Memorandum 14-007 Recommendations for Reducing Meetings of Commissions and Committees

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TO: MAYOR WYTHE AND HOMER CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JO JOHNSON, CITY CLERK

THROUGH: WALT WREDE, CITY MANAGER

DATE: JANUARY 6, 2014

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDUCING MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS

In an effort to reduce staff time spent preparing for and attending meetings, Mayor Wythe requested that we look at the current commissions and committees to see if there were ways to reduce the number of meetings. Too many commissions and committees often result in inefficiency, lower staff productivity, overlapping jurisdictions, and increased bureaucracy.

These are the current boards/commissions provided for in code:

Library Advisory Board
Advisory Planning Commission
Economic Development Advisory Commission
Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission
Port and Harbor Advisory Commission

Initial discussion among City staff indicates that some of the advisory Boards and Commissions could function as effectively with revised schedules that could be organized seasonally and the duties of other standing and special committees could be eliminated or absorbed by another group. Some of the initial suggestions are listed below for your review.

An example for a seasonal schedule is that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission could forego November – March meetings and complete business in the other seven months. Alternately, summer meetings could be canceled since this is the busiest time for parks staff. Meeting dates could be changed to the first Thursday of the month to allow more lead time before the summer season.

Other groups who participate in department development of policies and budget or don't have larger issues presently at hand could reduce to quarterly meetings, like the Library Advisory Board. The Board was established to assist with the fundraising, budget process, and policy making for the library.

Advisory bodies that don't have specific tasks defined and/or budgets to accomplish them could convene on an as needed basis at the request of the City Council, like the Economic Development Advisory Commission.

These are the current Standing Committees:

Lease Committee (in code)
Permanent Fund Committee (in code)
Public Arts Committee (in code)
Transportation Advisory Committee (by resolution)

The Transportation Advisory Committee was originally formed as the Road Standards Committee to make recommendations to Council relating to road standards. This was at a time when there were many road improvement districts underway. Most of the organizational items have been resolved through the Transportation Plan and Roads Design Standard adopted. It was suggested this committee could be dissolved and the Advisory Planning Commission could address road standards when needed.

The Lease Committee is another group suggested for dissolution. There is the potential for conflicts of interest on leases and special interest agendas with public members. Committee members receive limited information due to the confidential nature of the application and review of leases by a committee with public members tends to politicize the process. Fiduciary responsibility to manage public lands and assets rests with the Executive Branch. It is recommended we go back to the old method.

The Public Arts Committee and Permanent Fund Committee have a specific purpose as outlined in code and quarterly meetings allow those groups to conduct their business.

These are the current special subcommittees:

Karen Hornaday Park

Port and Harbor Improvement Committee

Employee Committee

Port and Harbor Building Task Force

The Karen Hornaday Park Committee is primarily comprised of Parks and Recreation Advisory Commissioners and their business could be conducted as needed in a Worksession prior to the Commission's meeting.

The Port and Harbor Improvement Committee and Port and Harbor Building Task Force were formed by resolution of the City Council and will terminate upon completion of the projects from which they were formed.

The Employee Committee is comprised of city staff and meets as needed.

Please consider the following recommendations:

Form no new committees, subcommittees, or task forces without Council approval.

Amend advisory bodies' bylaws to state that NO special meetings of boards, commissions, committees, or task forces can be scheduled without Council approval (with the exception of the Advisory Planning Commission due to time constraints within the code). This would encourage participation in the regularly scheduled meetings and alleviate a significant amount of staff time. Often we have a commission or committee that does not have a quorum for a regularly scheduled meeting so they schedule a special meeting. This results in added staff time notifying all parties to reach a consensus on meeting dates, increased advertising costs, and preparation of duplicate packets.

RECOMMENDATION: Discuss and direct staff to bring forward an ordinance or resolution to make the changes.

Fiscal Note: N/A

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