

# OPEN SHOP GAZETTE

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In the last Open Shop Gazette, Vol. XV-07, we discussed Charter Cities and Counties and their ability to operate largely under their own charter instead of being “general law” cities and counties which operate largely under state law. The people in Vista, located in San Diego County, had voted to become a charter city and one of the driving reasons was that then they would not have to pay prevailing wages on all the projects that are funded with only city funds and Vista has a budget of \$100 million for local construction projects. At the time of that issue, there were also several other cities considering the change to charter status. (In response to that article I had a member inquire about a single source to get information on which city or counties hold charter status and as of this moment I have not been able to discover one but I continue to investigate.)

What has prompted me to bring this up again is an article in the *Orange County Register* of Friday, November 23, 2007 titled “Buena Park weighs charter status”. The city council has authorized and formed an exploratory committee to examine whether becoming a charter city could make it easier to conduct business. The city council wants to have a bit more freedom in how public works are handled. The city would like not to have to select a contractor who submits the lowest bid for an undertaking, as state law decrees.

“We’ve had some projects where the contractor didn’t get a lot of work done without the city holding their hand,” Shalice Reynoso, City Clerk said. Creating a charter would allow officials to “screen contractors for their experience and quality rather than going for the low bidder.”

The Buena Park voters would still have to approve this change of status but it could be on the ballot as early as 2008. However, there will be a battle with the State Building and Construction Trades Council which is a lobbying group for the construction unions just as there continues to be in Vista.

With more and more city and counties considering the change to Charter Status it may be easier some day to ask for a single source to discover who is NOT a charter city or county.



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