



Legislation Text

File #: 23-1155, **Version:** 1

City Council Meeting Date: May 9, 2023

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Ben Martig, City Administrator
Lynette Peterson, City Clerk
Sara Hoffman, Deputy City Clerk/Executive Administrative Assistant

Update and discussion on City Council, Board and Commission Governance Effectiveness Review.

Action Requested:

No Action.

Summary Report:

Staff will give an update on the Board and Commission Governance Effectiveness Review and seek input from Council. The Board and Commission Governance Effectiveness Review was initiated in response to a 2021-2024 Strategic Plan initiative.

The City Council received an initial presentation on the Board and Commission Governance Effectiveness Review at the January 11, 2022 City Council Work Session and updates at the July 12, 2022 City Council Meeting, the January 10, 2023 City Council Work Session, and the April 11, 2023 City Council Work Session.

The first phase of the review looked at 2021 board and commission survey results, current board and commission processes, gaps in these processes, opportunities for improvement, what initiatives other cities have executed, and suggestions/additions to the current board and commission process.

The second phase of the review aims at implementing processes and changes related to the information gathered in phase one. The Board and Commission Rules of Business was approved by the City Council and is being implemented for all meetings. City Administrator Martig held a meeting with staff liaisons to discuss the Board and Commission Rules of Business and any changes to current processes that will result from adoption of that document.

Additionally, the following changes/updates are in process and are included in the packet, or a subsequent supplemental memo, for review:

- Ordinance Updates to City Code

The City Attorney has drafted an update to code (will be sent in a supplemental memo) that would add an introductory section to the existing boards and commissions section. In addition, it would realign existing code relating to boards and commissions so all relevant information would be in same section of code. These changes would replace the need for individual bylaws for almost all boards and commissions. Council approved bylaws may be utilized for specific boards or commissions if a need is

identified by staff or City Attorney Hood.

- Evaluation of the Role of Youth Members

As part of ongoing governance work and due to specific concerns brought by a former board and commission member, staff has reviewed the role of youth members within our boards and commissions. Staff has compiled research on youth membership within the City's boards and commissions as well as the role of youth members in comparative city boards and commissions (attachment #1). In addition, staff has met with Healthy Community Initiative (HCI) Youth Engagement and Northfield Community College Collaborative Director Meleah Follen, who currently oversees the Youth on Boards program to discuss options for the youth members on City boards and commissions.

Staff would like to receive feedback from Council and has proposed the following options for review:

1. Leave the youth members at the same levels they are now and maintain one voting youth per board, as allowed.
2. Standardize the number of youth members allowed per board to two members, with one holding a voting role, as allowed. This would keep steady membership numbers for all boards and commissions (with minor exceptions) and allow for better utilization of the Council dais.
3. Standardize the number of youth members allowed per board to two members with both holding a voting role, as allowed. This would keep steady membership numbers for all boards and commissions (with minor exceptions) to nine voting members - seven adults, two youth. In addition, it would allow for better utilization of the Council dais.

- Ethics Disclosure Form

Currently, City Code requires elected officials, appointed officials, and select staff to complete an ethics disclosure form at the time of election, appointment or hiring and then annually during their term or tenure. Due to the difficulty in getting some individuals to sign and return the document staff has discussed alternative options to streamline the process. City Attorney Hood has stated that the form is not a requirement but a best practice for the City.

Regarding staff positions, staff is proposing that the list required to complete the form be adjusted to only include the City Administrator, Finance Director, Public Work Director/City Engineer, Community Development Director, City Clerk, Police Chief, Library Services Director, and Northfield Hospital & Clinics President and Chief Executive Officer.

Regarding elected and appointed positions, staff would like to receive feedback from Council and has proposed the following options for review:

1. Keep the current process of requiring all City Council members and board and commission members to complete the ethics disclosure form at the time of election or appointment and annually at the beginning of the calendar year.
2. Alter the process to require all elected and appointed officials to complete the ethics disclosure form at the time of election or appointment. City Council members and members of the Economic Development Authority (EDA), Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), Planning Commission (PC), Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC), and Hospital Board will continue to complete the form annually. All other board and commission members will be asked to complete the form again if they need to update

the information provided.

In addition to changes to who completes the form and when, staff is also looking to make changes to the form to include disclosures on affiliated organizations so staff is better of aware of potential member conflicts of interest.

A copy of the current Ethics Disclosure Form (attachment #2) is included.

- Equal Opportunity Form

Along with a review of the Ethics Disclosure Form, staff is also looking at changes that can be made to the Equal Opportunity Form to improve the information gathered and the process surrounding it. The Equal Opportunity Form is completed voluntarily by elected and appointed officials on an annual basis. Staff is looking at what other relevant information can be gathered, such as age range or family background, to improve the data the City receives. Staff is proposing that the information collected in the form be added to the online board and commission application and only be collected at the time of appointment, not annually. Inclusion of this information in the application will assist with increasing diversity on our boards and commissions by providing the information prior to appointments not after. Applicants will still have the option of declining to provide some or all information.

A copy of the current Ethics Disclosure Form (attachment #3) is included.

- Board and Commission Governance Review Committee

City Administrator Martig and Mayor Pownell are recommending a small committee of Council and Board/Commission representatives be assembled as a committee to review, comment, and offer suggested changes before coming back for a follow-up review. Additionally, there is also an intent to bring together the Chair and Vice-Chairs of our boards for a similar information and listening session prior to future council action on the item.

The following items are in process and were discussed at the April 11, 2023 Work Session. They are not attached and staff does not intend to present any further detail at the May 9 work session.

- Code of Ethics Update with Ex Parte Communications Prohibition

City Attorney Hood has drafted an ordinance amending the Code of Ethics and adding a prohibition on ex parte communications. Staff is continuing to review this draft.

- City Council and Board & Commission Member Guide

Staff has drafted a *Board and Commission Member Guide* that can be utilized for new City Council and board and commission members as a reference document for current members. Staff is also planning to create a similar document for staff liaisons. Both documents are targeted to be complete for the next orientation cycle.

- Boards & Commissions Handout

Staff has drafted a Boards & Commissions Handout that will be utilized during the recruitment period. This gives prospective members a better understanding of what each of the City's boards and commissions covers, the board/commission calendar, and contact information.

- Board and Commission Meeting Times and Time Commitment Document

Staff has drafted a Board and Commission Meeting Times document that will provide applicants and prospective applicants with meeting times and the expected time commitment of the City's boards and commissions.

In addition to the attachments provided, staff is preparing a presentation in addition to the other documents referenced.

Financial Impacts:

N/A.

Tentative Timelines: