

SULTAN CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

ITEM NO: A -6
DATE: March 22, 2007
SUBJECT: Proposed Council Subcommittee Meetings
CONTACT PERSON: Deborah Knight, City Administrator *D. Knight*

SUMMARY:

This staff report proposes a subcommittee structure, meeting dates and times based on feedback from the City Council on March 8, 2007. The City Council can choose to approve the entire proposed schedule, select specific meeting dates and times, or suggest alternatives.

This staff report recommends reducing the number of Council subcommittees from five (5) committees meeting as needed to two (2) committees meeting monthly, with three Council members per committee and two alternates:

1. Government Services and Public Safety (first Thursday of each month)
Members: Blair, Seehuus, Wiediger, Champeaux (A)
2. Community Development and Public Works (third Thursday of each month)
Members: Boyd, Flower, Blair, Slawson (A)

Policy issues would be assigned by topic to the appropriate committee.

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.

BACKGROUND:

At the Council meeting on March 8, 2007, the City Council discussed setting meeting dates for subcommittee meetings, retreats and Town Meetings in advance. The Council approved the following meeting dates:

- Adding 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. The Council left open the option to add time to the retreats if the agenda warranted additional time.
- Adding two Town Meeting dates one on Thursday, May 31st and one on Thursday, November 29th.
- The Council directed staff to return with a revised proposal for Council subcommittee meetings.

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.

Public Disclosure Act

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.

The City Council directed staff to return with a three member subcommittee structure to avoid any violation of 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.

Alternative Subcommittee Structure

After reviewing the schedule and time commitment to attend and support committee meetings, the City Council supported consolidating 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 Thursday of each month)
Members: Blair, Seehuus, Wiediger, Champeaux (A)
2. Community Development and Public Works (fourth Thursday)
Members: Boyd, Flower, Blair, Slawson (A)

Policy issues would be assigned by topic to the appropriate committee.

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

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.

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. Approve the full schedule of subcommittee meetings.

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.

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).

RECOMMENDATION:

Reduce the number of Council subcommittees from five committees to two committees meeting as needed. 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.

RECOMMENDED MOTION

I MOVE TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEES FROM FIVE (5) COMMITTEES TO TWO (2) COMMITTEES WITH THREE COUNCIL MEMBERS PER COMMITTEE AND TWO ALTERNATES.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Revised Council standing subcommittee – proposed schedule
 - B. Council standing subcommittee - proposed schedule
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COUNCIL ACTION:

DATE:

Proposed Committee Schedule

Government Services and Public Safety Committee

When: First Thursday of each month 6:00pm-7:30pm

Government Services	Public Safety	City Council Representatives	City Staff Representatives
Finance	Law Enforcement	Kristina Blair	City Administrator
Personnel	Emergency Services	John Seehuus	Finance Director/ Deputy Finance
Technology	Schools Programs	Ron Wiediger	Police Chief
Legal		Bruce Champeaux (A)	Public Works Director

Upcoming agenda topics:

- April - Financial policies (credit cards, debt service, etc), police contract
- May – 2008-2013 Capital improvement Plan, Police fleet analysis
- June – 2008 Budget, Community policing

Community Development Public Works

When: Third Thursday of each month 6:00pm-7:30pm

Community Development	Public Works	City Council	City Staff
Land Use and Zoning	Utilities	Kristina Blair	City Administrator
Planning	Streets	Derek Boyd	Planning Director
Economic Development	Parks	Jim Flower	City Engineer
Public Facilities	Grant	Steve Slawson(A)	Public Works Director Grants Coordinator

Upcoming agenda topics:

- April – Comprehensive Plan update, Waste Water Treatment Plant
- May – Sewer Rate Study, Storm Water Utility
- June – Land use priorities 2008-2013 Capital Improvement Plan

2007
Council Standing Committees

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	Public Works Director	Bruce Champeaux
Programs (JR/SR)		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		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