

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

Agenda date: 12/15/08  
Reviewed by: BP

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

**Report by:** Beth Pollard, City Administrator

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

1. Review the charges and general composition of the City's commissions, committees, and boards, and if any changes are desired, refer the change to that group for comment and to staff for recommendation back to Council.
2. Consider reorganizing the Social & Economic Justice Commission and the Sustainability Committee into one commission.
3. Authorize establishing an Economic Development Working Group for a period of up to six months, and appoint two Council Members to the group.

**BACKGROUND**

The City has 11 commissions, committees, and boards (hereafter called "commissions"), as follows:

- Arts Committee
- Albany Library Board
- Charter Review Committee
- Civil Service Board
- Community Media Access Committee
- Parks & Recreation Commission
- Planning & Zoning Commission
- Social & Economic Justice Commission
- Sustainability Committee
- Traffic & Safety Commission
- Waterfront Committee

The commissions are established by charter, ordinance, resolution, or minute order. Most commissions are comprised primarily of individual Councilmember appointees, with some also having one or two members appointed at-large by the full Council, and some with student and/or adult appointees from the Albany School District Board of Trustees. Recently established commissions have specified dates for Council review: Social & Economic Justice Commission (SEJC) (January, 2007); Sustainability Committee

(January, 2010), and Community Media Access Committee (2013, and every five years thereafter). The SEJC was not reviewed in 2007.

## **DISCUSSION**

By periodically reviewing the commission list, purposes, and general composition (i.e. not the individual members but how they are appointed) of the City's commissions, Council has the opportunity to consider whether changes are needed. Changes to consider include:

- Is there overlap or redundancy in any of the groups
- Can there be any restructuring to be more efficient with staff time and other resources. What is the financial and staffing position of the city to provide support for the commissions.
- Is the size of the commission appropriate to its purpose; commissions that are too small may not have a healthy spectrum of ideas; commissions that are too large may be unwieldy in making decisions
- Does the general composition suit the purpose. Do at-large members appointed by the Council assist in the purpose. Is the commission served by having appointees from the School Board. Do youth appointees contribute and receive a good experience from the service.

A more convenient time to review these questions is prior to the City Council election and the subsequent turnover in appointments. Therefore, staff recommends that in the future, this issue be agendaized no later than the month before the election with advance notice to commissions that the review will take place so that they may comment.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **SEJC & Sustainability**

When it came to staff's attention that the SEJC was to have been reviewed in January 2007, a discussion of that review was placed on SEJC's November 2008 agenda. The discussion was not completed and was continued to its December 10 agenda.

Staff has reviewed the resolution establishing the SEJC (attached) and notes that the purpose encompassed environmental issues. Further, the definition of "sustainability" typically includes the so-called three "E"'s: Environment, Social Equity, and Economy as being inter-related. By combining the issues of social and economic justice with environmental sustainability onto one commission, the City would have the full spectrum of sustainability considered in one body. It would have the further benefit of being more efficient with staff time.

If Council is interested in pursuing the reorganization, staff would work with the two groups and prepare a recommended resolution for the regular meeting of January 21, 2009.

### Arts Committee

The Arts Committee is the largest commission, with two appointees from each Councilmember and one appointee from the School Board. The Committee discussed the issue of its composition at its December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting and has advised that it is satisfied with the status quo.

### Traffic & Safety Commission

Staff is exploring with the Traffic & Safety Commission whether a modification in composition is warranted at this time. The Commission is now comprised of five members: one appointee from each Councilmember.

### Economic Development

In June 2008, the City hired Neil Mayer and Darlene Rios Drapkin to assist in economic development strategies. Staff would like to agendize an economic development workshop for the City Council on Monday, January 5, 2009, so that Council can review the findings to date and engage in discussion on possible strategies.

In the meantime, staff recommends that an Albany Economic Development Working Group be established to help the City be more dynamically engaged on these issues and have direct and regular working relationships with the involved parties. The initial composition of this group would be the City's economic development consultants, the Executive Director of the Solano Avenue Association, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, two Councilmembers, the Sustainability Committee Chair or designee, the Arts Committee Chair or designee, and staff members on an as-needed basis. Assistant City Administrator Judy Lieberman would be the staff liaison. The proposal is that the group would meet for up to six months with a report back to Council at that time.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT**

The recommendation to reorganize the SEJC and Sustainability Committee into one commission will help insure that the full spectrum of social, economic, and environmental sustainability are considered together.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is staff time required for every commission, at the minimum in preparing agendas, attending meetings, and writing minutes. Depending on the commission, there also can be staff research and reports required. There is also administrative overhead involved in the appointment process, records maintenance, and other support services.

### Attachments

1. SEJC Resolution
2. Sustainability Committee Resolution
3. Descriptions of each commission

