

**CITY OF ALBANY  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA  
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: November 15, 2010  
Reviewed by: BP

**SUBJECT:** Review of City Commissions, Committees, and Boards

**REPORT BY:** Beth Pollard, City Manager

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

That Council review the advisory body report recommendations, the comments from Commissions, Committees, and Boards, and the staff alternatives, and provide direction on revisions to incorporate into policies, procedures, and guidelines, on any further information needed, or other actions.

**BACKGROUND**

Last year an organizational analysis conducted by Citigate Associates recommended that Council review its advisory bodies to consider whether staff support services could be reduced. To follow up on this recommendation, a more focused study on various aspects of the City's advisory bodies was conducted earlier this year. Council reviewed this report in July, and referred it to all the advisory bodies to review and offer comments on all the recommendations.

**DISCUSSION**

In summary, the review seeks to consider changes to the composition, purpose, protocols, policies, procedures and other aspects of the City's advisory bodies in order to:

- 1) Develop good policy options for the City Council.
- 2) Create productive experiences for advisory body members.
- 3) Provide avenues for the public to advise advisory bodies on values and priorities.
- 4) Reserve for staff time those items that only staff can or should do.

Some of the themes in the review include clarity and congruence between City Council and advisory body expectations; streamlining staff support & increasing self-sufficiency; and encouraging meaningful public participation.

**STAFF ANALYSIS**

The City has incorporated principles of community engagement in its mission, vision, and goals. The review of the City's advisory bodies is an opportunity for the City Council to consider how to best engage its residents in developing policy options for the city, through appointments to advisory bodies and community access to public deliberations.

Among the ideas that have emerged from the review are:

- Regularly review advisory bodies for revisions to meet current needs, interests, and communication methods; conduct bi-annual reviews.
- Consider appointment of task forces with focused expertise or interest for short-term to develop suggestions on policy options or public processes to consider those options
- Encourage active participation of the appointees in conducting research, analysis, and development of policy alternatives
- Use new technology to record meeting deliberations, such as digital audio recordings and video broadcasting, and streamline preparation of the written record
- Provide training for appointees in group decision making, public deliberations, chairing meetings, and open meeting and other applicable laws
- Encourage advisory groups to try new ways to encourage public information and participation in their deliberations, such as forums, small group discussions, meeting in neighborhoods, different room configurations, dialogues, etc.

Attached are summaries of the advisory body report recommendations and comments from the advisory bodies especially where they vary from the report recommendations. Staff has provided some possible alternatives that seek to incorporate principles from both the report recommendations and advisory body comments.

The terms of the current Council appointees expire at the end of 2010. Staff recommends that changes affecting the existence, composition, and key purposes of the advisory bodies be determined prior to Council completing its pending round of appointments for the expiring terms. The priority decisions primarily concern the Social & Economic Justice Commission and Sustainability Committee, as well as the Waterfront Committee and Parks & Recreation Commission.

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT**

Among the anticipated outcomes of the changes is to create positive avenues for the community to participate in policy advice as appointees or members of the public.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Reduction in staff time allocated to attending meetings, conducting research, preparing reports and minutes, and other support activities can be allocated to other City projects and programs and implementation of policy direction.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Upon receipt of Council direction, staff will return to the City Council with any required changes to ordinances, resolutions, or other policy documents, and will incorporate changes into the Commissions, Committees and Boards Handbook.

### **Attachments**

1. Summary of advisory body comments
2. Communications from advisory bodies
3. Summaries of purpose, composition and functions of advisory bodies
4. “Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Albany’s Commissions, Committees, and Boards”, dated June 1, 2010, by Drennen Shelton

