

Jeff Herdman, former City Councilman

The saga of Councilman Will O'Neill's flawed "elected mayor" proposal has taken an unhappy twist that requires as many of us as possible to be informed, and to attend the Oct. 26 City Council meeting and speak out against it.

My guess is that many of you are asking yourself, "What proposal?"

Councilman O'Neill is proposing that we change our City Charter to having the citizenry of Newport Beach elect the mayor. As it has been since the inception of our Charter, the mayor has been elected by the council at its annual meeting held each January.

You are probably saying to yourself, "So what is wrong with that?"

I say nothing is wrong with it, if it were not for the fact that this proposal consists of two four-year terms for an elected mayor, allowing one person to serve for 16 years on the council. It requires the City Manager to seek the permission of the mayor to put the city's normal business on the agenda, a restriction that no other city requires. The City becomes a mayor managed form of government as opposed to the current mayor-council governance structure.

The initiative states that "the mayor shall have the sole discretion to set City Council agendas." This completely remakes our current form of government and dilutes the authority and power that each individual council member has.

The initiative will require the entire redistricting of our City (from 7 to 6), with double representation occurring in the district that the mayor lives in.

I am concerned about this double representation and the effect it will have on the other districts in terms of priorities for projects and spending.

Initially, Councilman O'Neill began a signature drive to get his proposal on the November ballot. He is now asking the City Council to put it on the ballot for him.

Attend the Tuesday, October 26 City Council meeting. When this agenda item comes up, each person will have three minutes to speak on the proposal. The meeting begins at 7 p.m. at the City Hall Council Chambers at 100 Civic Center Dr.

You may also submit comments by emailing the Council at: citycouncil@newportbeachca.gov.

Jeff Herdman, former Newport Beach City Council Member