



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – July 21, 2021 Agenda Item 9

Work Session

Begin review of code changes for city committees, commissions and boards

Recommended Council Action

Hear and discuss suggested code changes for city committees, commissions and boards, that reflect Council discussions and Council subgroup recommendations in previous work sessions.

Context with Key Issues

Currently there are 16 Council-appointed volunteer boards, commissions and committees, as distinct from short-term task forces. 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. At this work session, code changes that reflect Council discussions and Council subgroup recommendations in previous work sessions will be presented and discussed.

Council has been in the process of a series of work sessions over the past few months, starting with a Feb. 17 work session, to finalize progress toward achieving these goals. In June 2021 the council extended existing committee appointments to Oct. 15, to allow time to implement changes as well as to recruit and appoint new members. Work sessions have focused on defining an overall purpose for committees, factors for considering whether to create or continue a committee on a particular issue, applying these factors to existing committees, boards and commissions. Some of these actions require code changes. Other topics have been administrative and operational improvements, as well as the recruitment and appointment process this summer and fall leading to appointments by Oct. 15. Committees and their members have had the opportunity to contribute to the discussions.

At the January 2021 council priorities retreat, initial recommendations 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, which highlighted issues of relevancy and purpose, lack of diversity in committee membership, and need for training and administrative improvements. Feedback from committees over the summer largely supported these concerns. City staff participating in a GARE cohort worked on diversity in committee membership as their project, and their feedback was to consider the committee system as a whole, topic areas, relevancy to all residents, and relationship to other ways to accomplish same purposes. Council also adopted a Code of Conduct for committee members (Resolution 2020-22, October 7, 2020).

At this work session, code changes that reflect Council discussions and Council subgroup recommendations in previous work sessions will be presented and discussed.

- Recommended code changes would:
 - Establish a common membership, terms, and purposes;
 - Provide limited exceptions for specific committees;
 - Retain specific code language for quasi-judicial and regulatory groups;
 - Streamline code language for non-regulatory standing committees; and

- Codify the Youth Council and Grants Review Committee.

Building on previous discussions, the code changes would:

- Continue 5 quasi-judicial & regulatory groups and 5 standing committees (and address minor code issues after reappointments);
- Discontinue 2 groups--Personnel Appeals Board, Façade Advisory Board;
- Continue for now pending further discussion--Noise Control Board, in context of public safety discussion;
- Phase out 2 groups in the short term--Commemoration Commission; Nuclear Free Committee; and
- Discontinue 2 groups in their current form, pending possible creations of new groups: Committee on the Environment (reconstitute as Sustainable MD Green Team) and Complete Safe Streets (consider a future Vision Zero task force).

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 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, depending on final direction in this area and the future work of the committee.

Fiscal Considerations

Some of the recommendations related to recruitment activities and member supports, such as stipends or childcare/transportation reimbursement or services, have possible staff and budget impacts. Estimated costs will be considered in decisions about adopting changes.

Racial Equity Considerations

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

Links to Background Information

- July 7, 2021 [work session](#) and [presentation](#)
- June 16, 2021 [voting session](#)
- June 9, 2021 [work session](#) and [presentation](#)
- May 19, 2021 [work session](#) and [presentation](#)
- 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](#)
- 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](#)