



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – June 3, 2020 Agenda Item 4

Work Session

Discussion of Board, Commission and Committee Appointment Process

Recommended Council Action

Discuss and determine interim steps. Staff recommends: 1) extending expiring terms to June 30, 2021 for individuals serving on committees; 2) delaying new appointments unless needed for the committee to function; and, 3) initiate engagement with boards, commissions and committees to continue the review and develop revised draft recommendations for Council consideration.

Context with Key Issues

The City Council set as one of its priorities a review of the existing structure, appointment processes, and practices for Council-appointed committees to increase efficiency and effectiveness and attract new members, and to explore innovative ways to engage residents who tend to be harder to reach, with a desired outcome of enabling diverse, engaged, productive, and rewarding committee membership.

Currently, the City has 16 standing committees with occasional short-term committees. About 140 members current serve on committees.

In the Spring of 2019, a working group began to examine the range of committee structures and functions to identify ways to improve functioning and engagement on City Committees. Members of the working group include: Mayor Stewart, Councilmember Dyballa, City Manager Ludlow, Public Works Director Braithwaite, Sustainability Manager Mathias, Recreation Director Clark, Community Development Manager Grigsby, and City Clerk Carpenter.

On January 15, 2020, the working group presented to the Council the results of a survey of committee members (present and past) that was conducted at the end of 2019. Since that time, the group has met periodically to develop recommendations for consideration by the City Council and the boards, commissions, and committees.

Preliminary recommendations are attached. They include establishing a new process for selecting members:

- Develop job descriptions for committee members and criteria matrix for selection (jointly developed by committees and Council).
- Have an annual open application period with a common deadline of May 1 with appointments scheduled to be effective July 1.
- Publicize vacancies through newsletter, media, local organizations.
- Include question on application regarding the need for specific accommodations.
- Develop a recruitment/nominating committee of two or three Councilmembers.
- Council members on committee to meet with potential committee members before they come before council for appointment.
- When possible, require applicants attend a committee meeting before appointment.
- Invite committee input on potential applicants using established criteria.

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and Jessie Carpenter, City Clerk
Approved by: Suzanne R. Ludlow, City Manager

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- Council makes final selection of applicants and adopts appointment resolutions.

An important next step is to share all the proposed draft recommendations with boards, commissions and committees to get their feedback. The working group will then revise the draft recommendations and come back to the Council for its input, and ultimately adoption of recommendations.

In the interim, the committee recommends that the Council delay making new appointments until June 2021 unless needed to keep the committee functioning. If current members are willing to continue, expiring terms should be extended until June 30, 2021, unless the member is term limited.

Council Priority

Engaged, Responsive & Service-oriented Government: Improve and Formalize Systems for Council-Appointed Committees.

Goal: Improve and formalize systems for Council-appointed committees . . .

Strategy: Review existing structure, appointment processes, and practices for Council-appointed committees, and make changes to increase efficiency and effectiveness and attract new members; explore innovative ways to engage residents who tend to be harder to reach.

Desired outcome:

– Diverse, engaged, productive, and rewarding committee membership.

Environmental Considerations

There is no environmental impact from the review of the Council-appointed committees.

Fiscal Considerations

There is no fiscal impact from the review of the Council-appointed committees.

Racial Equity Considerations

Council-appointed committees do not generally reflect the diversity of the population of Takoma Park. Improvements of the recruitment, training, functionality and support of committees may encourage more people from all backgrounds in the City to participate in the Council-appointed committees.

Attachments and Links

- Review and Draft Recommendations for Structure and Operations (prepared by the working group)
- Board, Commission, and Committee Membership Information
- [Link to Committee Survey Results](#)



Council-Appointed Boards, Commissions and Committees: Review and Recommendations for Structure and Operations

May 27, 2020

The City Council set as one of its priorities a review of the existing structure, appointment processes, and practices for Council-appointed committees to increase efficiency and effectiveness and attract new members, and to explore innovative ways to engage residents who tend to be harder to reach, with a desired outcome of enabling diverse, engaged, productive, and rewarding committee membership.

With this goal in mind, a working group of staff and Council members has identified areas for consideration. Staff conducted a survey of committee members in Fall 2019, and reported the results to Council on January 15, 2020:

<https://documents.takomaparkmd.gov/government/city-council/agendas/2020/council-20200115-3.pdf> The findings are incorporated into this document.

Why are we looking at a common structure for committees?

Council-appointed committees serve as part of the City organization, thus warranting a comprehensive review of how they function and how they might be improved. Establishing a general format can improve the operations of committees, as well as the support capacity of staff and the engagement of council.

Benefits of a common structure for committees include:

- streamlined recruiting and staffing
- additional standardized support for committees
- an annual committee orientation for new and current members
- training for committee chairs
- synergies between committees and potential for integrated work
- an open, transparent committee application and appointment process
- outreach to under-represented populations
- committees that are more representative of the community

Draft Recommendations for Common Structure for All Standing Committees (limited exceptions may be established)

- Residency: Members must be City residents.
- Schedule: Committee appointments occur once a year in June, with applications due May 1. All new members are required to attend a Committee orientation session.

- Size: The optimal size for committees is seven to nine members.
- Criteria: In partnership with Council, the committee develops criteria for the selection of new members.
- Term lengths: Term lengths for a committee can be two or three years, with staggered terms to ensure continuity.
- Term limits: Committee members are limited to two or three consecutive terms (or six years), with the possibility of serving again after a one-year hiatus.
- Election of officers: Each committee must have a chair and vice chair (or two co-chairs), and a note-taker for minutes (which can be a rotating position). Officers are elected to serve one-year terms, with a limit of two consecutive terms.
- Quorum: A quorum is half the number of appointed committee members plus one.
- Absences: If a member misses more than three meetings without advance notice to the chair, the member may be removed.
- Removal: In partnership with Council, the committee develops criteria for the removal of a member.
- Reporting to Council: Committees will have regular reporting to Council.
- Code: The Committee will recommend to Council needed changes in the Code, including incorporating essential information and eliminating the by-laws.

Clarification of Leadership Roles of Council, Staff and Committee Members

Role of Council

- To establish and regularly review the purpose of the committees and procedures of operations, and to identify the skills needed among members
- To appoint members and foster diversity on committees
- To hold annual or periodic joint meetings between Council and committee chairs
- To clarify the roles of Council, staff and committee members including ways for Council members to engage with individual committees
- To identify other types of community engagement when a standing committee is not the appropriate structure to meet the purpose

Role of Staff

- To provide orientation and training to committee chairs and committee members
- To ensure compliance with requirements regarding meetings and record-keeping
- To facilitate meeting logistics and support committee functions
- To provide research and background information as appropriate
- To provide guidance on purpose, operations, and composition of committees

Role of Committee members

- To serve on the committees responsibly
- To participate in regular reporting to Council
- To stay focused on the purpose as defined by Council

- To provide input on purpose and operations
- To assist with recruitment, to identify gaps and to foster diversity
- To ensure compliance with requirements regarding meetings, record-keeping and ethics

Review of the Purpose of the Committees

The purpose of each standing committee will be reviewed on a regular basis by Council, staff and committee members with these criteria:

How does the committee serve Council’s priorities or a continuing City structural purpose?

How does it report out on its work to Council and the community?

Is there adequate staff capacity to provide support for the committee?

How does the committee provide a meaningful way for the community to participate?

How does the committee mentor leadership among members?

Improvements for Committee Operations for Members and Officers

Staff can hold in person or on-line orientation and training for all new members and new officers together.

Orientation for committee members would include:

- An on-line handbook for committee members
- Information and requirements about compliance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act
- Information about the Maryland Public Information Act (Freedom of Information Act) Requests and its impact
- A Code of Ethics, including issues of conflicts of interest and policy on gifts
- A committee member contract and guidelines
- Training about equity considerations
- Attendance requirement

Training for committee officers:

- Meetings and record keeping -- agendas, minutes, votes, meeting management
- Timekeeping and meeting facilitation
- Role of the public at committee meetings
- Equity considerations
- Managing conflict
- City Code regarding committees
- Live streaming and/or recording for key meetings
- Role of City staff and City Attorney

Services that may enable more people to participate:

- Call-in number for members to participate remotely/video calls (such as Zoom)
- Language interpretation – including translation devices
- Stipends/reimbursements
- Buddy system – recruit as a pair
- Audio-visual support – large-print materials, assisted listening devices
- Childcare
- Transportation
- Include question on application regarding the need for specific accommodations.

Tools to Increase Diversity on Committees

- Determine why certain groups are underrepresented on committees
- Clarify the role of Council, staff and committee members in recruitment
- Incorporate the work of the GARE cohort

Establish a New Appointment Process

- Include question on application regarding the need for specific accommodations
- Develop job descriptions for committee members and criteria matrix for selection (jointly developed by committee and Council)
- Actively seek committee members who represent the diversity of the City in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, income, renters and owners.
- Have an annual open application period with a common deadline
- Publicize vacancies through newsletter, media, local organizations
- Develop a recruitment/nominating committee of two or three Councilmembers
- Council members meet with potential committee members first
- Require applicants attend a committee meeting before appointment
- Invite committee input on potential applicants using criteria
- Council approves applicants using criteria