

Ellis wants to subpoena Whitmire - Houston Chronicle (TX) - MARCH 4, 1989 - page 26

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City Councilman **Rodney Ellis** said Friday he wants to **subpoena** Mayor Kathy Whitmire to explain to a council committee why the Department of Planning and Development has gone without a permanent director for 11 months.

But that won't happen because City Attorney Clarence West said council committees have no **subpoena** power, and because Whitmire said she will appear before the Economic Redevelopment and Revitalization Committee next Friday with the information Ellis wants.

That information includes her long awaited plan for reorganizing Planning and Development, headed by acting director Mike Marcotte.

The department has been closely scrutinized since last April, when Whitmire fired then-director Efraim Garcia because she was unhappy with his management of the \$20 million Community Development program the department oversees.

Whitmire said Ellis asked her Wednesday to present the reorganization plan when the committee met Friday. She said she couldn't do so because the final plan won't be ready until sometime next week.

``I felt that on 48-hours notice, we could not be expected to produce it," Whitmire said.

During a committee meeting chaired by Ellis, the councilman joined Councilman Ben Reyes and several others who voiced frustration and said Whitmire is moving too slowly on the reorganization.

``After going almost a year with an acting department head, it's time for the council to be more assertive," Ellis said.

West said council committees have no power to **subpoena** anyone. He said the full council has such authority, but the mayor must sign any **subpoena**. That council power is weak, however, because neither council nor mayor can enforce the subpoenas.

Last October, a mayor-appointed task force presented a report indicating that Planning and Development lacked teamwork. It also noted a perception that department employees don't have appropriate credentials and background.

The report also recommended that the Community Development program, which spends federal money from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, has low visibility in the low- and moderate-income areas where that money is targeted.

The process for allocating those funds is too cumbersome and political, the report stated.

It recommended that the city establish a non-profit commission that would oversee 70 percent of the Community Development money, and that they city continue budgeting the other 30 percent.

Barry Goodman, who chaired the task force, said Friday he also was impatient with Whitmire. ``I'm not trying to do the mayor's job," Goodman said. ``But it's unfair to Marcotte and the workers there that they don't have any stability."

Reyes said he wants a separate department created to oversee Community Development money. He said Community Development will not get the special attention it needs if kept within Planning & Development, or folded into Finance & Administration, as rumored.

``We need to have someone who can focus on this money," Reyes said.

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