

Legislation Text

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Human Rights Commission Meeting Date: April 26, 2023

To: Human Rights Commission

From: Claudia Garcia, Spanish Translator/Staff Liaison
Ben Martig, City Administrator

Discussion about member roles and appointment process in boards and committees.

Action Requested:

The Human Rights Commission is being asked to receive Valdecantos suggestions related to members roles and the appointment process in City boards and commissions.

Summary Report:

Former Human Rights Commission member Mar Valdecantos will provide a brief background on the topic. Valdecantos has raised some concerns around board and commission member roles and the appointment process for boards and commissions. She brought the issues up while she was a member but the timing didn't work for her to present. Staff made a commitment though to allow her to present even though she isn't currently a member since she had been trying to do so prior to leaving the position.

Youth Member Role

Valdecantos is proposing that all youth appointed to serve on a City board or commission should be given voting rights. Currently, if a board or commission allows for a youth voting role, one youth has the voting power and the other you member(s) are designated as non-voting members. The current process for youth members in the HRC is that they discuss their votes as a group, with the voting member officially making the vote.

Currently, nine City boards and commissions have 25 youth members (9 voting, 16 non-voting), not counting the 15 voting members of the Mayor's Youth Council.

Staff has researched the roles of youth members in boards and commissions in comparable cities. Of the 15 cities contacted, eight cities allow for youth involvement in their boards and commissions and seven do not currently allow for youth involvement. Of the eight with youth involvement, two are within youth commissions only, three are within select boards and commissions, one is allowed in one board or commission but has not been active for years, and two allow them in most boards or commissions with exceptions.

The role of youth involvement will be discussed in further detail as the board and commission governance work continues.

Non-Voting Member Role

Valdecantos has brought up a concern around the appointment of non-voting, non-youth members to boards and commissions. Valdecantos has suggested a formal criteria be implemented for when members will be given non-voting, advisory or ex-officio roles and what their role within the board or commission will be.

The role of non-voting, non-youth members will be discussed in further detail as the board and commission governance work continues. The following are some tentative timelines:

- City Council review of topics scheduled in May;
- Special Committee appointed end of May to review governance documents;
- All Board and Commission Chair person review of governance documents June;
- Special Council appointed committee set to review the documents in June with final council action in July.

Appointment Process

Valdecantos has expressed some concern with the appointment process and how appointments are made. She has suggested that prospective applicants should be interviewed by a committee not one person which would allow for appointments to be made through different lenses.

Staff advises that any significant change to the way the appointments are done would likely require a change to the City Charter.

Meleah Follen, Youth Engagement and Northfield Community College Collaborative Director will be in attendance to explain the youth voting history and thoughts. Additionally, City Administrator Martig will give background to the items in the presentation for added perspective.

Alternative Options:

The Human Rights Commission should focus any deliberation primarily on their experiences related to these governance perspectives. But, it also is relevant that the work is taking into consideration different impacts across all 13 boards and commissions.

1. The Human Rights Commission can choose to not formally take a stance on any of the above issues brought up. Valdecantos may submit the letter or other thoughts to the City Council that would be shared with other input received during the review.
2. The Human Rights Commissions can choose to take an official stance in support, or not, of any of the above issues brought up. If so there should be a formal motion or motions made to deliberate on the topic. Staff suggests if the commission is interested in this route to have deliberation on the topic and continue the agenda item to May before action. There is a lot of information in the memo to consider so having the opportunity to hear from Follen and Martig before taking action. Also, staff anticipates more details of a city position on these topics to be reviewed at the worksession on May 9th. That way the Human Rights could see those documents prior to weighing in on a position.

The future actions could include:

- A. Motion to forward Valdecantos letter to City Council;
- B. Position on different issues:
 - a. having all students vote;
 - b. allowing voting/non-voting status be by the individual rather than Mayor/Council;

c. Change in recruitment process.

“motion to continue this agenda item to May 24th.

3. The Human Rights Commission could take action for a motion to “support the Valdecantos letter and forward to City Council for consideration at their governance review.”

Financial Impacts:

N/A

Tentative Timeline:

N/A