

# Letters from Prominent Citizens Endorsing Commission Form of Government

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I believe in the Commission Form of Government because it places the responsibility where it belongs. Any one who is selected by the people of the city will have in mind all the people and can act for the benefit of all and not a portion of them.

Frank W. Sheahan.

The Commission Form of Government makes it possible to do one's duty for the good of the town as a whole, irrespective of wards or party politics. Each commissioner is elected by all the people and the credit for efficient work belongs to him, likewise the blame for things left undone or badly done. There is no shifting of responsibility, no red tape, no endless committees to be consulted. Each Commissioner reports to the people once a month in a published article giving them a knowledge of what is being done with their money. Let us note on Saturday to have a government for the town as a whole, doing away once for all with the east and west side lines. Then we must keep our organization and our interest, being sure to get good candidates for the spring election. There seem to be no weak points in the Commission Form of Government provided reliable commissioners are elected.

Elinor B. Fyfe,  
Chairman Education Committee.

I do not believe the Commission Form of Government will be a panacea for all city ills but I do believe it is a step in the right direction and would justify itself if only for the following reasons: It abolishes party politics thereby bringing a closer and better community spirit. It crystallizes public opinion and places responsibility for departmental administration squarely on the shoulders of a conspicuous individual, keeping this individual by publicity and the referendum, from exercising harmful powers, compelling publicity in all his transactions in city affairs, making efficiency the principal requirement for holding public office.

Mrs. Frank Lincoln Wean.

Some of the convincing facts gathered from letters received and read of other cities on Commission Form of Government impressed me very favorably. In the first place this is not a new movement. Twenty-eight cities large and small throughout our state have adopted this plan. Some sixty-five cities from various states north, east, west and south that we know of, commend on this plan highly. Topeka, Kansas, goes so far as to quote figures showing decrease in taxation, retiring \$107,000 worth of bonds some of which had been running forty years, built a \$1700 fire station, bought \$20,000 worth of motor fire apparatus and built new bridges all of which have been provided for within their tax levy the last four years. One of the strong arguments for Commission Form of Government is the centralizing of power, resting responsibility on heads of departments for efficient and best results. Franchises, corporation deals, referendum and recall are up to the people. Let us give this a trial and make Highland Park the most prominent spot on the map.

Respectfully,

J. J. Brand,  
Chairman Publicity Committee.

James Bryce unhesitatingly states that the government of cities in the United States is the weakest point in American administration. The best proof of this is the frequent change of methods and systems. There seems to be no general description of municipal government that might be pointed out as typical. In the early

history of the country a city charter was framed as though it were a little state. Today the city is regarded more in the light of a business corporation which in various ways is the agent of the state. This would seem to be the logical plan of government for a city like Highland Park.

The Commission Form of Government does away with party politics and political machinery as well as ward divisions and puts the running of the city affairs on a purely business basis. The reports and records are all placed before the public eye and all employees are retained for fitness and efficiency. It is important that the right kind of men be elected.

In the initiative, referendum and recall the citizens hold a finger on the pulse of the government and one of the strongest arguments in favor of the Commission Form of Government is that it places responsibility where it belongs.

It has been stated somewhere that "government is an executive committee possessing no powers beyond those conferred by the citizens themselves." This seems particularly true of the Commission Form of Government and it therefore is imperative that the standard of citizenship should be high in order that that power be conferred wisely and intelligently.

The efficiency of a government is established by the satisfactory answering of two questions. What does it cost and what does it do for the people?

The best way to investigate a matter is to ask the right questions. The best way to prove the Commission Form of Government is to try it.

Louise Seymour Jones.

If nothing else were accomplished by the Commission Form of Government, than the doing away with the present division of our city by wards, I should want to work and vote for it. As necessary as wards may be for a large city like Chicago, they are absolutely unnecessary for Highland Park. Here we all belong to the one community and any improvements made or wrong conditions existing in any particular part of the city affects us all.

The men conducting the affairs of the city should be selected entirely due to their capability and trustworthiness irrespective of where they happen to live. If they cannot afford the time or do not think it worth their while to look after the interests of every portion of the city they should never accept the office.

To have a city council of five members instead of nine is another important matter, there is no good reason for having more.

The lack of interest shown, on the part of the public, regarding politics, is becoming a thing of the past. Women as well as men are just beginning to realize that it is the duty of every good citizen to concern her or himself about matters pertaining to the governing of our politics and it is due to this interest taken that Commission Form of Government becomes a fact and has been a success almost without exception wherever given a fair trial.

Under this system each commissioner is given full charge of his respective department, he is under bond and held absolutely responsible for whatever results obtained and in this way the city is bound to get better and more efficient service than is possible under the present system.

We do not want and are not looking for a cheaper way, we want a better way, more efficiency. There isn't a labor saving device introduced, which really saves the owner money

but by its use more is accomplished; that's what counts. The motto of the progressive town should be "Let's Do Things."

Let's have a Commission Form of Government. Let's get five business men into the city hall, or what would be still better, two men and three women. Put a lot of responsibility on each one, pay them as much as the law allows, encourage them by taking an interest in what they are trying to accomplish and you will have a better town. This new way will not be perfect nor ideal but it is a step forward and that means "Progress."

Fritz Bahr.

The newly proposed Commission Form of Government which is in successful operation in numerous cities makes its strongest appeal to me in that it brings the issues of the day directly before the public, thereby eliminating all possibilities of influence being brought to bear by private interests.

Mrs. Jno. F. Scott.

I believe Highland Park should adopt the commission form of government for just one reason. It offers a possibility, if not a probability, of city management based on business principles solely.

It is not that the supporters of this movement are dissatisfied with the present incumbents of office, but rather that they want these men or any other men in office to have a better vehicle of government. They don't ask that more gasoline be put into the municipal machine, but that more mileage be got out of it.

Germany has better municipal government than we have in this country. Over there the balance sheet of a city is watched by the people with the same interest as the balance sheet of a corporation would be in which they were stockholders. This is because the people in Germany are getting their money's worth out of their municipal government, and they are proud of it. The sooner we get a form of city government in which we can take pride, the sooner we will be asked by other cities to send a man to them to tell about what has been done in Highland Park. I am,

Very respectfully,

Geo. R. Jones.

From what I have read and heard of Commission Form of Government it is better than our present form. But elect good men—or women.

Henrietta A. Laing.

The Commission Form of Government, as I have heard it explained and discussed, seems to me to be one particularly well adapted to the needs of Highland Park. The fixing of definite responsibility upon individuals, and the monthly reports given of the condition of city affairs, can be mentioned as two of its many important advantages.

Marion Mason.

I consider the Commission Form of Government a good thing. It puts a city on good business basis to be operated on business principles and I think we would be making no mistake in adopting this new Government, which, so far as I know, has been a welcome change in every city where it has been tried.

O. G. St. Peter.

If the Commission Form of Government is and has been a success for other cities why wouldn't it be the best thing for this city? I do not see any reason why every public spirited citizen shouldn't vote yes on this proposition next Saturday, Oct. 24, and induce all his friends to do likewise.

Otto Lawrentz.

From what I have learned of the Commission Form of Government it impresses me very favorably.

Mrs. James H. Duffy.

The more I read and hear about Commission Form of Government and what it is doing and has done for other cities, the more I am convinced it is a good thing for Highland Park.

August Noerenberg.

How about the proposed change in the city's government? Have you thought about it, and if so, does it meet with your approval? I frankly confess I did not trouble myself much about it at first, but I heard that a very wise and responsible person was coming to Highland Park to tell us all about it. I attended the meeting at the Elm Place School and spent a most enjoyable evening, for which I paid nothing, (quite a consideration in these hard times). But somehow when I left the building I recognized that though I had had a delightful time I had not gleaned as much as I expected to on the subject in question and, as I mean to vote and vote intelligently, I decided there was only one thing to do and that was to inform myself, and not to have a decision handed out to me across the footlights. I spent a good deal of valuable time in the offices of the Commission Form of Government, where I was free to examine books and pamphlets and read the different answers from cities already enjoying the Commission Form of Government, and I am now fully convinced that it is the best kind of government for our city. Our conditions and needs are just those that can be best met by the Commission Form of Government—we have such splendid men from which to choose our mayor and four commissioners. Perhaps you are as sentimental as some folks to whom I have spoken, and are talking regretfully of losing men in office now who have worked well and faithfully for the city. That is just where you need enlightenment. Choose your candidates from among those men if you so desire. There is nothing to prevent you from doing so.

It seems to me it would be a great relief to feel that one person carries the full responsibility for each department. If things go wrong he cannot shift the responsibility onto someone else's shoulders. You can justly point the finger at the head of the department and say: "Nathan thou art the man."

Time and space prevent me from writing more at present. Get busy, dear friend, and let me hear from you as soon as you have come to a decision on this important question.

Yours always,

A. L. M. Spencer.

I favor a Commission Government for Highland Park because of its simplicity and efficiency. The centering of all duties and responsibilities in five commissioners will eliminate the red tape and get results. Simple and direct methods always accomplish more than the complex and cumbersome.

Yours truly,

Frank L. Cheney.

In the synopsis of the law providing for the Commission Form of Government, I see nothing objectionable, but on the contrary, everything favorable to the successful administration of city affairs.

Briefly one of the strongest arguments in favor of it being the Initiative and Referendum which places the test word or questions of importance in the peoples hands.

Yours very truly,

G. L. VETTER.