

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(3)682/03-04

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**Extract from minutes of Meeting between
Legislative Council Members and North District Council Members
held on Thursday, 27 May 2004 at 10:45 am
in Conference Room A of the Legislative Council Building**

Members present : Hon LAU Kong-wah, JP (Convenor)
Hon James TIEN Pei-chun, GBS, JP
Dr Hon David CHU Yu-lin, JP
Hon CHAN Kam-lam, JP
Hon Andrew WONG Wang-fat, JP
Hon Emily LAU Wai-hing, JP
Hon Andrew CHENG Kar-foo
Hon WONG Sing-chi

Attendance by invitation : North District Council Members

Mr CHOW Kam-siu, Joseph (Vice Chairman)
Mr LUI Hing-chung
Mr HAU Kam-lam
Mr MOK Siu-lun
Mr WONG Leung-hi
Ms IP Mei-ho
Mr YIP Yiu-shing, Chris, MH
Mr LIU Chiu-wa
Mr LAU Ying-wo
Mr POON Chung-yuen
Mr SO Sai-chi, MH

Staff in attendance : Mrs Betty LEUNG
Chief Council Secretary (3)1

Mr Arthur LEUNG
Senior Council Secretary (3)1

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II. Request for prompt construction of a major civic centre

2. Mr SO Sai-chi pointed out that during the meetings with LegCo Members in the past few years, NDC members had repeatedly reflected the need for the prompt construction of a major civic centre in the North District. After meeting with NDC members in April last year, LegCo Members had held a case conference on the issue with the Administration, but the project had made no progress so far. North District residents found this disappointing, and he himself was dissatisfied with it. He advised that the development proposal had been put forward since the Regional Council era. However, it was subsequently shelved when the municipal councils were dissolved. Having regard to the Government's current financial conditions, NDC was prepared to reduce the scale of the proposed civic centre, i.e. to reduce the seating capacity from 5 000 to about 1 500. He hoped that LegCo Members, particularly Members who were returned from the New Territories East geographical constituency in the LegCo election, could take practical measures to help North District residents fight for the implementation of the proposal. He revealed that when the Administration resumed the land at an average compensation cost of just tens of dollars per square feet in 1982, it had indicated that recreational facilities for residents would be developed at that location in order to urge land owners to cooperate and surrender the land. He urged again LegCo Members to actively fight for the construction of a civic centre for North District residents.

3. Mr LIU Chiu-wa added that he considered the progress of major issues raised by NDC members during the meetings with LegCo Members in the past few years unsatisfactory. He hoped that issues raised this time could be duly followed up and that progress could be made. Mr LIU pointed out that the North District Town Hall had a seating capacity of only 500, which was not enough to cater for the needs of larger-scale community activities and school graduation ceremonies. As the utility rate of the North District Town Hall was approaching 100%, and the population of the North District together with Tai Po had reached 600 000, he earnestly hoped that the development project could be implemented as soon as possible.

4. Mr POON Chung-yuen shared the dissatisfaction expressed by Mr SO Sai-chi. This was his fourth attendance at the annual meetings between NDC members and LegCo Members, but he had an impression that the follow-up actions taken by LegCo Members on issues raised by NDC were inadequate. He hoped that meetings between District Council (DC) members and LegCo Members would not be limited to social gatherings.

5. Mr LAU Kong-wah responded that LegCo Members accorded great importance to meetings with members of various DCs. Nevertheless, they were not in a position to direct the Administration to propose capital works projects according to the requests made by DC members.

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6. Mr Andrew WONG Wang-fat said that Legco Members should not put forward expenditure proposals that had charging effects. Although the Panels concerned could discuss the priorities of various work projects, the final decisions were still made by the Administration. He pointed out that in planning the civic facilities for each district, the Administration no longer adopted the population of the district as the sole criterion. It would set the priority according to the Government's fiscal deficit situation, the outcome of the current pilot scheme in which the Private Sector Finance (PSF) approach was adopted in the development and management of individual leisure and cultural facilities, views of the LegCo Panels concerned and the needs of different districts.

7. Mr CHAN Kam-lam concurred with the ideas expressed by NDC members and pointed out that even though Kwun Tong was located at the city centre, the Government only agreed to commence a pilot scheme in the district last year after the Kwun Tong DC had fought incessantly for the construction of a recreational and civic centre for more than a decade. He pointed out that as the Consultancy Study on the Provision of Regional/District Cultural and Performance Facilities in Hong Kong commissioned by the Government had already established the need to provide for Community Cultural Centres at eight districts, the progress made in this respect was slow and the Administration could not rid itself of the blame. He considered that the Administration did not have to wait until the outcome of the pilot scheme was available before commencing the planning of the facilities. Hence, it should promptly commence the planning of the construction of a major civic centre in the North District, and the LegCo Panel on Home Affairs (Home Affairs Panel) should urge the Administration to put forward a development timetable for it.

8. Dr David CHU Yu-lin pointed out that the crux of the matter surrounding NDC members' request could be summed up in two points: first, the current political structure adopted was an executive-led structure, and LegCo could not force the Government to submit work project proposals; second, NDC's request involved resources allocation. He considered that LegCo Members should fully support the aspirations of NDC in order to increase the chance of success.

9. Mr WONG Sing-chi said that, as a former Regional Council member and NDC member in the last term, he shared the anger of NDC members. He pointed out that the Administration had devoted resources to major projects (such as the construction of a \$700 million children development centre in Chai Wan, which had recently been brought to a halt), and neglected the actual needs of the districts. He urged LegCo Members and members of various DCs to monitor together the Administration's proposed work projects throughout the territory in order to avoid misallocation of resources. He considered that DCs' terms of reference should be expanded to include the implementation of work projects of less than tens of millions of dollars.

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10. Mr YIP Yiu-shing, Chris concurred with the Member's view about the Administration's misallocation of resources and pointed out that the Administration had failed to effectively implement "people-oriented" policies. He considered that the Administration should set priorities according to the state of development of the eight districts whose needs for the development of community cultural centres had been confirmed. As the private sector might not be interested in operating civic facilities, and whether the fees to be charged by them in future would be reasonable had yet to be verified, the Administration should develop civic facilities in a practicable manner.

11. Mr LAU Ying-wo advised that this was his first attendance at meetings between DC members and LegCo Members, and he doubted the effectiveness of such meetings. He pointed out that being the first stop for people from the Mainland, the North District was situated at an important geographical location. Given that even the village office of an ordinary village in the Mainland, such as the village office of the Shahe Village, could accommodate two thousand people, a presentable civic centre should be constructed in the North District.

12. Ms Emily LAU Wai-hing reminded the meeting that under Article 74 of the Basic Law, "LegCo Members may not introduce bills involving public expenditure". She considered that as the Government was currently facing a serious deficit problem, adopting the PSF approach to develop and manage individual leisure and cultural facilities would enable an early implementation of such work projects. She inquired whether NDC had discussed this approach and about the outcome of the relevant discussions. She considered that a tripartite case conference could be held among LegCo Members, NDC members and the Administration if necessary to discuss NDC members' request.

13. In reply to Ms Emily LAU's question, Mr WONG Leung-hi pointed out that the PSF approach to develop and manage individual leisure and cultural facilities had been discussed by NDC. Members in general accepted the approach, and a member even suggested that the authority concerned should stipulate in the land lease that the developer should develop civic facilities on the lot. NDC members unanimously requested for the implementation of the project of constructing a small-scale Hong Kong Coliseum in the district. Mr POON Chung-yuen added that although NDC had discussed the approach, it had not formally agreed that the implementation of the approach should be supported.

14. Mr WONG Leung-hi pointed out that to implement the project, some political parties could put forward the proposal to the executive authorities through their members who sit on the Executive Council (ExCo), or it could be achieved by LegCo Members unanimously making the request to the Administration. In reply, Ms Emily LAU said that if there was a consensus among the majority of LegCo Members on certain issues, it could indeed have a bearing on the Administration's stand on the issues. However, this power must be exercised carefully, taking public responses into consideration. Besides, the current practice of LegCo Members in dealing with public affairs was not the

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same as that of some overseas parliaments, i.e. putting various subjects together to force compliance by the Administration. Mr Andrew WONG advised that it was a dangerous development for the majority of LegCo Members to exert pressure on the Government indiscriminately in order to implement certain proposals, and it would also undermine the executive-led mode of government operation.

15. Mr James TIEN Pei-chun pointed out that ExCo would only make decisions on proposals put forward by bureaux, and ExCo Members would not make proposals to the Administration on their own initiative. Hence, it would be more appropriate for discussions on issues such as the construction of a major civic centre in the North District to be made in LegCo. He also pointed out that whether the Government was facing fiscal deficit problems or not, in considering the construction of civic facilities, the Administration had to balance the needs of various districts. The Liberal Party was of the view that as there were insufficient government resources, the PSF approach would make it easier for the request for the construction of a major civic centre to materialize, especially when the operation of commercial facilities such as restaurants and karaokes were allowed in the centres concerned. In doing so, the proceeds concerned could also be used to subsidize the charges for the use of the civic facilities.

16. Mr Joseph CHOW expressed the strong dissatisfaction of NDC members that the work project of constructing a major civic centre in the North District, which was already thoroughly planned during the Regional Council era, was abandoned because of the dissolution of the two municipal councils. NDC members, regardless of the parties to which they belonged, were making concerted efforts to fight for the construction of the civic centre in the district. He urged LegCo Members to provide active assistance in this regard.

17. Mr WONG Sing-chi informed the meeting that the PSF approach was being considered for the construction and management of the new Tai Po civic centre. He suggested that LegCo Members should meet with the Administration to propose the inclusion in the pilot scheme of the proposal to construct a civic centre in the North District.

LegCo Secretariat 18. Mr LAU Kong-wah suggested that a tripartite case conference among LegCo Members, NDC members and the Administration should be held as soon as possible. Mr Andrew WONG pointed out that as this LegCo term would soon come to an end, the task might not be completed. He suggested that LegCo Members should consider leaving this issue to be handled by the new term of LegCo. In response, Mr LAU Kong-wah pointed out that LegCo should not stop working because of the imminent expiry of its term. Members of the current term could first hold case conferences to be followed up by a new term of LegCo. Mr WONG Sing-chi said that the Government might as well make use of the period between the two LegCo terms to study the proposals put forward by LegCo Members and DC members. LegCo Members present agreed that case conferences should be held as soon as possible. Mr LAU Kong-wah further instructed Secretariat staff to inform the Administration that NDC was interested

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in the PSF approach, and hoped that the Administration could put forward proposals along this direction. LegCo Members present agreed that the decision on whether inspection of the civic centre site should be carried out would be made in conjunction with the discussion on the remaining items (please refer to paragraph 26 for such a decision). Mr WONG Sing-chi suggested and LegCo Members present agreed that the policy issues relating to the construction of civic facilities in various districts should be referred to the Home Affairs Panel for consideration and follow up.

Home
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