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From: "Paul Zimmerman"
Date: 2006/11/29 Wed PM 01:10:51 CST
To: <pa-consultation@cab.gov.hk>
Subject: Input to public consultation attached.

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Submission by

Designing Hong Kong Harbour District

Convenor, Paul Zimmerman

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THE EXPERIENCE GROUP

Hong Kong, 29 November 2006

Constitutional Affairs Bureau
3/f, Main Wing
Central Government Offices
Lower Albert Road
Hong Kong

Fax: 2521 8702

Email: pa-consultation@cab.gov.hk

Re: Consultation on Further Development of the Political Appointment System

It is unclear how the proposed additional layers of political appointees will result in the development and execution of policies which will better reflect the views and aspirations of the community.

How do the proposed changes address the issues we face in relation to the area of our concern, the issues related to the urban, marine and transport planning along the harbour-front:

1. A lack of leadership and vision;
2. Conflicting interests between various departments;
3. Disconnect between urban, transport, and marine planning arrangements;
4. Rudimentary urban planning and design control mechanism under various ordinances (Incl. Town Planning, Buildings, Road and Rail) and different planning areas (outline zoning plans and gazetted road and rail plans);
5. The current gazettement and consultation system fail to involve the public in a timely manner, and the processing of the input lacks transparency and accountability;
6. Coordination arrangements such as the Committee on Planning and Land Development and the Transport Advisory Committee are entirely unaccountable, and the Town Planning Board has limited accountability.

We see the need for greater integration of bureaus and departments to eliminate horizontal layers, the need to break through the silos by reorganizing portfolios (for example by integrating lands, marine and transport planning) and the need for 'city' leadership. Recognizing that the Chief Executive is ultimately pre-occupied with 'One country, two system' issues, who will take responsibility for the overall plan and vision for the urban, transport and marine development of the city? What accountable, transparent mechanism will be developed to engage the community early and ongoing in the decision making process?

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The current outcome from planning decisions tend to be the 'lowest common denominator' solutions which all the various corners of Government can agree on. Moreover, the process of internal consensus building is so cumbersome that, together with the normal human being's resistance to change, the overall system is incapable of adapting and following the changing aspirations and views of the community in a sensible manner.

Given this scenario of silos, departmentalization and a lack of accountable interfaces with the community, will the addition of another layer of internal decision makers and influencers not just further aggravate an already precarious situation?

Herewith we so submit for your consideration,

Yours sincerely

(Signed)

Paul Zimmerman
Convenor, Designing Hong Kong Harbour District