

SULTAN CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

ITEM NO: Action A -6

DATE: January 10, 2008

SUBJECT: Proposed Council Sub-Committee Meetings, Retreats, and Town Meetings

CONTACT PERSON: Deborah Knight, City Administrator

ISSUE:

The issue before the City Council is to discuss and set the Council's 2008 calendar for sub-committee meetings, retreats and town meetings.

SUMMARY:

In 2007, the Council scheduled certain types of community and Council sub-committee 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 sub-committee 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. Continuing to schedule two sub-committees meetings on the first and third Thursdays of each month. There are enough issues requiring Council attention that monthly meetings are necessary. This approach is intended to streamline the policy making process and reduce the possibility of burn-out.
2. Scheduling three Council retreats on Saturdays in February (Mayor/Council goals), June (2009 budget priorities), and October (Mayor's recommended budget) to allow in-depth discussion of Council goals and policies, and other topics as identified by the City Council.
3. Holding three Town Meetings dates on Thursday, January 31; Thursday, May 1; Thursday, November 27, 2008.

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 (**Attachment A**) 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 Sub-committee Structure

Currently, the Council has two standing committees (**Attachment B**). The subcommittees meet monthly on alternate Thursdays (first and third).

1. Government Services and Public Safety (first Thursday of each month)

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

2. Community Development and Public Works (third Thursday of each month)

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: The two subcommittee structure meeting on alternate Thursdays seems to have worked well in 2007.

City Staff recommend keeping the current subcommittee structure and replacing former Councilmembers Seehuus and Boyd with newly elected Councilmembers Doornek and Davenport-Smith.

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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 one full-day retreat in February 2007 to discuss a number of topics including vision, land use, public safety and financial policies. The Council held a half-day retreat in June to discuss and set budget priorities and a half-day in October to discuss the Mayor's recommended budget.

The feedback from the Council on last year's retreats was positive.

Recommendation: Schedule three Council retreats on Saturdays in February (Mayor/Council 2008 goals), June (2009 budget priorities), and October (Mayor's recommended budget) to allow in-depth discussion of Council 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 three Town Meetings in 2007: January 30, 2007 – public safety; March 15, 2007 – sheriff's proposed contract; and November 30, 2007 – Community Block Watch.

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 interested are identified throughout the year:

Recommendation: Hold three Town Meetings dates on Thursday, January 31 – Library Annexation; Thursday, May 1 – Topic to be determined; Thursday, November 27, 2008 – Topic to be determined.

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 public process. The balancing act is to have just enough sub-committee meetings and retreat

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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. Accept the staff recommendation to continue with the two Council subcommittee meetings per month. Approve the three Council retreats per year and three 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.

Although the City Council adopted a similar meeting schedule for 2007, there are two new Councilmembers and a new Mayor. There may be a need to discuss how the Council and Mayor will together and receive input from the community before making a decision.

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. Water Plant Operator).

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 Council retreats in 2007.

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.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

1. Continue to schedule two sub-committees meetings on the first and third Thursdays of each month. Assign new Councilmembers to replace vacated positions There are enough issues requiring Council attention that monthly

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meetings are necessary. This approach is intended to streamline the policy making process and reduce the possibility of burn-out.

2. Schedule three Council retreats on Saturdays in February (Mayor/Council goals), June (2009 budget priorities), and October (Mayor's recommended budget) to allow in-depth discussion of Council goals and policies, and other topics as identified by the City Council.
3. Hold three Town Meetings dates on Thursday, January 31; Thursday, May 1; Thursday, November 27, 2008.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A - Council Procedures

Attachment B – 2007 Council Subcommittee Schedule

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2. TYPES OF MEETINGS

- 2.1 **Regular Council Meetings:** The Council shall meet on such days as set by resolution beginning at 7 PM and ending at 10 PM. (The current resolution provides for meetings on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month) When a Council meeting falls on a holiday, the Council may determine an alternate day for the meeting or cancel the meeting. The Council may reschedule regular meetings to a different date or time by motion. The location of the meetings shall be the Community Center meeting room at 319 Main Street, unless specified otherwise by a majority vote of the Council. All regular and special meetings shall be public.
- 2.2 **Special Meetings:** Special meetings may be called by the Mayor or any four (4) members of the Council. The City Clerk shall prepare a notice of the special meeting stating the time, place and business to be transacted. The City Clerk shall attempt to notify each member of the Council, either by telephone or otherwise, of the special meeting. The City Clerk shall give at least 24 hours' notice of the special meeting to each local newspaper of general circulation and to each local radio and/or television station which has filed with the Clerk a written request to be notified of special meetings. No subjects other than those specified in the notice shall be considered. The Council may not make final disposition on any matter not mentioned in the notice.
- 2.3 **Emergency Meetings:** Emergency meetings may be called in less than 24 hours and without notice requirements for special and regular meetings, to deal with emergencies involving damage to persons or property, or when there is a likelihood that adherence to the notice requirements would be impractical and may increase the likelihood of injury or damage.
- 2.4 **Continued and Adjourned Sessions:** Any session of the Council may be continued or adjourned from day to day, or for more than one day, but no adjournment shall be for a longer period than until the next regular meeting.
- 2.5 **Study Sessions and Workshops:** The Council may meet informally in study sessions and workshops (open to the public), at the call of the Mayor or of any four or more members of the Council, to review forthcoming programs of the city, receive progress reports on current programs or projects, receive other similar information from city department heads or conduct procedures workshops, provided that all discussions and conclusions thereon shall be informal and do not constitute official actions of the Council. Study sessions and workshops held by the council are "special meetings" of the council, and the notice required by RCW 42.30.080 must be provided.
- 2.6 **Executive Sessions:** Executive Sessions or closed meetings may be held in accordance with the provisions of the Washington State Open Meetings Act (Chapter 42.30 RCW).

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Among the topics that may be discussed are:

- (1) certain personnel matters;
- (2) consideration of acquisition of property for public purposes or sale of city-owned property; and
- (3) potential or pending litigation in which the city has an interest, as provided in the Revised Code of Washington.

The Council may hold an executive session during a regular or special meeting. Before convening in executive session the Chair shall publicly announce the purpose for excluding the public from the meeting place and the time when the executive session will be concluded. If the Council wishes to adjourn at the close of a meeting from executive session, that fact will be announced along with the estimated time for the executive session. The announced time limit for executive sessions may be extended to a state later time by the announcement of the Chair.

- 2.7 Attendance of Media at Council Meetings:** All official meetings of the Council and its committees shall be open to the media, freely subject to recording by radio, television and photographic services at any time, provided that such arrangements do not interfere with the orderly conduct of the meetings.

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