



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – February 17, 2021 Agenda Item 4

Work Session

Update on Recommendations for Board, Commission and Committee Structure and Appointment Process

Recommended Council Action

Hear and comment on update.

Context with Key Issues

Currently, the City has 16 standing committees, boards and commissions, as distinct from short-term task forces. One City Council priority is 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. The desired outcome is to enable more diverse, engaged, productive, and rewarding committee membership.

The Council most recently took up this topic at the January 2021 council priorities retreat, where recommendations for implementation were presented. An informal working group of staff and council members reported in June 2020 to Council on preliminary recommendations and results of a survey of committee members past and present. Since then, last July the Council extended existing appointments to June 30, 2021, to allow time to implement recommendations, providing for new interim appointments only when necessary for a committee to function, or to broaden its representation (ordinance adopted July 29, 2020). The Council also adopted a Code of Conduct for committee members (Resolution 2020-22, October 7, 2020). Committees had the opportunity over the summer to give feedback on preliminary recommendations. City staff participating in a GARE cohort worked on diversity in committee membership as their project, which resulted in recommendations that could be utilized as part of this review and restructuring.

Draft recommendations to date focus mostly on reforms to the existing system—common structure, more clear roles, operational changes, a revised appointment process—and also highlight issues of diversity, relevancy, and purpose. A survey of current and past committee members highlights lack of diversity in membership. Feedback from Committees over the summer largely supports these. The staff GARE cohort's feedback goes further—to consider the committee system as a whole, topic areas, relevancy to all residents, and relationship to other ways to accomplish same purposes.

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.

Prepared by: Councilmembers Dyballa, Kostiuk, and Searcy
and Jessie Carpenter, City Clerk

Posted: 2021-02-12

Approved by: Suzanne R. Ludlow, City Manager

Environmental Considerations

There is no direct environmental impact from the review of the Council-appointed committees. A Council action related to the Committee on the Environment or other committees focused on climate-change initiatives could have a positive or negative impact on environmental initiatives in the future, but specific changes are not proposed at this time.

Fiscal Considerations

There is no fiscal impact from the review of the Council-appointed committees. Some of the recommendations, particularly those to engage residents, such as stipends or childcare services, have possible staff and budget impacts in the future.

Racial Equity Considerations

Council-appointed committees do not generally reflect the diversity of the population of Takoma Park, as shown by the committee members survey. Improvements in recruitment, training, operations and support of committees may create more diverse and representative Council-appointed committees and bolster their capacity to incorporate racial equity considerations in all their committee work.

Links to Background Information

- June 2020 Review and [Draft Recommendations](#) for Structure and Operations (prepared by the working group)
- [Link to](#) Board, Commission, and Committee Membership Information
- [Link to Committee Survey Results](#)