



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – May 19, 2021 Agenda Item 8

Work Session

Continued Conversation on Committees

Recommended Council Action

Continue discussion of Council-appointed standing committees without a regulatory function, and of implementing administrative recommendations for improving committees.

Context with Key Issues

The Council has identified a priority of reviewing the existing structure, appointment processes, and practices for Council-appointed committees to increase efficiency and effectiveness, attract new members, and 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 is in the process of a series of work sessions that will continue over the next several months to progress toward achieving these goals. Recent work sessions on Feb. 17, March 3 and 17, April 7 and April 14, and May 5 and 12, 2021, have focused on defining an overall purpose for committees, factors for considering whether to create or continue a committee on a particular issue, and applying this to existing committees, boards and commissions.

At this work session, a Council subgroup (Councilmembers Dyballa, Searcy, and Kostiuk) will discuss several standing committees that focus on a particular issue but do not have a regulatory or quasi-judicial function. In addition, Council will hear progress on administrative recommendations for improving committee operations, and consider the timing and schedule for recruiting new members and for making code changes.

In May work sessions, the group recommended retaining several standing committees (Arts & Humanities, Emergency Preparedness, Grants Review, Recreation, and Youth Council). In April the group recommended continuing the Board of Elections, Commission on Landlord-Tenant Affairs, Ethics Commission, Police Pension Board and Tree Commission with their current regulatory roles, and addressing minor issues after reappointments. The group suggested more thoroughly considering the regulatory role of the Noise Control Board within the context of the broader discussions about code enforcement and public safety in the future. The group recommended accepting the Façade Advisory Board's recommendation to remove its regulatory function and after further consideration also recommended not continuing the other functions of this Board as well. The group suggested replacing the Personnel Appeal Board with an alternative appeals process.

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.

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

Approved by: Suzanne R. Ludlow, City Manager

Posted: 2020-05-14

Desired outcome: Diverse, engaged, productive, and rewarding committee membership.

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 or sustainability 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 significant 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

- May 12, 2021 [work session](#) and [presentation](#), [presentation on orientation/handbook](#)
- May 5, 2021 [work session](#) and [presentation](#)
- April 14, 2021 [work session](#) and [presentation](#)
- April 7, 2021 [work session](#) and [presentation](#)
- March 17, 2021 [work session](#) and [presentation](#)
- March 3, 2021 [work session](#) and [presentation](#)
- Feb. 17, 2021 work session [information](#) and [presentation](#)
- 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](#)