

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

Agenda Date: December 6, 2010
Reviewed by: BP

SUBJECT: Revisions to City Commissions, Committees, and Boards

REPORT BY: Beth Pollard, City Manager

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- 1) That Council approve Resolution No. 2010 - 63, which modifies the composition of the Arts Committee, Charter Review Committee, Sustainability Committee, Community Media Access Committee, Waterfront Committee, and the Social & Economic Justice Commission to reduce, discontinue, or add at-large appointments by the City Council and the Albany Unified School District Board of Trustees; discontinues the Youth Task Force; and modifies or clarifies certain protocols for advisory bodies.
- 2) That Council implement training expectations for appointees, beginning with a training session the evening of Monday, January 31, 2011.

BACKGROUND

At the meeting of November 15, 2010, the City Council received comments from its advisory bodies on recommended changes to composition, policies, procedures and other aspects of the City's commissions, committees, and boards. The Council discussed the comments, provided direction to staff, and scheduled action for its next regular meeting. The recommended actions are contained in the attached resolution, and cover areas including composition of some of the bodies, as well as guidance on meeting schedules, handling agenda items, use of staff time, and reports to City Council.

The terms of the current Council Member appointees are due to expire December 31, 2010. Council Members may reappoint members (in which case no new application is required), or select new appointees. The new appointees will begin service effective January 1, 2011, or thereafter upon appointment by the Council Member.

DISCUSSION

The changes to the advisory body composition are:

- o Discontinue at-large appointments of the City Council to the Charter Review Committee (2 seats), Sustainability Committee (1 seat), and Waterfront Committee (2 seats).

- Discontinue the at-large appointments of the Albany Unified School District Board of Education to the Social & Economic Justice Commission and the Sustainability Committee. Its at-large seats on the Parks & Recreation Commission would remain.
- Add up to two seats recommended to the City Council for appointment to the Community Media Access Committee by the School District Board of Education, if the appointments will strengthen District-City partnerships and District activity for KALB - the Albany PEG (Public-Education-Community Access) channel.
- Discontinues the Youth Task Force. Future task forces will be established on topics as needed.

Clarifications and/or revisions to advisory body protocols in the resolution are summarized below. These suggested clarifications or revisions to advisory body protocols are intended to establish expectations for both appointees and staff.

- 1) Any member of a commission, committee or board may request an item be placed on an upcoming agenda, with scheduling subject to availability of meeting time.
- 2) Commission, committees, and boards should be cognizant of and prudent with the use of staff time. Examples include members performing research and preparing minutes, or expecting brief minutes, whenever feasible. Appointees to committees are asked to work directly on projects, programs, community outreach, or other aspects of the committee's work plan.
- 3) Except as otherwise provided for (e.g. Planning & Zoning Commission), regular meetings of the advisory bodies shall occur no more frequently than monthly. Special meetings and subcommittee meetings may be scheduled from time to time, with staff in attendance on an as-needed basis. The regular meeting schedule of the Social & Economic Justice Commission shall be quarterly.
- 4) Items referred to advisory bodies by the City Council shall take priority over other business.
- 5) To provide the City Council with a full picture of issues, reports from advisory bodies should include alternatives, advantages and disadvantages, and other analysis.
- 6) Advisory bodies may request the Council agendaize issues, ideas, and recommendations. As is the case with all other City Council agenda items, those requests may be placed on a City Council agenda by any member of the Council, the City Manager, or the City Attorney.
- 7) Advisory bodies are encouraged to present issues or ideas on items they are considering to the Council in advance of extensive analysis or development of recommendations. In this way, the Council has the opportunity to provide direction on its interest, ideas, and concerns before completion of the body's work.

- 8) Regular meetings of advisory bodies shall not be scheduled to conflict with one another. (Currently the Arts Committee and the Waterfront Committee meet on the same night) While special meetings may conflict from time to time, efforts should be made to minimize those conflicts, especially on issues of significant community interest.
- 9) The City Council will next review the advisory body composition and protocols in two years.

Other ideas for advisory bodies and staff to explore, which are not included in the resolution, include:

E-mail: Set up an email address for the advisory body, to be checked by the Chair or his/her designee. The Chair or designee would need to exercise caution in complying with open meeting laws (Brown Act).

Audio: Make MP3 audio recording of meetings for posting on the City website.

Visual: Per Council policy, each commission, committee or board may request the occasional video recording/broadcasting of a meeting to show on KALB and the City's website.

Public engagement: Conduct meetings in different formats to encourage dialogue between members and the public, and to make meetings more inviting for the public to attend. Ideas include setting the chairs in a circle format (recently done by the Parks & Recreation Commission); creating a "fishbowl" where applicants and commissioners engage in conversation with one another for the purpose of better understanding the project/proposal, followed by public comments (recently done by Planning & Zoning Commission); conducting neighborhood meetings to focus on their interests and ideas (Voices to Vision; Parks & Recreation Commission on parks)

Time limits: Place time guidelines or limits on agenda items that provide sufficient time for discussion while also moving the meeting along.

Training

Lastly, the advisory bodies suggested that they could benefit from training about the Brown Act, group meeting process, and related topics. Staff previously suggested a training session for the evening of January 31, which will be after the appointments have been made, the Chairs and Vice Chairs generally have been elected for the year, and being a fifth Monday would not conflict with other meetings. Staff recommends proceeding with that training for appointees, which would be in the Council Chamber, at a tentative time of 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm (light supper food provided).

The training would be interactive, and cover items such as the Brown Act, group decision making, conducting effective meetings, and other issues of concern to appointees. Staff will contact current appointees to generate their questions and ideas about topics to cover.

Appointees who are unable to attend will be asked to view a video of the training and/or other materials. Each commission and committee will be asked to follow up with an agenda item shortly thereafter to reinforce key concepts and take steps to implement any changes if needed.

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.

Attachments

Resolution No. 2010-63