

May 8, 1974

Mr. Ben F. McDonald, Jr.
Executive Director
Department of Community Affairs
P.O. Box 13166
Austin, Texas 78711

Dear Mr. McDonald:

For the past eight months I have conducted an extensive field research effort in the data-gathering phase of my master's thesis in Public Administration at Southwest Texas State University. The subject of my thesis is the use of private consulting firm studies as a critical information source by small Texas cities. I have already accomplished an intensive survey of sixty-six small Texas cities (using structured questionnaires and personal interviews) and am now in the process of surveying another sample set of eight cities.

With this research information in mind, I would like to express my complete agreement with the recent position which the Department of Community Affairs has taken (as reported in the Austin American-Statesmen, May 7, 1974) concerning comprehensive planning for small Texas cities. The first-run analysis of my research data is the factor which leads to my endorsement of the new DCA direction, for it indicates that a significant number of past com-

prehensive plans have failed to meet immediate and critical needs of small municipalities. A large majority of the interviewed city managers were much more enthusiastic (in terms of "study meeting the city's needs") towards "spot" planning than comprehensive planning. I should mention that Jim Delashaw and I discussed my thesis subject and first-run data analysis on May 2, and I have promised him a copy of my final data-analysis. My accumulated data to this date also leads me to strongly favor your new program aimed at training people "in planning so that a small city can look after its own needs in that area without looking to state planners or private consultants", although this program may draw the anger of the private consulting firms. I might add at this point that one of the recommendations that my thesis will present will be that the DCA should be the state agency location for a unified information system for Texas cities under 50,000 population. Such a system would be a storage and processing center for the data generated by accomplished critical problem-area studies conducted for small cities. The system would provide rapid access to data for cities which express a need for a problem-area study; thus, giving the cities helpful guidelines in choosing and negotiating with consulting firms to do studies or frameworks for doing their studies with " in-house " personnel. Of course, this

recommendation will be merely an academic exercise and will probably go no further than the Southwest Texas State University Library.

However, once again I would like to express my support for the direction which DCA is now taking.

Sincerely,

Charles Wayne Chapman

Charles Wayne Chapman
Assistant Instructor
Department of Political Science
Southwest Texas State University