★ planning advisory service

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PLANNING OFFICIALS
1313 EAST 60th STREET — CHICAGO 37, ILLINOIS

Information Report No. 69 December 1954

ORGANIZATION CHARTING*

A chart is a form of visual communication. It describes by the use of symbols a system of relationships. An organization chart graphically portrays a plan of organization. Its chief purpose is to aid in securing a clear-cut understanding of a plan of organization by those who are affected by that organization.

Ardent proponents of organization charting are apt to become fascinated with the proliferation of boxes and lines that the organization chart is capable of embracing. Its skeptical opponents claim that the organization chart is a beguiling picture of something that doesn't exist in real life and protest that the appearance of logic and neatness will be accepted at face value. To both camps we are indebted for a system of reasonable organization charting. To the advocates for the development of principles of charting and a methodology; to the critics for the grain of salt and the constant warning that "the map is not the territory."

Value of Organization Charting

An organization chart is essentially an abstraction. It is a condensation of the structural aspect of a complex institution - a branch of government or a corporation, as the case may be. Being an abstraction, it presents an over-all picture of organizational structure. This is the first use of the chart: to make it possible to see organizational structure as a whole.

Moving on to internal relations - the relation of parts to the whole and to each other - the first value of a chart is that it clarifies. Clarification results (or should result) from any process of classification. But the uniqueness of the classification that constitutes an organization chart is due to the facts that (1) it is

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two-dimensional, and relative position as well as departmental breakdown is revealed, and (2) symbols are used instead of words so that the picture of organization is visual rather than verbal.

When organizational structure is thus classified and described, what then are some of the practical uses of the organization chart? For one thing, it can be used to discover organizational weakness and inefficiencies, such as duplication of functions, confused channels of authority and responsibility, and inappropriate distribution of personnel. Sometimes the very act of making a chart will reveal confusion about lines of authority and job duties. Organization charting, therefore, goes hand in hand with job description and job classification.

The need for organization charting in a large organization is more immediately apparent than in a small one. Without an organization chart (which, incidentally, need not necessarily be published) it is almost impossible to control personnel costs and recruitment. For the same reason, however, the unique analysis of structure made possible by the organization chart is valuable in smaller staffs as well, particularly those that are expanding in work load and personnel.

Small staffs usually function informally, and formal structural analysis is not necessary because both functions and relationships are understood by everyone concerned. Furthermore, jobs in small staffs are not rigidly defined, and new duties that come into existence are allocated partially on the basis of individual capabilities. However, with all expanding staffs there comes a time for soul-searching, a time for appraisal of the job primarily on its own merits rather than primarily on the merits of the particular person performing it.

Finally, the organization chart is almost indispensable to reorganization. When used for this purpose, it is the beginning of organization planning rather than the end product. In this respect it is analagous to the survey of existing land uses that normally precedes the land-use plan.

One warning should be voiced here. An organization chart is a picture of something that exists. To make a chart before personnel are hired is to make an abstraction of an imaginary institution. While it may be thought desirable on occasion to chart prior to fact, such a picture should be drawn tentatively and only after duties and responsibilities of organizational subdivisions and individual positions are pretty well thought out.

Chart Types

It is generally agreed that organization charts can be classified into four basic types, the first three of which describe organizational setup, the fourth showing sequence in time or process.

1. Structural Chart. Sometimes called a departmental chart, this chart shows the anatomy of the organization. It reveals the basic relationships between the various parts of the organization. Strictly speaking, the structural chart contains no information that would distract from communication of its main purpose - that of displaying structure.

2. Functional Chart. The configuration of the functional chart is identical with that of the structural chart, but it also contains descriptions of the specialized work done by segments of the organization. A statement of duties or functions is placed within each appropriate box.

   Functional statements should be clearly stated, as all-inclusive as possible, and should be placed in the present tense to eliminate unnecessary words. Functions common to all divisions shown on the chart should be omitted.

3. Position on Personnel Chart. Here "position" is used as a dignified version of "job." Again, the specific information needed is superimposed on a structural chart. Positions are indicated by job title, and their placement within boxes shows how they fit into the plan of organization.

4. Flow or Process Chart. Strictly speaking, the flow chart is not an organizational chart, but is a detailed record of the successive steps taken by organizational subdivisions in processing their work. It shows the course or channel through which work flows, and may be used to analyze the flow of work and to subsequently rearrange it or to eliminate needless effort. The flow chart is uncommon in planning agencies, and unless work is characterized by a great number of routine operations, this type of chart does not serve a useful purpose.

In practice, planning agencies often find combination charts to be more useful for their purposes than a separate analysis for structure, function, and position. The combining of chart types is more apt to occur where the organization i s simple or the staff is small. Sometimes a structural chart is accompanied by a statement of functions. This statement may be detailed and rather lengthy, constituting a compilation of job descriptions, or it may be brief enough to be placed on one page with the chart.

Early in the process of organization charting for a planning agency, a decision will be made on the level of authority to be first represented. Some charts (as will be seen in examples shown later) start with the electorate. Others start with the governmental body or office to which the planning organization is responsible. A few describe only the internal organization of the planning commission itself.

Because the planning agency is not an autonomous governmental unit but one that functions within the formal framework of municipal or county government, the relation of the commission and the director to the rest of the city government sometimes is shown. Where it is desired to emphasize the relation of the planning agency to the voters, via the legislative or executive branch as the case may be, then this relationship can also be indicated on the chart. There are no rules on these matters, however, and the choice of level to be first represented will depend on the complexity of the city government, how firmly the planning function is established, to some extent on the degree to which the planning agency has become an administrative branch of local government, and the purpose for which the chart is made.

Figure 1 is a simplified composite of the three different kinds of organizational charts. The top three levels are structural; the third level contains a structural box, a functional box, and a position box, all representing the same departmental subsection so that comparisons can be made between the kinds of information shown on the three different charts.

Principles of Charting

Authorities agree that organization charts should have the appearance of symmetry, simplicity, and unity. Symmetry is one of the ways of showing the logic of the organizational structure. Sometimes chart makers are tempted to route connecting lines along an indirect instead of direct path in order to get the entire chart on a sheet of a specified size. This results in a confused picture of the organizational structure and in part nullifies the purpose of the chart. Equally misleading, however, is an artificial forcing of symmetry. Most organizations inherently possess symmetry - and this should be reflected in the chart.

The rule of simplicity applies to the symbolic elements of the chart as well as the over-all arrangement. One charting expert has observed that a complicated or confused chart is a sign that the plan of organization itself is complicated or confused, or that the charting technique is improper.

Unity applies chiefly to the arrangement of chart components on the paper. Compactness, coherence, emphasis of major lines of authority and responsibility, use of consistent boxes (rectangles and squares instead of combining rectangles with circles, triangles and ovals) all contribute to an effect of unity.

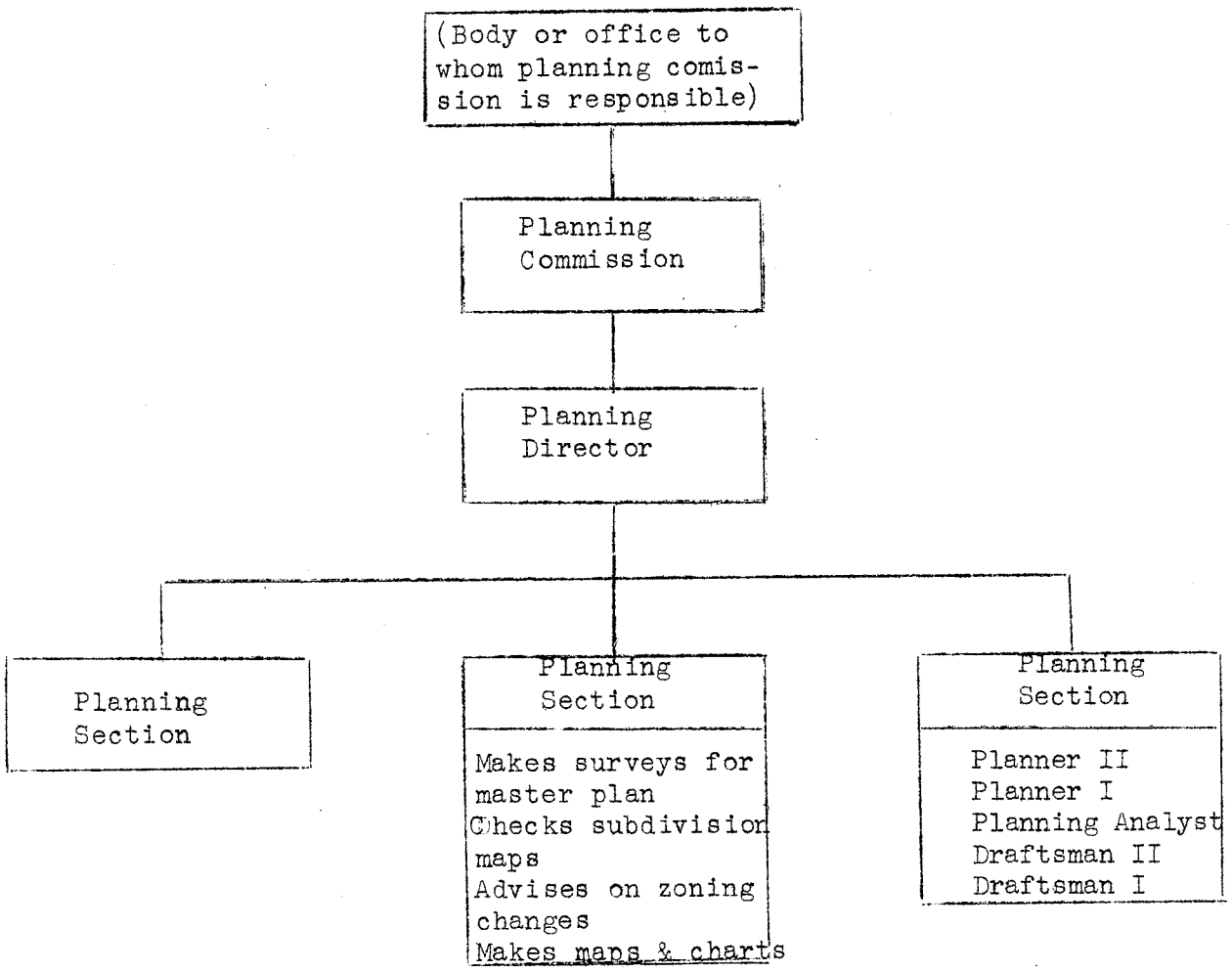


Figure 1.

Types of Organizational Charts

Chart Components

The two essential parts of a chart are the boxes and the lines connecting them. Different kinds of relationships are shown by box positions, kinds of lines, and the use of special designating symbols. The possibilities of variation are almost endless.* However, solid connecting lines and solid-line boxes are adequate for most purposes.

The general rule is that solid lines indicate authority and responsibility, and that dotted lines indicate relationships of particular importance where it is designed to emphasize those relationships. One authority holds that dotted lines should not be used to indicate routine day-to-day working relationships. Another authority, however, has developed several kinds of broken lines to show flow of work, advice, and "funneling of instructions." Both infer that dotted lines should be used sparingly.

In an article on organization charts in a British governmental bulletin it is observed that "the lines joining the various officers have a meaning which involves some degree of action; in some respects they correspond to verbs where words are concerned." In several of the organization charts shown at the end of this Information Report the verbs which the lines represent are themselves placed on the chart.

Certain charting practices are so widely followed as to have become nearly standardized. These practices are illustrated in Figure 2, page 7.

Other matters of information that should appear on the face of the chart are:

1. Title: city or county, planning agency, and kind of chart
2. Date
3. Legend or key explaining meanings of special lines, boxes, and symbols

Where organization charts are contained in annual reports of city or county agencies, titles are often abbreviated and the date is not always indicated.

*A manual by John J. Furia on How to Make and Intepret Functional Organization Charts (Public Business Management Series No. 2, 1943. 64pp.) explains in considerable detail the various devices that can be used to illustrate special relationships, e.g., temporary subdivisions, part-time assistance, flow of advice, etc. Distributed by the New York University Bookstore, price 50¢.

1. Vertical lines are lines of authority and responsibility. (AB, AS, and BC)

2. S is a staff position, possessing no authority.

3. Advisory bodies are indicated by the use of the separate "side arm," a horizontal line proceeding from the side of the box.

   (Note that horizontal lines emerging from vertical lines - e.g., the horizontal line connecting C-1 and C-3 to vertical line BC - do not indicate an advisory relationship.)

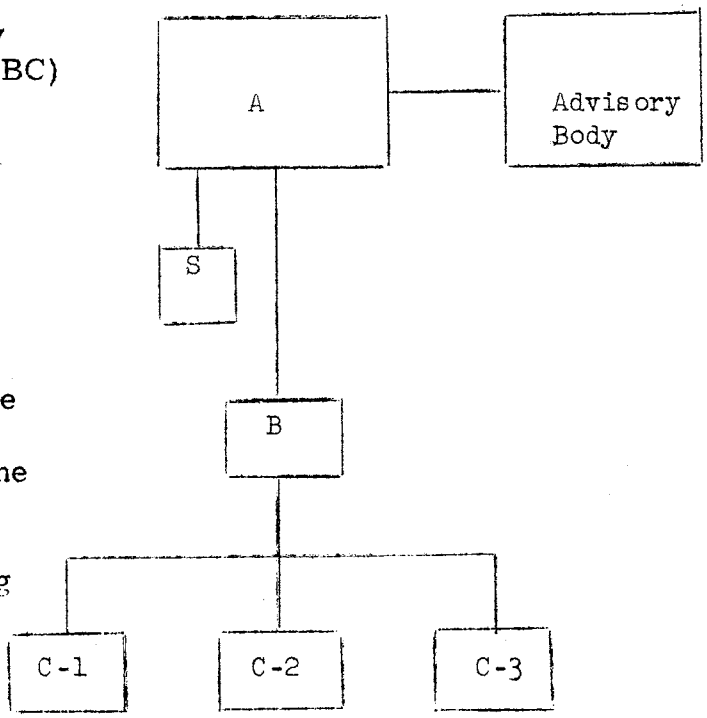


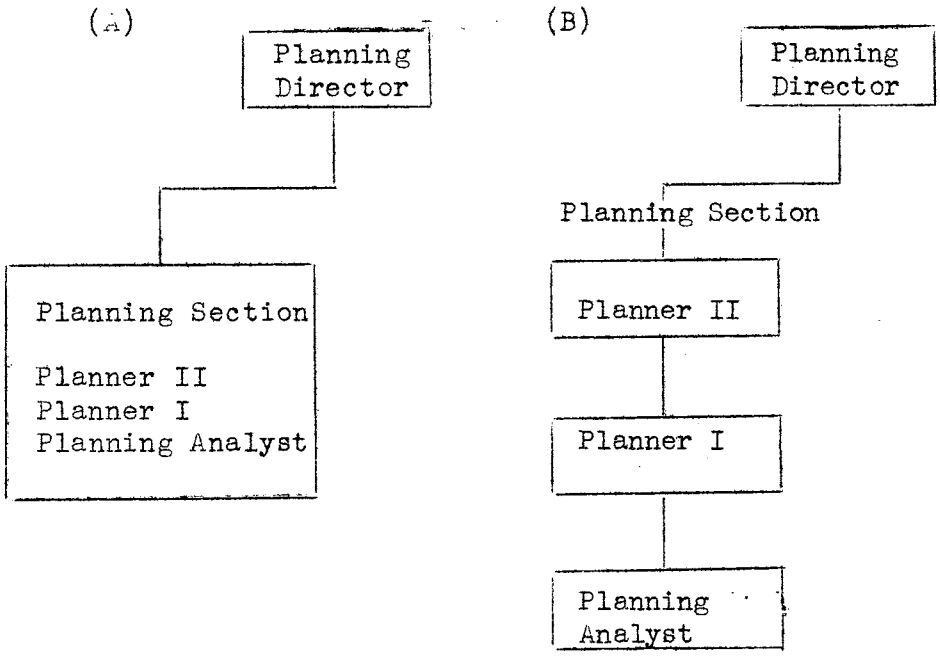
Figure 2

Diagram of Standard Charting Practices

Some of the pitfalls of organization charting have been mentioned in different parts of this report, but one danger needs especially to be emphasized. This is the danger of the misuse of solid, vertical lines. It should be kept in mind that solid, vertical lines stand for authority and responsibility; they never merely connect positions in a hierarchy unless that connection bears authority. Misuse of the solid, vertical line is most likely to occur in a position chart or in a combined structural-position chart. Figure 3, page 8 illustrates (A) the right and (B) the wrong way of indicating that the entire planning section is responsible to the planning director. (B) would not be incorrect if authority actually flowed from one position (or level) to the other.

Examples of Organization Charts for Planning Agencies

The balance of this report consists of a group of organization charts taken for the most part from annual reports of various city and county planning agencies. There is some spread in population size, but most cities and counties represented are over 100,000.



Shows entire planning section responsible to planning director

Shows Planner II responsible to Planning Director: Planner I responsible to Planner II; and Planning Analyst responsible to Planner I

Figure 3

Right and Wrong Ways of Indicating Authority

All three types of charts - structural, functional, and position - are to be found in this group, either singly or in combination. Strictly speaking, there are no flow charts. Although some examples do designate the nature of the relationship between organizational subdivisions by using such words as "assist," "coordinate," "elect," and "appoint," this is something different from the detailed analysis of routine operations that the typical flow chart describes. The use of arrows and other devices employed in these examples to carry the eye along from one point to another should not be confused with the arrows often used in a flow chart.

The intended distribution of the report in which the organization chart appears will probably affect its form to some extent. If distribution is to be widespread, and among the recipients is a number of persons not familiar with planning

organization and function, then the use of graphic elements may well add to the comprehensibility of the chart and an understanding of the position of planning in local government.

In the charts describing the planning commissions of Delaware County, Pennsylvania, and Salt Lake County, Utah, emphasis is placed on the fact that the voters elect the county boards who, in turn, appoint the planning commissions. Also emphasized in these two charts are the kinds of things done by the commissions and the nature (by means of words) of the relationships between various branches.

Several conventional organization charts are among this group. Although among them are examples embodying the principles of charting (symmetry, simplicity, and unity) and others showing proper arrangement of chart components, no one can be singled out as a model.

In between the graphic organization charts of Delaware and Salt Lake counties and the several conventional organization charts are other examples that embody features of both. Many of the charts are combination charts, the most frequent being structural and position, and one (Seattle) being structural, position, and functional.

Several generalizations can be drawn from this group of charts. The first - a rather obvious one - is that the larger the staff, the more complex the structure and the more specialized the individual functions. Notice, however, that it is not always possible to be sure that valid inferences regarding complexity and specialization are being drawn from a comparison of two or more charts. A case at point is The Regional Planning Commission of Los Angeles County and the City Planning Commission of Los Angeles. According to the 1954 Municipal Yearbook, Los Angeles County Regional Planning Commission employs 90 full-time persons and the Los Angeles City Planning Commission employs 70 full-time persons. They are comparable in staff size. Judging from the organization charts alone, the city commission appears to be vastly simpler than the county commission. But this is not necessarily the case because (1) the charts are different types, the city chart being structural (with functional explanations in accompanying text), and the county chart being position; (2) the city chart represents a higher level of abstraction than the county chart.

A second generalization that can be drawn from this group of charts is that there appears to be a fairly consistent dichotomy between planning and administration.

Sometimes the zoning functions appear entirely in an administrative category, sometimes they constitute an individual section, and sometimes zoning activities are split between planning and administration. A third generalization, then, is the tendency to separate the planning and zoning functions, either within a major organizational subdivision, or into entirely different categories.

THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

PERSONNEL ORGANIZATION CHART June 30, 1953 Chart No. I

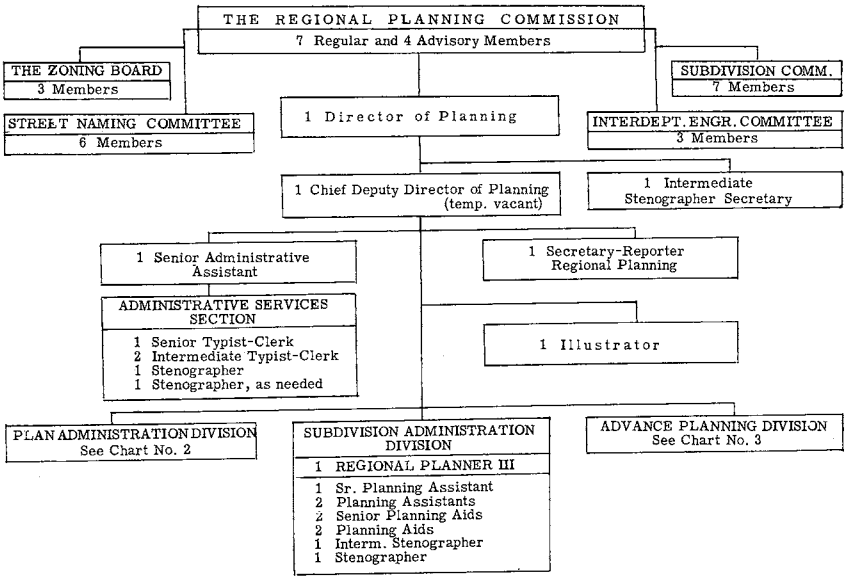
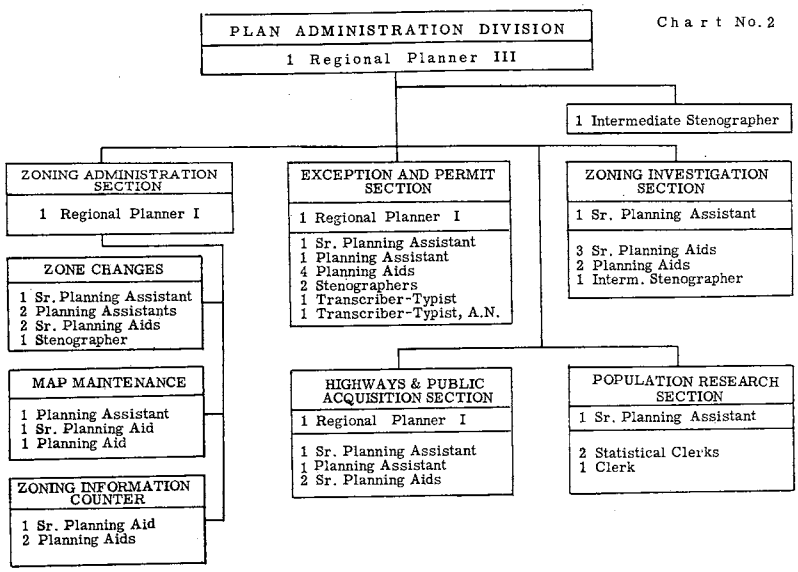
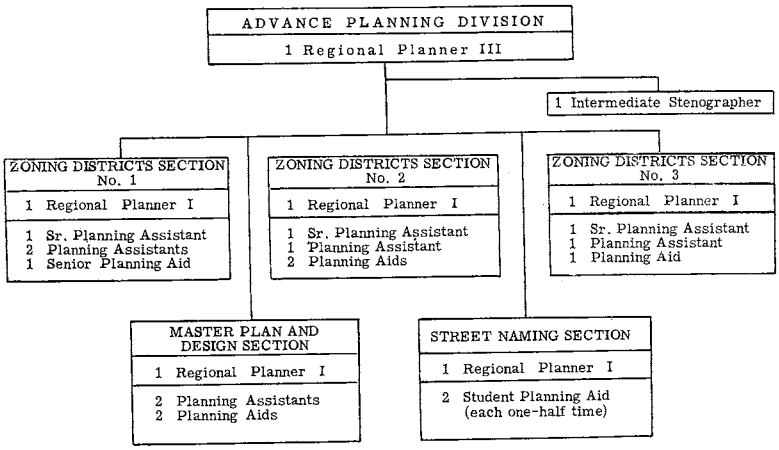


Chart No. 2



THE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

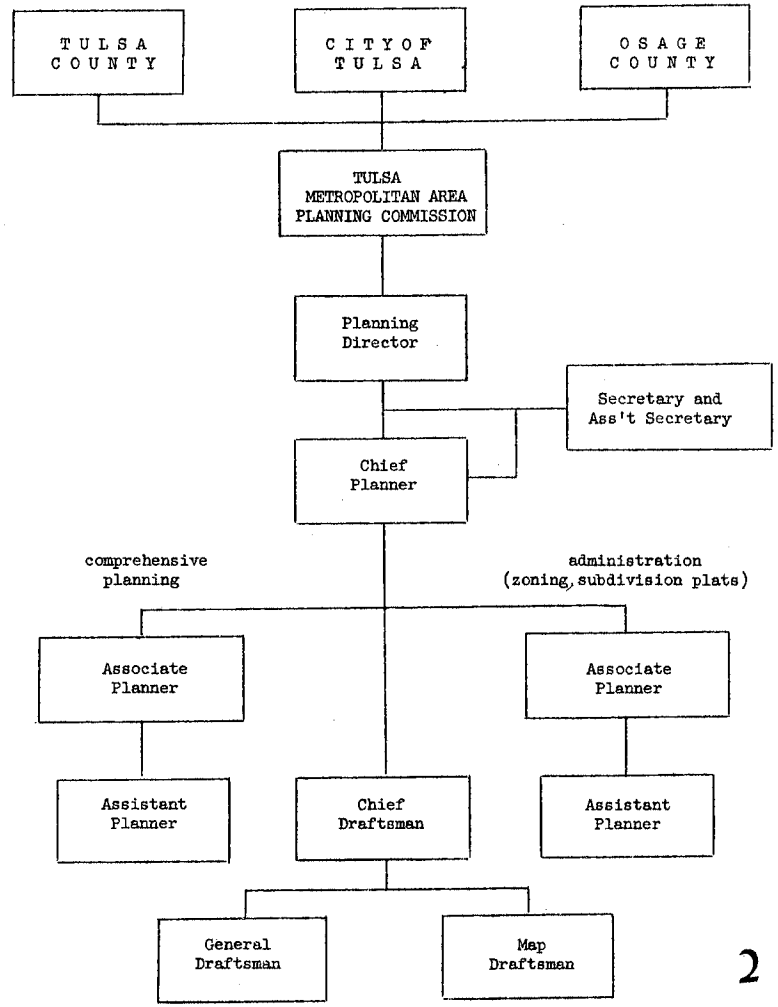
PERSONNEL ORGANIZATION CHART June 30, 1953 Chart No. 3



Source: Guiding Growth, Annual Report 1952-1953. The Regional Planning Commission of Los Angeles County and Los Angeles County Regional Planning District, California.

TULSA METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COMMISSION

ORGANIZATION



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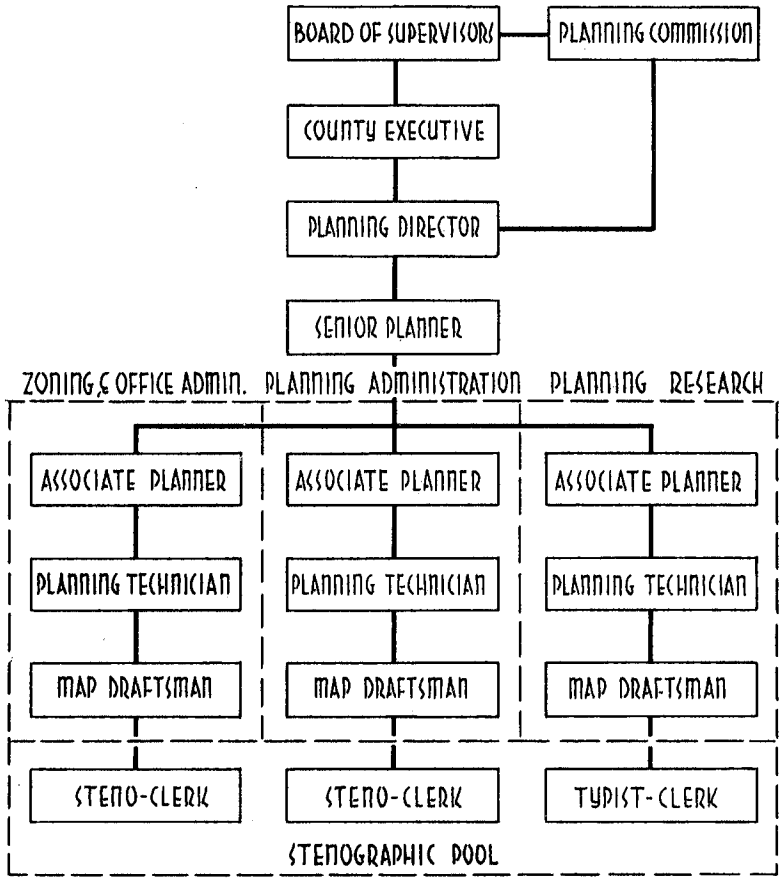


STAFF ORGANIZATION DIAGRAM

SANTA CLARA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

3

Source: Santa Clara County Planning Commission, Administrative Code, Section 300 - The Planning Commission Staff (1952). California.

Addendum to organization charts, Planning Division, City of Glendale, California

Line of authority from the Council and City Manager to the Planning Director and his staff, showing that the Director is responsible directly to the City Manager and acts as Advisor to the City Council.

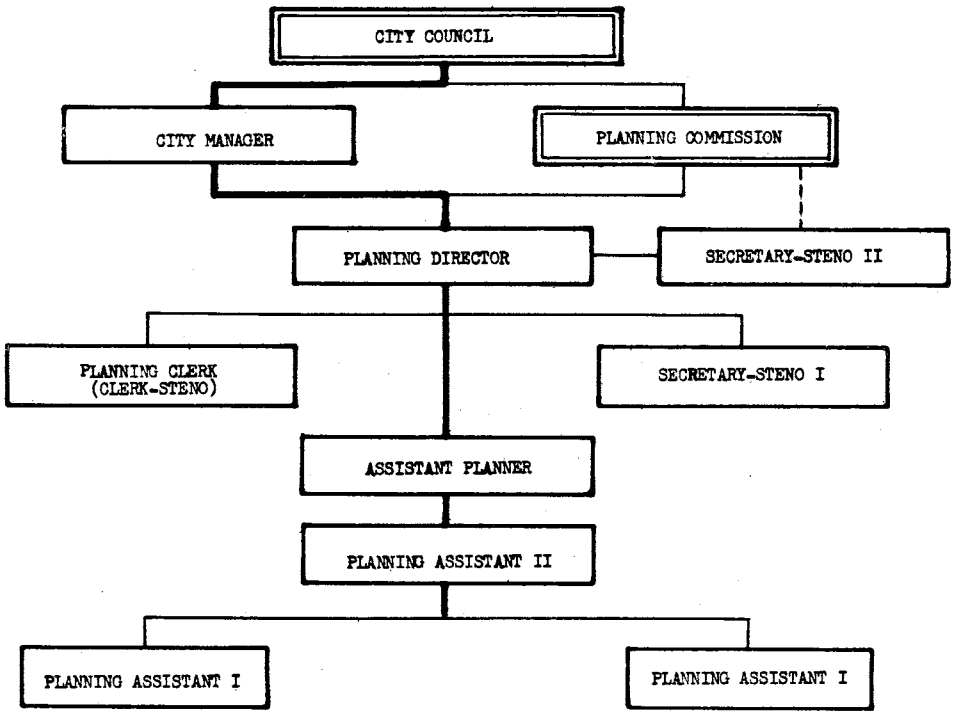
Technical and directive service performed. Dotted to show that the Planning Commission or the Zoning Board has no hiring or firing authority over the Planning Director but that he and his staff perform technical and advisory service to that Board, and the results of their actions proceed directly to the City Council, although Planning Director prepares these reports and they proceed through the Director and City Manager's office to be placed on the City Council agenda for consideration.

Secretarial service performed. Dash shows no authority of the Board over the secretary, all employees being responsible to the Planning Director, as shown by the line of authority.

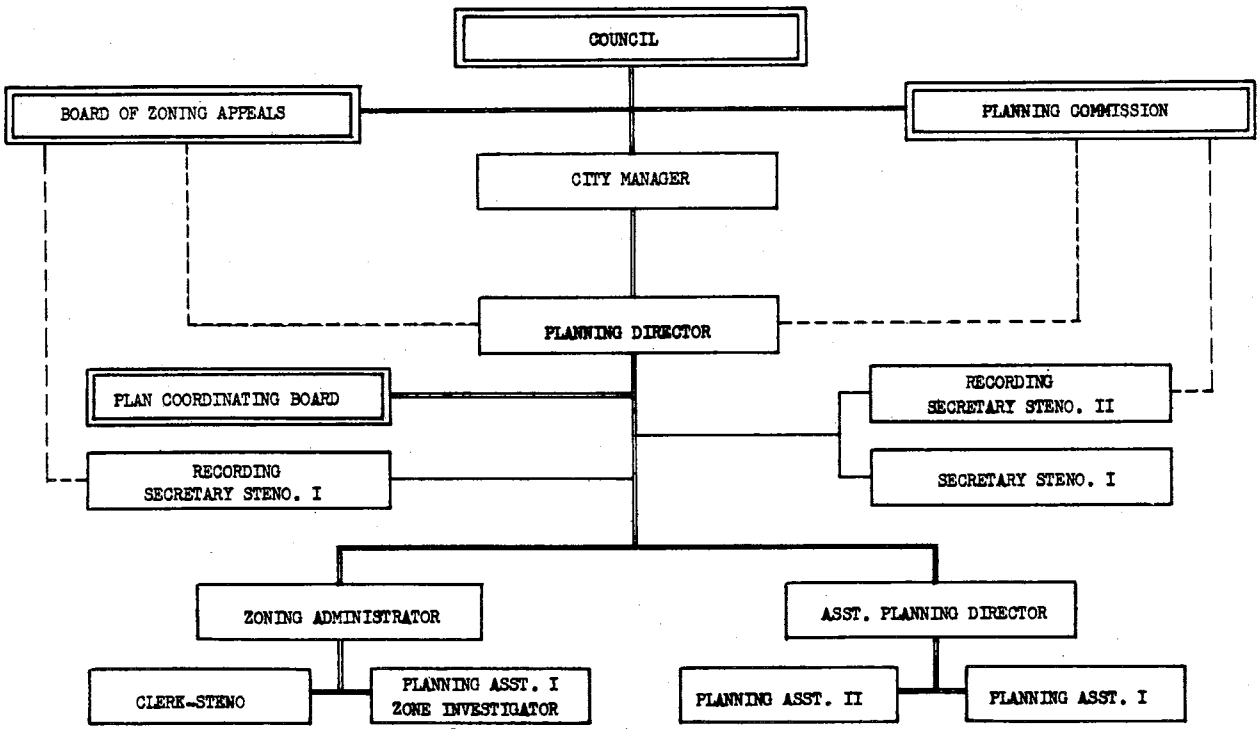
Official boards and commissions created by ordinance whose work and conclusions proceed through the Planning Director to the City Manager and City Council. (Applies to lines and boxes.)

(facing chart 4)

organization chart
1952-53

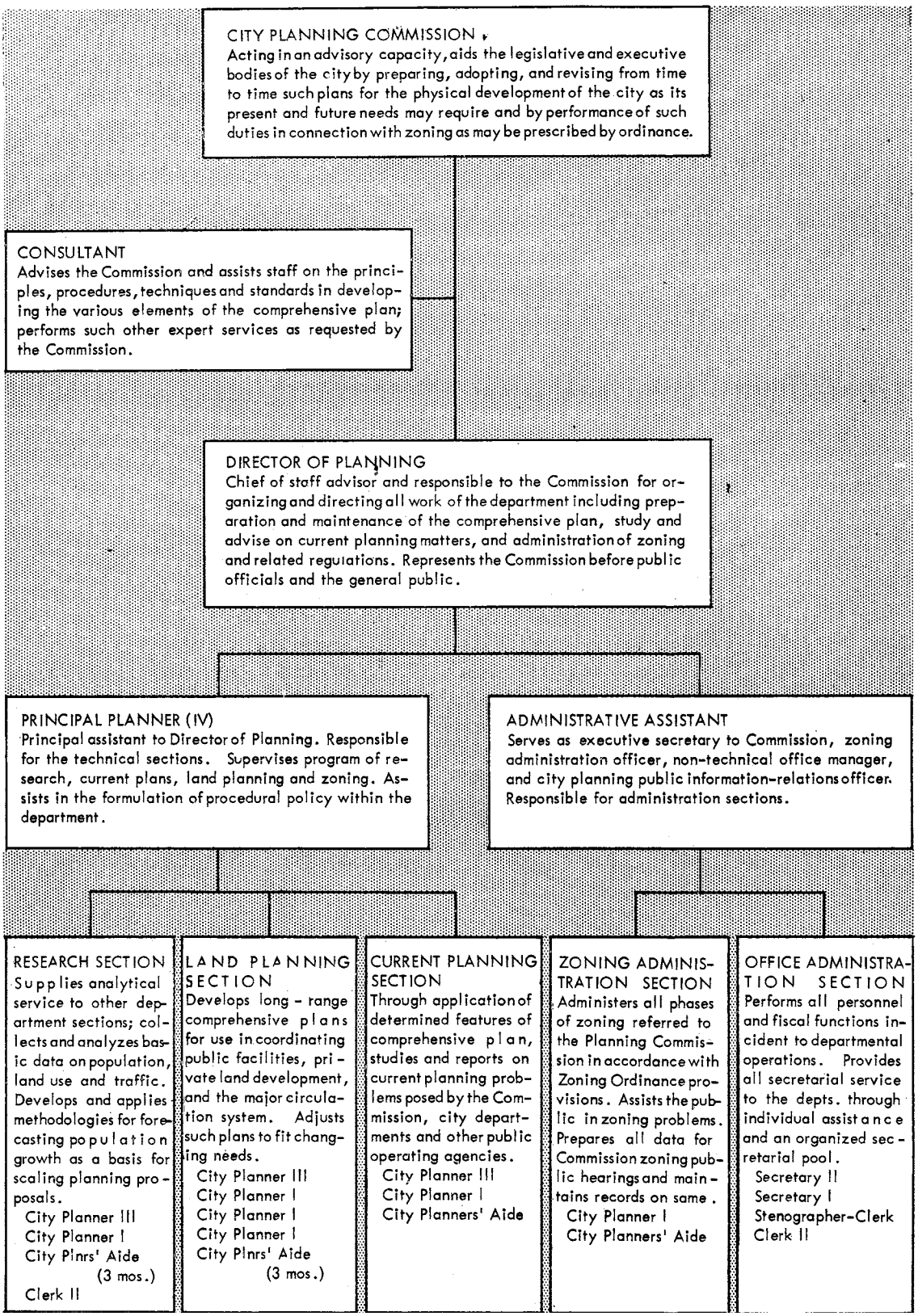


organization chart
1953-54

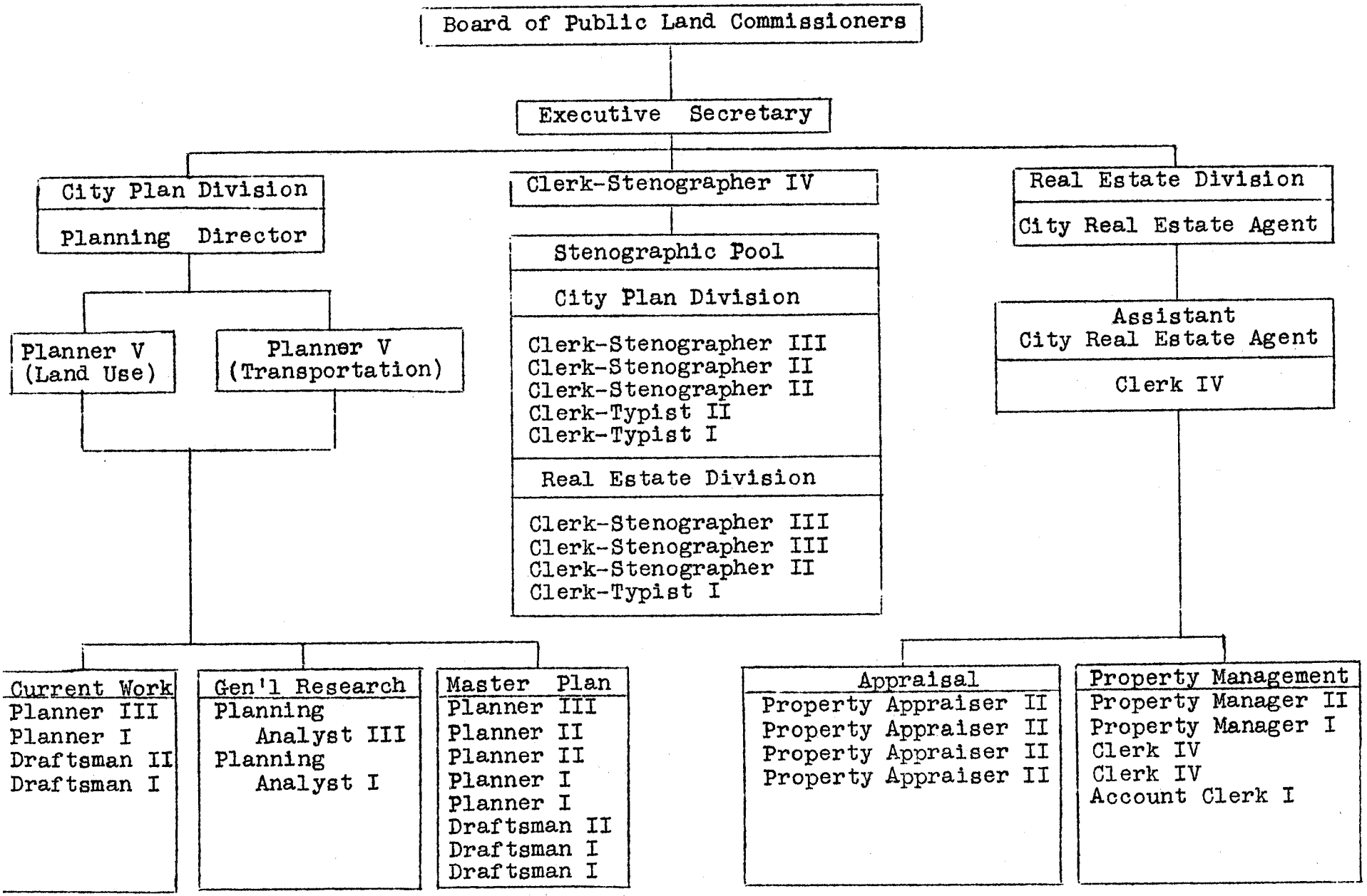


Planning Commission. Washington.

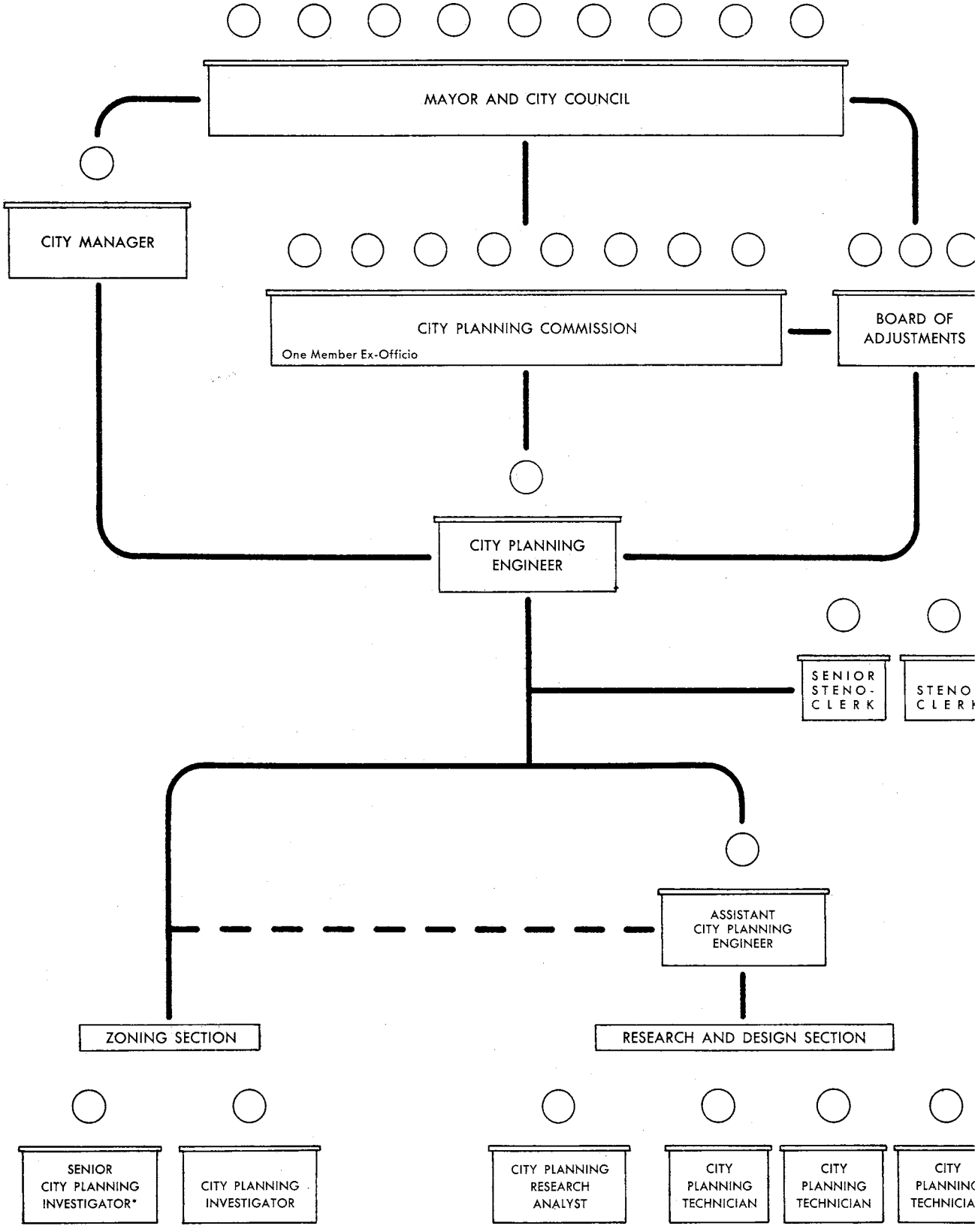
ORGANIZATION CHART



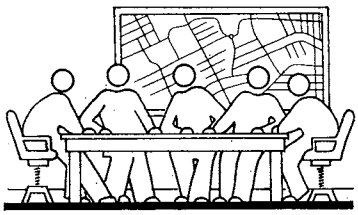
ORGANIZATION CHART



ORGANIZATION

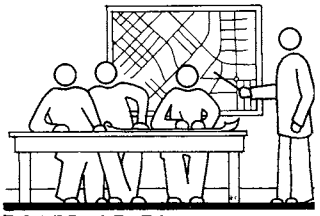


*Secretary, City Planning Commission

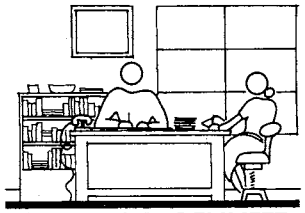


CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

SECRETARY

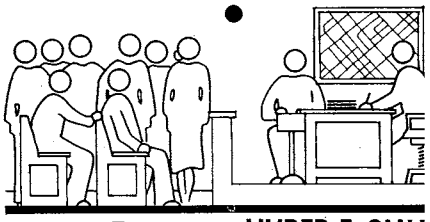


BOARD OF ZONING APPEA

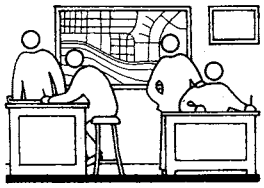


CHARLES B. BENNETT
Director of Planning

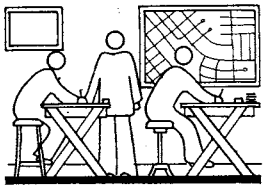
JOHN E. ROBERTS
Principal City Planner



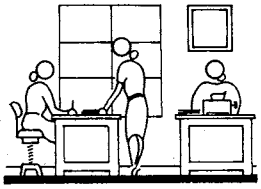
HUBER E. SMU
Zoning Administrat



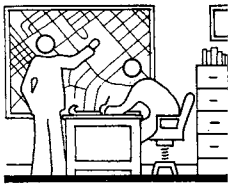
MASTER PLANNING



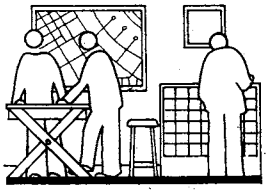
PLANNING DRAFTING



STENOGRAPHIC & CLERICAL



ZONING INVESTIGAT



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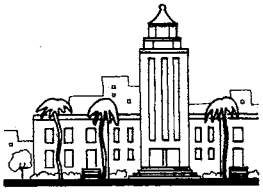
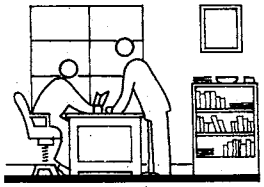
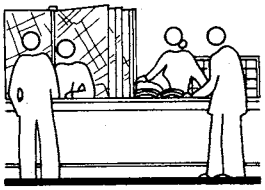


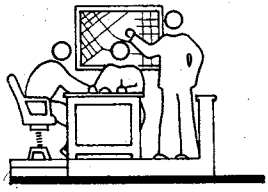
VAN NUYS BRANCH



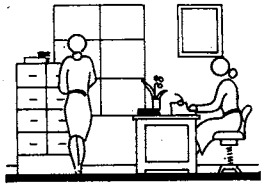
ZONING PLANNING



INFORMATION COUNTER



ZONING HEARING



STENOGRAPHIC & CLERICAL

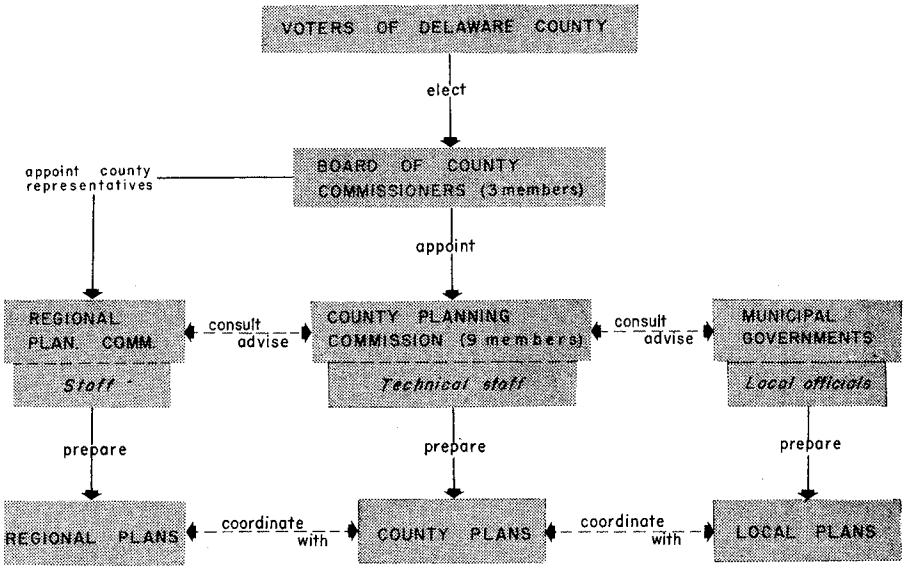
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION—advises Director of Planning in preparation of the Master Plan, and acts upon all proposed z changes, subdivision maps, city land acquisitions and sales, and rel planning matters. The Commission consists of five citizens appoir by the Mayor and approved by the City Council.

DIRECTOR OF PLANNING—has full charge and control of all work the Department of City Planning. He is Chairman of the Coordina Board (Page 44). The Director is appointed by the City Planning C mission subject to Civil Service provisions.

PLANNING DIVISION—is charged with the preparation and revis of the Master Plan; preparation of suggested amendments to the Zo Ordinance; checking and reports to the Director on all new subdivi maps, and a variety of related studies. Included on the staff are p ning engineers, architects, landscape architects, zoning planners planning analyst, draftsmen and clerical help. The Division, consi of 47 employees, is under the supervision of the Principal City Plar

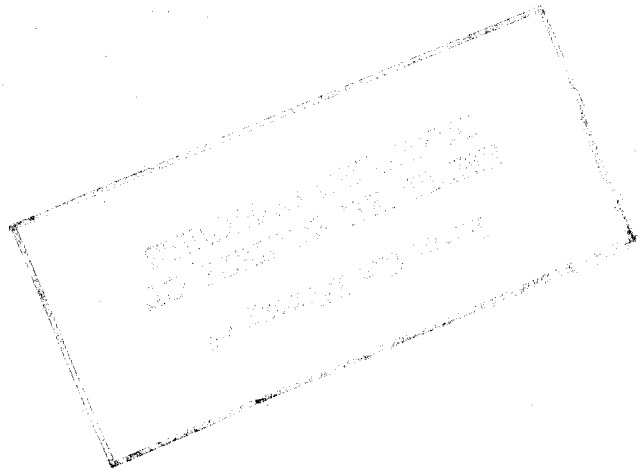
ZONING ADMINISTRATION DIVISION—investigates and renders sions on all applications for variances from the regulations and req ments of the zoning ordinance, and hears and determines appeal zoning decisions made by the Department of Building and Safety. Division, consisting of 17 employees, is under the supervision of Zoning Administrator who is appointed by the Director of Planning.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS—hears and determines appeals from rulings, decisions and determinations of the Zoning Administrator. Board consists of three members appointed by the Mayor and appr by the City Council.



Source: Report 1951. Delaware County Planning Commission, Media Pennsylvania.

ORGANIZATION

By virtue of the type of work the Planning Commission performs a continuity of its activities is of the utmost importance. To assure this continuation the State Law provides that the members of the Planning Commission be non-partisan and free to pursue its activities in an objective manner. They are appointed by the Board of County Commissioners and serve without pay. They in turn hire a staff of technically trained personnel to administer the policies the Planning Commission approves. A local group, called the "District Planning Commission," is also appointed by the County Commissioners to represent each of the various planning districts. Even more personal contact is made with each neighborhood through appointment of an advisory committee by the district planning commission.

Source: Towards A Better County, Progress Report '49-50-51. Salt Lake County Planning Commission. Utah.