

*Submitted into the Record*  
*by Hillsborough County Charter Review Board*  
*Member,*

From: "Candace Hundley" <Hundleyc@hillsboroughcounty.org>  
To: Gerald L. White  
Date: Wednesday - November 30, 2005  
Subject: 1999 County Mayor Proposal

*Gerald White, Sr.*  
*1/24/11*

Per your request, I am attaching for your information selected newsclips from our 1999 file... you may want to put them in order from oldest to newest to read--I'm not sure they scanned that way. There should also be 5 pages.

I am also attaching the first two pages of the local staff summary which indicates who signed off on the bill to file it at the local level and, on the second page, the outcome of the deliberations on the matter.

I did not find any letter or letters from the BOCC in the file, but I believe the news articles should be helpful to you regarding the matter.

Please let me know when we may be of any further assistance to you.

Candace Hundley, Director  
Hillsborough Legislative Delegation

**STAFF SUMMARY  
LOCAL LEGISLATION - 2000 SESSION**

**LOCAL BILL NO.:** 02A (Draft 21-336A)

**BILL RELATING TO:** Countywide Mayor

**SPONSOR:** Senators James Hargett, Sen. Tom Lee, Sen. John Grant

**COMMITTEE:** Rep. Frank Murrain

**LOCAL FINAL STATUS:** Local Bill 2B was before the Delegation on 1/14/00; it differed from LB 2A in that it corrected language relating the date the Mayor would take office which had been inadvertently omitted from LB 2A. LB2B was ultimately withdrawn from further consideration by its sponsors on 1/14/00.

During the discourse on the proposal, several amendments were described although they were not formally acted upon; they are included at this juncture for historical accuracy relating to the language being put forth for discussion in the local community.

Amendment 2B-1 was a "strike everything" amendment which would have differed from Bill 2B in that it included term limits; restored language relating to assistant county administrators; provided veto limits on zoning ordinances; and included professional qualifications for the county administrator.

Amendment 1 to Amendment 2B-1 provided for 5 single-member districts and 2 at-large commission districts, that there be no less than 7 commission districts, and that 70 percent of the commission membership must derive from single-member districts.

Substitute Amendment 1 to Amendment 1 to Amendment 2B-1 provided for 7 single-member districts and all districts would remain single-member if the number of districts were increased above 7.

Amendment 2 to Amendment 2B-1 reduced the salary of the Mayor to 150% of that of a Hillsborough County commissioner.

**Amendment 3 to Amendment B-1 would have provided minimum funding levels for certain local entities.**

The bill also contained a motion which would have required that the bill be held in committee for 30 days, pending receipt of any additional recommendations to the program, including by the Charter Review Board and the holding of a public hearing. It also provided for the inclusion of any such recommendations into the program within 30 days of enactment. The motion passed on a 4-0 vote in the Senate and a 7-0 vote in the House (with Reps. Alexander, Billaker, Ford, and Grant voting no; Miller voting yes). Senator Grant also proposed an amendment, but it was pending receipt of further information, but it was not formally addressed.

Updated by: Candace Hundley. 1/19/00.

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11/12/2000

## Drop Hillsborough mayor bill

The bill to create a countywide mayor is the worst proposal Hillsborough's legislative delegation has sponsored in years. The power befits a monarch, not a mayor, and creating the job by fiat from Tallahassee infringes upon the right to self-government as established by Hillsborough's home-rule charter. City and county officials should oppose the bill. The meddling by legislators is unnecessary and harmful to the interests of average citizens.

The idea of creating an elected mayor is worth a debate. Given Hillsborough's size, diverse population and growth as a hub for corporate relocation and international trade, the county could be well served by a chief executive who could focus the county and serve as a counterbalance to the power of seven partisan commissioners.

But this bill does more. It gives the mayor veto power over nearly every decision by county government. The mayor could veto the budget, kill a tax or throw public contracts to campaign contributors. The mayor also would have veto authority over every county law and "any legislative, quasi-judicial, zoning, comprehensive-plan or land-use decision of the commission."

The mayor, then, could single-handedly shape growth patterns, environmental laws and social services throughout the county without much input or oversight from the elected commission. The potential for abuse is great. The mayor's office would become one-stop shopping for developers and corporate interests looking for a way to skirt regulations

*The mayor's office would become one-stop shopping for developers and corporate interests looking for a way to skirt regulations and Florida's open-government laws.*

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The bill also would hurt Tampa, Plant City and Temple Terrace by decimating the work of a number of agencies that coordinate growth and public services for both city and county governments. The mayor could upend county decisions on growth management, public transportation and access to health care and leave the cities unable to serve their own citizens.

The prime sponsors of the legislation, state Sens. John Grant and Jim Hargrett of Tampa, claim their intervention is needed to prompt the county mayoral debate. Nonsense. The county charter provides several ways for voters to approve a county mayor, and the Charter Review Board, which meets this spring, is widely expected to consider the idea. In the 1990s, the board agreed to put such a measure on the ballot. It was killed, at the last minute, by a judge. The county has proved it doesn't need Tallahassee to dictate the terms of this local issue. The delegation should drop the bill and turn its attention to more constructive ideas.

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# Legislators pitch mayor for county

■ The plan would give voters the say on a mayor as Hillsborough's political leader and administrator.

By DAVID KARP  
Times Staff Writer

*JBZ 2/16/80*

TAMPA — At Hillsborough County Commission meetings, you'll find the county administrator sitting to the left of commissioners, next to the recording secretary. He answers questions when asked, and takes direction from the seven-member commission.

But by Friday, state legislators could approve a proposal to upend all of that.

It would move the county administrator's seat — figuratively speaking — to the center of power on the commission. The proposal, being pushed by three state senators, would create a mayor of Hillsborough County to be top administrator and political leader.

The mayor would be elected by the public to run the government, control the hiring and firing of county department heads, oversee a \$2-billion budget, and have the power to veto all ordinances, including zoning decisions and changes to the county's comprehensive land

Please see MAYOR 6B

## Mayor from 18

plan. The mayor also would have a line-item veto over the county's \$2-billion budget.

The commission, which now appoints an administrator to perform some of those functions, could override the mayor's veto by a two-thirds vote. But it would lose much of the power it now has.

The idea, which could go to voters for approval this November, raises questions about the balance of power: How do you give someone enough power without making that person too powerful?

The current form of government deliberately spreads the power among the seven members of the board. Voters cast a ballot for three countywide seats on the commission, and for the district seat that represents the area where they live.

It's intended to reflect the county's diverse neighborhoods, and to create a commission that's accountable to the voters.

The current county administrator must have a master's degree in public administration or a related field, and have worked for at least three years in government. Commissioners are free to choose an administrator based on qualifications and experience — not politics.

The current form of government was adopted by voters in 1983 after a bribery scandal resulted in criminal charges against three commissioners. With Tampa's reputation for corruption and cronyism, many thought the reform was needed.

But groups have been pushing for change since the 1983 vote.

For one, the separation of powers written into the 1983 charter haven't worked as planned. Commissioners were supposed to leave administrative decisions, such as hiring and awarding contracts, to the administrator. But they haven't, said former Commissioner Pick Talley, who favors the county mayor system now being proposed.

He remembers meetings in the 1980s that lasted until 2 a.m. as the commission micromanaged administrative chores, even though they weren't supposed to.

Pinellas County has a similar form of government as Hillsborough, and it generally works as intended, Talley said. In Pinellas, the commission gets along with uncanny harmony, and the county administrator, Fred Marquis, has run the government steadily for 21 years.

In Hillsborough, which has gone through a number of top administrators over the years, the form of government seems to have created a power vacuum, and left the county without a united political voice.

Sometimes, several senators said, the commission votes one way on an issue, such as new taxes for transportation, only to have individual commissioners' lobby state legislators behind the scenes for the opposite result.

"It would be funny if it wasn't so serious," said state Sen. John Grant, R-Carrollwood.

That's why legislators say they drafted a proposal that would make the county mayor independent and powerful. If the Legislature passes the proposal, it would still be up to the voters to decide the issue.

"I think every year our community grows, it becomes more complex, and the more complex it becomes, it becomes critical we have one leader who makes decisions," said state Sen. Tom Lee, R-Brandon.

But it's the concentration of power in one person's hands that frightens some people.

"I see huge, huge danger signs," Denise Layne, president of the Lutz Civic Association, told commissioners last week. She was particularly concerned about the mayor's power to veto ordinances.

"That's an extraordinary amount of power for one person to have," she said.

Jamil Jreisat, a professor of public administration and political science at the University of South Florida, said letting a mayor run

county government would erode the reforms made by professional managers.

A county mayor could replace department heads and employees for political reasons, and might award friends lucrative contracts. The mayor could name anyone, including his campaign manager, as his administrator, fire chief or water department head.

"Their motives are different," Jreisat said of politicians. "They want to be elected. They are under constant pressure from lobbyists and special interests."

Developers might make campaign contributions to influence the mayor, who could veto zoning decisions, said Commissioner Jan Platt, who opposes the county mayor plan.

"It's obviously a developer's dream come true," Platt said.

Supporters of the mayor proposal disagree. They say corruption can take root in any form of government, depending on the people in the office.

Even so, Platt raises another objection: She doubts an elected mayor would actually unite the government under one person.

A county mayor wouldn't have the same power as Tampa Mayor Dick Greco, who hires the police chief and controls the city's checkbook. Florida's constitution makes counties an arm of the state and gives power to separately elected constitutional officers, such as Sheriff Cal Henderson.

A county mayor couldn't write a check without approval from Clerk of the Circuit Court Richard Ake, who is elected separately. And unlike the Tampa City Council, which historically has been weak, the County Commission has a tradition of independent power. The commission might constantly be at war with a mayor.

"It's not going to be what people think it is going to be," Platt said. "It's just going to hamstring things more. If the government is ineffective now, this will really bring things to a standstill."

— Times staff writer Bill Coats contributed to this report.

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# Legislators fail to revamp county politics

**TAMPA** — A 14-member citizen panel will have the next say on whether Hillsborough County should have an elected mayor.

By **TED BYRD**  
of The Tampa Tribune

7/15/00

State legislators dropped an effort to create an elected mayor for Hillsborough County on Friday. But they vowed to revisit the issue next year if local leaders do not study alternatives to the current structure of county government.

"You've got to know when to hold and when to fold. I think now is a good time to fold," said state Sen. James Hargrett, D-Tampa, who sponsored a bill that would have put the elected-mayor system before voters in November.

He withdrew the bill before it was voted on during a meeting of the Hillsborough County Legislative Delegation.

"We're not getting out of the game; we're taking a break," said Sen. John Grant, R-Tampa, a co-sponsor of Hargrett's bill.

Community activists, elected officials and business leaders have been torn over suggestions that it's time to revamp Hillsborough's government. But they were united in wanting the Legislature to stay out of the issue.

"This is a Hillsborough County issue, and it should be addressed in Hillsborough County," said Sam Horton, a retired educator and president of the Hillsborough County chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

About 100 people showed up for Friday's meeting, nearly all opposing the state lawmakers' involvement.

And some legislators, especially from the House of Representatives, appeared uncomfortable with the idea, as well.

"It appears to me that this is some sort of arm-twisting. This seems to be a bully tactic," said Rep. Les Miller, D-Tampa.

Hillsborough's charter is expected to remain one of the most discussed issues this year.

The next step in the process will be meetings of the 14-member Charter Review Board, which is scheduled to meet for the first time on Feb. 9.

Any changes to the charter would have to be finished by early summer. That would allow time to meet election deadlines and undergo U.S. Justice Department review before the question goes to voters in November.

Under the plan Hargrett and several other

lawmakers were pushing, the seven-member commission would be retained to set policy and make legislative decisions, but an elected mayor would take over the day-to-day executive decisions.

Supporters of a charter change said the county has become too big to be ruled by a group of seven trying to reach consensus.

"When you're the size of Hillsborough County government, somebody needs to be in charge," Grant said.

Despite losing the issue Friday, state lawmakers said they hope the existence of the bill has opened new dialogue.

"Maybe it was a shot across the bow for everyone," said A.D. "Sandy" MacKinnon, the president and owner of Yale Industrial Truck and a spokesman for the Hillsborough Chamber of Commerce.

He said he is sympathetic with the commission members and the difficulties they've had reaching consensus in recent years.

"How do you lead a group of leaders?" MacKinnon asked. "That's a difficult task when they all have their own feelings."

► Ted Byrd covers Hillsborough County government. He can be reached at (813) 258-7870.

# Senator's proposals on county spurned

■ John Grant says the meeting of the county's legislative delegation was a low point in his 21-year career.

By DAVID KARP  
Times Staff Writer

*DK 1/15/00*

TAMPA -- State Sen. John Grant had plans to cap off his 21 years in public service by pushing the Legislature to adopt a bold restructuring of Hillsborough County's government.

But on Friday, as he participated for the final time in a meeting of the county's legislative delegation, Grant saw his bill to create an elected Hillsborough County mayor go down in defeat at its first hearing.

Instead of being a highlight to his career, Grant said later, the morning had been a low point. He was mocked during the meeting by a crowd of county employees and called "ignorant" by County Commissioner Ronda Storms.

And Grant's defeat also came at the hands of conservative Republican House members, who, Grant said later, had been influenced by an ascending power in the Legislature, state Rep. Johnnie Byrd Jr., R-Plant City. Byrd, some predict, will be House speaker in two terms.

Grant was also attacked by Plant City businessman Sam Rashid, a major fundraiser for Republican candidates, whom Grant said he had always considered a supporter. Rashid wrote Grant a blistering letter in December claiming he was interfering in county issues, and then copied the letter to the County Commission, every legislator in Hillsborough, the president of the Florida Senate and others.

Grant's bill, cosponsored by state Sens. James "Jim" Hargrett Jr., D-Tampa, and Tom Lee, R-Brandon, would have created an elected county mayor to run the \$2-billion government, appoint staff and have veto power over county ordinances. The County Commission would have still existed as a legislative body, but with diminished power.



Sen. John Grant argued the county needed an elected mayor to unify it.

Even if the Legislature had passed the bill, the issue would have required a voter referendum before becoming law.

Grant, who is being forced to give up his Senate seat because of term limits, argued that the county needed one elected mayor — rather than a divided commission of seven — to speak for citizens.

"Give us a unifying leader in this community," Hargrett said. "The only thing that unifies us in this community now is (Tampa Bay Buccaneers coach) Tony Dungy."

Scores of citizens, including a representative of the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce, agreed that the idea might work. But they argued that the Legislature wasn't the forum in which to re-engineer local government.

A locally appointed Charter Review Commission will begin meeting next month to consider the county mayor concept. The board will hold meetings in Tampa and could put a county mayor plan on the ballot in November.

Grant had argued that legislators could not trust the Charter Review Commission to act on the issue, because they were appointed by the County Commission.

"I think (the Charter Review Commission) would have a reason to move rapidly and responsibly if they have a bill hanging over their head," Grant said.

During the meeting, a crowd of county employees laughed at Grant as he spoke, and at one point someone in the audience directed profanity at Grant.

Even with the bill's defeat, Grant and others said they were glad the bill brought the issue much-needed attention.

"We did get the bill in play," Grant said. "We are not out of the game, but we are going to take a timeout."

Other highlights of meeting Friday:

■ State Rep. Sandra Murman, R-Tampa, withdrew a bill that would have restructured the county hospital authority, which owns Tampa General Hospital. Murman said the bill, which she only saw Thursday night, wasn't ready. She also wanted to give the public more time to study the issue.

■ Legislators defeated a proposal to let City Attorney James Palermo buy into the city's pension fund even though he decided against doing so earlier in his career.

The bill, specially written to benefit Palermo, would have allowed him to receive more than \$73,000 a year for life after he leaves the city payroll. Palermo would have had to pay as much as \$180,000 to cover contributions he would have made since starting work for the city in 1967, plus 8 percent compounded interest.

The bill's sponsor, state Sen. Hargrett called the bill a "humanitarian" issue. But state Rep. Victor Crist, R-Tampa, said he was concerned that the bill was unfair because other employees had not been given the same chance to join the pension system. "I think it is setting a bad precedent," Crist said.

■ The delegation did approve a change to Tampa's pension system that will let elected officials qualify for a pension after eight years instead of 10. The bill will now go to the Legislature for approval.

Only state Rep. Bob Henriquez, D-West Tampa, opposed the change.