

SULTAN CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

ITEM NO: D - 2

DATE: January 8, 2009

SUBJECT: Proposed Council Sub-Committee Meetings and Retreats

CONTACT PERSON: Deborah Knight, City Administrator

ISSUE:

The issue before the City Council is to discuss the Council sub-committee structure and membership for 2009 and set the dates for Council retreats.

SUMMARY:

In 2007 and 2008 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.

This staff report recommends:

1. Establishing sub-committees based on topic and retain the current membership for 2009. This is a return to the Council's previous sub-committee structure and provides for continuity especially when reviewing utility relief requests which may be appealed back to the committee.

Government Services (utility relief) and Public Safety

Council Members: Champeaux, Slawson, Davenport-Smith with Wiediger as an alternate.

Community Development and Public Works

Council Members: Wiediger, Flower, Blair with Doornek and Slawson as alternates.

2. Scheduling three Council retreats to allow in-depth discussion of Council goals and policies, and other topics as identified by the City Council:
 - Saturday, February 28, 2009 - Study Session on strategic initiatives
 - Saturday, June 20, 2009 - 2010 budget priorities
 - Saturday, October 17, 2010 - Mayor's recommended budget

DISCUSSION:

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 (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.

Committee A: Councilmembers Champeaux, Slawson, Davenport-Smith; Wiediger as an alternate

Committee B: Councilmembers Weidiger, Flower, Blair; Doornek and Slawson as alternates

Alternative Structure

Government Services (utility relief) and Public Safety:

- Bruce Champeaux,
- Sarah Davenport-Smith
- Steve Slawson,
- Ron Wiediger as an alternate

Community Development and Public Works:

- Kristina Blair
- Jim Flower
- Ron Weidiger
- Dale Doornek and Steve Slawson as alternates

Council can stay with the current structure, adopt the alternative structure based on specific topics or discuss adopting something different.

Recommendation: Keep the current subcommittee membership. Adopt the alternative structure based on specific topics. This is a return to the Council's previous subcommittee structure and provides for continuity especially when reviewing utility relief requests which may be appealed back to the committee.

Council Retreats

It is difficult 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 half-day retreat in February 2008 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 to allow in-depth discussion of Council goals and policies, and other topics as identified by the City Council:

- Saturday, February 28, 2009 - Study Session on strategic initiatives
- Saturday, June 20, 2009 - 2010 budget priorities
- Saturday, October 17, 2010 - Mayor's recommended budget

ANALYSIS:

The proposed subcommittee meetings and retreat schedule are a full schedule of activities in addition to the regular bi-monthly Council meetings. For some staff members this schedule may 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 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 subcommittees based on topics and approve the three Council retreat meeting dates.
2. Recommend a modified schedule. 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 2008, 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. Utility Clerk).

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.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

1. Discuss the proposed sub-committee structure and membership for 2009 and provide direction to staff.
2. Discuss the schedule for Council retreats and provide direction to staff.

COUNCIL ACTION:

DATE: