulated and firmly enforced policies, by an experienced, energetic Board supervising a skilled, hardworking team, has served this community well for eight decades.

Consider:

- \* The five Commissioners comprising the Board, reflecting the dynamic cultural mix of the community, meet in open session three days a week. Outreach efforts to generate maximum public participation support this intensive schedule.

- \* Last year, as one typical example, over 500 hearings were conducted. In addition, numerous citizen appeals were heard concerning permits fees and many other jurisdictional activities. Problems of residents, contractors, and employees were considered and resolved.

- \* Many critical issues are tackled, among them proceedings against toxic polluters, which result in the severance of sewer lines, and or the imposition of stiff fines, the root and core of the City's tough stand on industrial pollution. Assessed fines reimburse the City for the cost of identifying and monitoring those who would lay waste to our environment.

- \* Checks and balances flowing from open discussion by and between the five Commissioners and those who appear before them, remove the roadblocks of unduly delayed decisions, the common frustration of those whose business

brings them before local government. Too many of our citizens regard the experience as obstructionist, instead of the open-door response it can and must be...and invariably is in dealing with this Department.

\* As of this writing, the board has overall responsibility for dozens of ongoing projects totalling hundreds of millions of dollars. Among them: A ten-year, \$3.4 billion upgrade of the City's waste water system, the largest, most complex construction project ever undertaken by the City.

\* All contracts -- over 266 were awarded in the last fiscal year -- are monitored by the Board, a careful process requiring bid advertising, bond posting, insurance filing and verification, and the processing of contractor claims. Each Wednesday at 10 a.m., bids are opened and discussed in full public view. The Board administers the second largest pool of taxpayer dollars appropriated by the City.

\* An aggressive effort by the Board has channeled millions of dollars of City contracts to Black, Hispanic, Asian, women and small business entrepreneurs. Here again, sustained outreach is essential to generate awareness and response. In 1987, contracts valued at \$9.7 million were awarded by the Board under the City's Minority Business Enterprises (MBE) participation program; and some \$3.0 million under the Women Business enterprises (WBE) participation program. This compares to \$6.9 million awarded through the MBE program, and \$1.6 million through

the WBE program, in 1986.

The Board's responsibilities include managing the City's Motion Picture Coordination Office, a one-stop permit center to facilitate the level of service that helps make Los Angeles the world's leader in the television and motion picture industry.

\* The Board also serves as General Manger of the Department of Public Works. This stewardship brings a high level of coordination and direction to the work of the seven Bureaus comprising the Department. Full time Board supervision provides a strong administrative focal point, where Engineering, Sanitation, Street Maintenance, Street Lighting, Contract Administration, Accounting, Employee Services and administrative staff are brought together as a unified and flexible work force, efficiently and economically deployed, capable of fast response to changing needs.

\* The importance of this level of management commitment is further underscored by the Department's multi-billion dollar wastewater construction program, including construction of state-of-the-art full secondary sewage treatment facilities. A related responsibility is City compliance with a Consent Decree to keep sludge out of Santa Monica Bay. The Decree mandates full participation by the Friends of the Court in the compliance process, a requirement the Commissioners are particularly well organized to administer on behalf of the Mayor and City

Council.

\* The Board also takes a leadership role in the orderly and safe disposal of solid waste; including implementing programs which, by 1993, will recycle or compost fifty percent (some three thousand tons a day) of all solid waste for which the City is responsible. A vital adjunct to this program is expanding recycling efforts into the private sector, which generates two-thirds (about 16,000 tons) of the City's daily solid waste stream.

\* The critical area of hazardous materials similarly falls under the jurisdiction of the board, through its Hazardous and Toxic Materials Project. HTMP carries out the Mayor's directive to make Los Angeles the first City in the country to turn off the toxic cap. The project's mandate includes insuring City agencies and offices have programs in-place to control and minimize the use of hazardous materials; and expand this effort out into the community at large.

\* When not serving as the collective Department Head, and conducting meetings and special hearings, Commissioners are in their offices, responding to constituent, department and City concerns. Commissioners routinely handle hundreds of Council requests a year for assistance or constituent response. Functional responsibilities assigned to each Commissioner assures expeditious handling of these and many other pressing problems.

\* Collectively, and individually, Board members provide

leadership in many other areas. Labor-management disputes; contractor disagreements; affirmative action programs; risk management assessment; productivity analysis; purchasing standards; emergency preparedness. The list is long, the commitment of time prodigious. Members place themselves on 24-hour call. During times of emergency--floods, mudslides, fires, earthquakes--Board members are on the scene, working with line management to assure all possible assistance is rendered; and following up with support and emergency funding.

To summarize:

Article XXIII, Section 230 of the City Charter, creating a Department of Public Works, whose policies are established and activities closely supervised by a full-time, salaried Board of Commissioners, has over the years become far more than a legal entity. It is a cost-effective, broadly contributing and integral part of City government.

Board members devote full-time to their demanding responsibilities. Their sole allegiance is to the City. Potential conflicts of interests are removed, and objectivity the order of the day, as vast projects are begun and completed, vital services rendered and maintained, and hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars disbursed and monitored.

The unique organization that is the Board of Public Works has constructed the Los Angeles Aqueduct, built the



Los Angeles Harbor, converted open fields into one of the worlds busiest airports, supervised the construction of hundreds of public buildings, including City Hall itself, as well as the road, sewer and street lighting networks linking the extended urban reach of our City.

Today, responding to the urban pressures of the 1980's the Board is closely involved in meeting the infrastructure needs of a population with many voices and views: collecting trash, trimming trees, fixing potholes, resurfacing streets, repairing streetlights.

Commissioners must also seek consensus, and develop programs to solve the principal urban issues of our time: Disposing of solid waste; rebuilding an aging wastewater system; controlling the generation of hazardous materials; enforcing sewer limitation and water conservation ordinances impacting growth and development.

The Board must stringently enforce laws directed at industrial polluters; and go beyond enforcement to encourage voluntary cooperation by industry and private citizens in cleansing an environment for which all carry responsibility to safeguard future generations.

Responsiveness to community concerns and citizen accessibility: These criteria rank high in voter expectation of city government and those charged with its orderly administration. They have long been and remain the predominant gauge against which the Board of Public Works is measured and continually measures itself.