

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

Agenda Date: November 18, 2024

**SUBJECT:** Review of Advisory Bodies to the City Council

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**SUMMARY**

The action before the Council is to conduct a review of the existing advisory bodies to the City Council to identify any changes in advance of the next 2-year term.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

That the Council conduct a review of the advisory bodies to the City Council to consider sunseting or changes to existing advisory bodies, creation of new advisory bodies, and provide direction to staff on such and any next steps including the possibility of establishing Committees of the City Council in lieu of advisory bodies.

**BACKGROUND**

Beginning in 2010, the Council has conducted a review of the Advisory Bodies to the City Council every two years. In 2016 the Council authorized the review of advisory bodies to be conducted on an “as needed basis”. The most recent review by the City Council was conducted in November 2022.

**DISCUSSION**

As defined in the Advisory Body Handbook, the City Council’s philosophy regarding Advisory Bodies to the City Council is as follows:

*The primary purpose of Albany’s Advisory Bodies is to provide judicious advice to the City Council. Advisory bodies can build community consensus for proposals or projects, review written materials, facilitate study of critical issues, guide the implementation of programs, and assess the alternatives regarding issues of community concern...*

*The City Council not only considers comments provided by the Advisory Bodies, but also those of staff, appointed City officials, members of the public, and others. There will be times when the City Council will not act upon advisory body input. It is important to recognize that this is not a rejection of the integrity of advice, but an inevitable part of the decision-making process.*

The City currently has 9 Advisory Bodies to the City Council as included in the table below. In addition, the Board of Police and Fire Pension Fund Commissioners is defined within the City’s Charter and is tasked specifically with review of the investments and stability of the retirement plan for public safety employees who were hired prior to July 1, 1971.

| <b>Advisory Body</b>                          | <b>Establishing Action</b> |
|---|----------------------------|
| Arts Committee                                | Resolution                 |
| Climate Action Committee                      | Resolution                 |
| Financial Advisory Committee                  | Resolution                 |
| Housing Advisory Commission                   | Resolution                 |
| Parks Recreation & Open Space Commission      | Ordinance                  |
| Planning & Zoning Commission                  | Charter/Ordinance          |
| Policing Commission                           | Resolution                 |
| Racial Inclusivity & Social Equity Commission | Resolution                 |
| Transportation Commission                     | Ordinance                  |

Review of Advisory Bodies

The City Council will begin making appointments to advisory bodies in December for the 2-year term of December 2024 – December 2026. It is recommended that the Council make any changes to the advisory bodies in advance of this upcoming 2-year term to help ensure communication and outreach for the upcoming term is up to date regarding opportunities for prospective applicants.

Suggested criteria for this review include the following:

**1) Sunsetting - Should any of the advisory bodies be sunset at this time?**

Sunsetting may occur for a variety of reasons such as lack of effectiveness; topic area is no longer workable to the particular structure/forum of an advisory body; topic area has been fully implemented at the staff level; etc. Additionally, consideration is also given to ensuring ample resources to staff all advisory bodies effectively.

As noted in the table above, advisory bodies have been established via ordinance or resolution of the City Council. Advisory bodies established by resolution may be sunset as part of this

agenda item by minute action of the Council. Changes to advisory bodies established by ordinance would require an update via ordinance of the Council.

**2) Are there opportunities for further focus at the City Council level?**

As an alternative to an advisory body, certain priority topic areas currently assigned to advisory bodies may benefit from more direct engagement by Members of the Council. Two primary options include Ad Hoc City Council Committees (short-term) or Standing City Council Committees (ongoing). Any recommendations for action from this form of committee would be referred back to the full City Council for consideration.

Ad Hoc Committees of the City Council

From time to time the Council has utilized an ad hoc committee approach for items that have required additional focus at the Council level to further develop a policy-related concept or conduct more in-depth research on a time-sensitive topic. This type of committee is typically one that is shorter term in duration, and usually involves a specific focus area or work item.

Standing Committees of the City Council

An option that many cities utilize is the establishment of standing City Council Committees. Standing City Council Committees would be comprised of representatives of the Council (maximum of 2 Council Members) and meet in compliance with the Brown Act. This type of committee may review different policy initiatives, receive reports and provide an opportunity for more detailed discussion as helpful for citywide interest.

With respect to the expressed priorities of the City Council Strategic Plan and associated fundamental core city services, possible focus areas for Council Committees could potentially include but are not limited to budget/audit, public safety and resiliency, community connectivity and inclusivity.

Should the Council wish to pursue establishment of any standing committees, it is recommended that direction be provided to staff on the focus area of the potential committee and staff will develop a draft framework for further consideration by the Council at a subsequent meeting.

**3) Charge - Are changes to the charge of any advisory bodies needed?**

Changes could involve updates to the establishing resolution/ordinance to provide additional clarity. Changes could also include updates that aim on focusing/streamlining the charge of an advisory body to help encourage effectiveness.

**4) Subject – Are there new priorities that may benefit from advisory body input?**

In relation to item 3 above, this could include establishing a new advisory body or evolving an existing advisory body if there are subject areas confronting the City that the Council finds could benefit from an advisory body perspective.

**5) Appointments – Is the appointment process, number/type of appointments effective?**

The typical appointment process involves individual Council Members appointing applicants to each advisory body, and some appointments made by the Council as a Whole.

The number and type of appointments was recently addressed by the Council and enacted as part of the current term. Aside from the City's Housing Advisory Commission, Planning & Zoning Commission, Transportation Commission, and Financial Advisory Committee, each advisory body now includes seven seats with five of the member seats appointed by each of the Council members, individually. The other two member seats are appointed by City Council as a Whole (one for a high school student and one for a high school student or an adult who is affiliated with students).

#### Student/Student-Affiliated Appointments

The appointment of students/student-affiliated members to most of the City's advisory bodies was implemented as part of the current 2-year term. Staff conducted outreach at the local high schools to promote the opportunity and a robust group of students submitted applications for appointment.

Staff held check-ins with these members throughout the 2-year term to gauge overall experience in serving on an advisory body and to provide any guidance as helpful. Overall, student feedback indicated that serving on an advisory body was a valuable experience. At times, some felt that the content was not directly relevant. In addition, some expressed that the procedural approach to meetings took time to understand.

It should also be noted that there have been some instances where a student may need to resign prior to the conclusion of the 2-year term. This has typically been when a student is traveling to college. While this could potentially impact quorum from time to time, it is likely unavoidable and may simply need to be an understandable and supported transition for students. Additionally, vacancies can be addressed on a case-by-case basis depending on the amount of time remaining in the 2-year term.

### **6) Status reports to the City Council**

Existing practice has included development of workplans by the advisory bodies. During the current term, work plans were developed by newly established advisory bodies, and all advisory bodies provided periodic status reports to the Council. In addition, the goals of the City Council Strategic Plan have been utilized to help guide and prioritize work of the advisory bodies. It is advised that the following language updating expectations for status reports be incorporated into the Advisory Body Handbook which serves as the overall guidance document for Advisory Bodies:

All Advisory Bodies shall provide annual status reports to the City Council to summarize progress over the 2-year term. The staff liaison and Chair shall coordinate on the status reports. Advisory Bodies shall prioritize work to focus on helping further the Strategic Plan goals identified by the City Council.

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

It is estimated that staff time to support each advisory consists of approximately 20 hours per month for primarily administrative functions. Additional staff time is needed to address questions raised, develop presentations, staff meetings, and address other issues that may arise from time to time. In addition, staff time is utilized for each meeting to conduct audio/visual support and recording.

## **NEXT STEPS**

As standard practice, staff will initiate the following work in advance of the next 2-year term.

Local Appointments List (CA Government Code 54972) – this list is “an appointments list of all regular and ongoing boards, commissions, and committees which are appointed by the legislative body of the local agency” and includes a list of all advisory bodies whose members serve at the pleasure of the legislative body, and the necessary qualifications for each position with the appointive terms which will expire during the next calendar year, with the name of the incumbent appointee, the date of appointment, and the date the term expires”. This list is posted in December for the upcoming 2-year term at City facilities and on the City’s website.

Outreach regarding the upcoming 2-year term is also conducted through a variety of sources including ongoing posting on the City’s website, in the citywide eNews, flyers posted at city facilities, and via notify emails that are sent throughout the application period. In addition, outreach is conducted via social media, and in coordination with local community organizations as well as the local high schools.