

SULTAN CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

ITEM NO: A -4

DATE: March 8, 2007

SUBJECT: Proposed Council Subcommittee Meetings, Retreats, and Town Meetings

CONTACT PERSON: Deborah Knight, City Administrator *D. Knight*

SUMMARY:

The Council has expressed interest in scheduling certain types of community and Council subcommittee meetings in advance. The purpose of prescheduled meetings is to provide opportunities for in-depth understanding of City issues prior to bringing the issues forward for discussion by the full Council.

The purpose of this staff report is to propose meeting dates and times for Council subcommittee meetings, retreats, and town meetings. The City Council can choose to approve the entire proposed schedule, select specific meeting dates and times, or suggest alternatives.

This staff report recommends:

1. Reducing the number of Council subcommittees from five (5) committees meeting monthly to two (2) committees meeting monthly. There are enough issues requiring Council attention that monthly meetings are necessary. This proposal is intended to streamline the policy making process and reduce the possibility of burn-out.
2. Adding one full-day retreat on Saturday, June 23rd or two-half day retreats one on June 23rd and one on October 13th to allow a full discussion of the 2008 budget goals and policies, and other topics as identified by the City Council.
3. Adding two Town Meeting dates one on Thursday, May 31st and one on Thursday, November 29th.

Council Subcommittees

Council Subcommittees are working groups within the Council that focus on particular areas of concern and interest to the Council and the community.

The City Council Rules of Procedure include the provision for Council Committees. Standing committees include Government Services, Public Safety, Community Development Public Works, and Policy. There are no Ad Hoc Council committees at this time.

Although the Council's Rules of Procedures do not specifically address Council subcommittees, many elected bodies divide into subcommittees to study specific issues. Elected bodies may have both standing and ad hoc subcommittees. Subcommittees generally facilitate the decision-making process by allowing Councilmembers time to understand a project in greater detail.

Normally, if a council subcommittee meeting is only to discuss an issue and report back to the full council with a recommendation, then the meeting is not a formal meeting under the Public Records Act and minutes do not have to be kept. If the subcommittee is taking public testimony or has been delegated to take action on behalf of the council, then it is subject to the Act.

Current Subcommittee Structure

Currently, the Council has five standing committees:

1. Government Svc – finance, personnel, technology, legal
Members: Blair, Champeaux, Seehuus, Slawson (A)
2nd Quarter Topics: Financial policies, CIP, 2008 Budget
2. Public Safety – law enforcement, emergency services, school programs
Members: Champeaux, Seehuus, Slawson, Wiediger (A)
2nd Quarter Topics: Contract police services, police fleet replacement policy, community policing
3. Community Dev. – land use/zoning, planning, economic development,
Members: Boyd, Flower, Slawson, Blair (A)
2nd Quarter Topics: Comprehensive Plan update, quasi-judicial role, land use priorities, development code update
4. Public Works – utilities, streets, parks, grants
Members: Blair, Boyd, Flower, Wiediger (A)
2nd Quarter Topics: WWTP upgrade, capital improvement plan
5. Policy -

Generally each Councilmember serves on two committees with some Councilmembers serving on three committees. Given the number of possible topics that staff have

identified for the upcoming year, this subcommittee structure results in some councilmembers and staff having two or more meetings each week for each month of the year.

Attachment A outlines a possible schedule of meetings for the months of April, May and June.

Alternative Subcommittee Structure

After reviewing the schedule and time commitment to attend and support committee meetings, City staff recommend combining the five standing committees into two committees.

The subcommittees would meet monthly either on the same day as the council meetings (second and fourth Thursdays) or on alternate Thursdays (first and third).

Given the current subcommittee membership, staff developed the following two committee structure:

1. Government Services and Public Safety (first or second Thursday)

Members: Blair, Champeaux, Seehuus, Slawson, Wiediger (A)

2. Community Development and Public Works (third or fourth Thursday)

Members: Boyd, Flower, Slawson, Wiediger, Blair (A)

Council can stay with the current structure, adopt the proposed structure above, or discuss adopting something different.

Recommendation: Reduce the number of Council subcommittees from five committees meeting monthly to two committees meeting monthly. There are enough issues requiring Council attention that monthly meetings are necessary. This proposal is intended to streamline the policy making process and reduce the possibility of burn-out.

Council Retreats

Since it is nearly impossible to adequately discuss the long range needs of the City during a regular council meeting, the Sultan City Council, like many other city councils, volunteer a weekend of their time away from distractions to meet in retreat to discuss and plan the long range goals and programs of the City.

The City Council held a full-day retreat in February to discuss a number of topics including vision, land use, public safety and financial policies.

The feedback from the Council was that there were too many topics to cover in such a short period of time.

In looking forward, the Council may want to consider holding one more full-day retreat prior to the budget process in June, or holding two half-day retreats one in June and one in October that cover fewer topics (i.e. one or two topics per retreat)

Alternative Council Retreat Schedules

1 – Full day retreat on Saturday, June 23rd from 9am to 4pm focusing on 2008 budget priorities, goals and objectives

or

2 – Half day retreats, one on Saturday, June 23rd from 9am to 1pm focusing on 2008 budget priorities and one on Saturday, October 13th from 9am to 1pm with a topic to be determined at a later date.

Recommendation: Add one full-day retreat on Saturday, June 23rd or two-half day retreats one on June 23rd and one on October 13th to allow a full discussion of the 2008 budget goals and policies, and other topics as identified by the City Council.

Town Meetings

Town Meetings provide an opportunity for face-to-face exchanges between community members, the Mayor, City Council, and City staff in order to facilitate understanding and a balancing of diverse interests.

The City Council hosted a Town Meeting on January 30, 2007 and has scheduled a second Town Meeting on March 15, 2007 to discuss public safety issues. The Council has considered holding additional Town Meetings throughout the year to get more regular feedback from the Community.

After reviewing the calendar and items for discussion, City staff recommend hosting two additional Town Meetings for 2007. These dates would be set and additional dates could be added if topics of interest are identified throughout the year:

Town Meeting #3 – Thursday, May 31, 2007 (fifth Thursday of the month)
Note: Memorial Day is Monday, May 28.
Proposed Topic – 2008 budget

Town Meeting #4 - Thursday, November 29, 2007 (fifth Thursday of the month)
Note: Thanksgiving is on Thursday, November 22
Proposed Topic – to be determined

Recommendation: Add two Town Meeting dates one on Thursday, May 31st and one on Thursday, November 29th.

ANALYSIS:

The proposed subcommittee meetings, retreat schedule and Town Meeting dates are a full schedule of activities in addition to the regular bi-monthly Council meetings. For some staff members this schedule would require one to two night meetings per week per month.

The payoff for this level of effort should be better decision making and more opportunities for public involvement. The balancing act is to have just enough subcommittee meetings and retreat opportunities to inform the Council's policy making responsibilities along with enough public participation opportunities to keep the community interested enough to give up an evening of personal time.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Keep the current five subcommittees in place and use the schedule proposed in Attachment B. Approve the full schedule of subcommittee meetings, Council retreats and Town Meeting dates proposed by staff.

A decision to approve the entire proposed schedule will result in more work and time commitment for the Mayor, City Council and staff. An overly full meeting schedule could be overwhelming and result in "burn-out" and inattention to important topics.

2. Consolidate the five Council subcommittees into two committees meeting monthly. Approve the full schedule of subcommittee meetings, Council retreats and Town Meeting dates or approve a modified version of the proposed schedule.

A modified schedule could result in better decision making if there are sufficient meetings to inform Council and keep the communication lines between the City and the community open.

A decision to reduce or eliminate proposed meetings could result in more time and energy informing both the City Council and the public about important topics at the end of the decision making process rather than at the beginning when input and direction are most valuable.

3. Do not make a decision and direct staff to areas of concern.

The proposed subcommittee meetings are not scheduled to start until April. The City Council can proceed under the existing subcommittee framework. The proposed Council retreat schedule and Town Meeting dates can be scheduled later in the year with minimal impact.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There may be a small fiscal impact in the form of overtime costs for additional subcommittee meetings if hourly employees need to attend (e.g. Grants Coordinator).

Additional Council retreats may result in professional service expenditures if the Council hires a facilitator. Otherwise, the costs would be limited to food and beverage expense (approximately \$250) unless an off-site location requires a room rental fee. There was no cost to the City for the Monroe library meeting room used for the spring retreat.

Town meetings may result in additional costs for mailing notices, printing brochures and other materials, food and beverage expenses and meeting room charges in the event that donated spaces are unavailable.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Reduce the number of Council subcommittees from five committees meeting monthly to two committees meeting monthly. There are enough issues requiring Council attention that monthly meetings are necessary. This proposal is intended to streamline the policy making process and reduce the possibility of burn-out.
2. Add one full-day retreat on Saturday, June 23rd or two-half day retreats one on June 23rd and one on October 13th to allow a full discussion of the 2008 budget and other topics as identified by the City Council.
3. Add two Town Meeting dates one on Thursday, May 31st and one on Thursday, November 29th.

ATTACHMENT

- A. Council standing subcommittee - proposed schedule
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COUNCIL ACTION:

DATE:

2007
Council Standing Committees

The Council may want to consider rotating assignments for the remainder of the year.

Government Services	First Thursday of each Month	5:30pm-7:00pm
Finance	City Administrator	Bruce Champeaux
Personnel	Finance Director	Kristina Blair
Technology	Department Directors as needed	John Seehuus
Legal		Steve Slawson (A)

Upcoming agenda topics:

- April - Financial policies (credit cards, debt service, petty cash, etc)
- May – 2008-2013 Capital improvement Plan
- June – 2008 Budget

Public Safety	Second Thursday of each Month	5:30pm-7:00pm
Law Enforcement	City Administrator	Steve Slawson
Emergency Services	Police Chief	John Seehuus
Schools Programs (JR/SR)	Public Works Director	Bruce Champeaux
	Grants Coordinator	Ron Wiediger (A)

Upcoming agenda topics:

- April – County contract services
- May - Police fleet analysis
- June – Community policing

Community Development	Third Thursday of each Month	5:30pm-7:00pm
Land Use and Zoning	City Administrator	Jim Flower
Planning	Community and Planning Development	Steve Slawson
Economic Development	City Engineer	Derek Boyd
Public Facilities	Grants Coordinator	Kristina Blair (A)

Upcoming agenda topics:

- April – Comprehensive Plan update
- May – Land use priorities
- June – Development code

Public Works	Fourth Thursday of each Month	5:30pm-7:00pm
Utilities	City Administrator	Kristina Blair
Streets	Public Works Director	Derek Boyd
Parks	City Engineer	Jim Flower
Grant	Grants Coordinator	Ron Wiediger (A)

Upcoming agenda topics:

- April – Waste Water Treatment Plant
- May – 2008-2013 Capital Improvement Plan