



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – October 6, 2021 Agenda Item 5

Work Session

Proposed Process for Review of Committee Applications

Recommended Council Action

Discuss a process for review of committee applications by a Council subgroup, using a rubric similar to that used for the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force.

Context with Key Issues

In June 2021 the Council extended existing committee appointments to October 15, to allow time to implement improvements to the city system of committees along with related code changes, and also to take a fresh approach to recruit and appoint members as a group. This fresh approach has employed multiple outreach methods and targeted promotion to particular resident groups, as an effort to increase diversity of committee members. Applications are accepted until October 7 for nine commissions, boards and standing advisory committees:

To make new and renewed appointments in a timely fashion, one approach is for a Council subgroup to review the applications using a common set of guidelines, and make recommendations on appointments to the full Council for voting in mid-October. Proposed guidelines for review would include:

- Residency and other individual committee requirements
- Expression of interest
- Technical expertise and/or lived experience
- Organization and community affiliation
- Diversity and inclusion - age, race/ ethnicity, gender, ward diversity
- Contributions to the group - skills, lived experience, teamwork and/or perspective

The Council has also adopted code changes to support administrative and operational improvements to better support committees (such as training). Council also adopted a code of conduct for committee members (Resolution 2020-22, October 7, 2020).

At the January 2020 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 summer 2020 largely supported these concerns and approaches to address them. 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.

During 2020 and 2021, the City Council had a series of work sessions related to changes and improvements to committees and voted on code changes related to committees in September 2021.

The Council intends to make appointments and reappointments in October to: Arts and Humanities, Emergency Preparedness, Grants Review, Green Team, and Recreation/Community Engagement committees, as well as Board of Elections, Committee on Landlord-Tenant Affairs, Ethics Commission,

Tree Commission, and a short-term Task Force on sustainable investments.

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 appointment of residents to Council-appointed committees. A Council action related to the Green Team 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

There are no presently identified fiscal impacts from this proposed review process of committee membership applications.

Racial Equity Considerations

Existing Council-appointed committees do not generally reflect the diversity of the population of Takoma Park, as shown by the survey of committee members and data collected. A fresh approach to recruitment and appointment that is underway this month, as well as planned improvements in training, operations and support of committees and members, are all intended to create and support more diverse and representative Council-appointed committees and to bolster their capacity to apply racial equity considerations in all their committee work. Members are expected to comply with a Council-adopted code of conduct for committee members (Resolution 2020-22, October 7, 2020) in part to address equity issues. Reducing the number of standing committees and broadening the City's approaches to resident engagement will also help address equity.

Links to Background Information

- Sept. 29, 2021 [voting session](#)
- Sept. 22, 2021 [voting session](#)
- July 28, 2021 [work session](#) and [presentation](#)
- July 21, 2021 [work session](#) and [presentation](#)
- 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](#)