



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – February 1, 2023 Agenda Item 2

Work Session

City Committees, Commissions and Boards: Update, Background, and Discussion of Recruitment/Appointment Process

Recommended Council Action

Hear summary of current city committees, their responsibilities, the appointment process, and previous council review of committee structure; and decide approach for review of applications for appointments and reappointments to city committees, commissions and boards.

Context with Key Issues

The city is currently in the semi-annual recruitment process for city committees, commissions and boards. The previous council established a subgroup to review semi-annual applications as a group, apply uniform criteria for that review, and recommend individual appointments to the full Council.

In 2021, to enable a more diverse, engaged, productive, and rewarding committee membership, the Council updated the system for Council-appointed volunteer boards, commissions and committees. These changes are intended to increase efficiency and effectiveness, attract new members, and employ innovative ways to engage residents who tend to be harder to reach. The Council held a series of work sessions from Feb.-Oct. 2021, focused on administrative and operational improvements, changes in the recruitment and appointment process, and reviewing the number and overall purposes of committees. Committees and their members had opportunities to contribute to these discussions. Changes adopted include:

- Establish a common membership, terms, and purposes for Council-appointed groups, with limited exceptions for specific circumstances;
- Move to a semi-annual recruitment system for new and continuing members, in place of the previous one-at-a-time appointments;
- Strengthen committee training and support, along with code of conduct and member stipends;
- Continue 5 quasi-judicial & regulatory groups and 5 standing committees (and address minor code issues after reappointments);
- Discontinue 3 groups: Personnel Appeals Board, Facade Advisory Board, and Commemoration Commission;
- Discontinue two groups in their current form: Committee on the Environment (was reconstituted in code as Sustainable Maryland Committee) and Complete Safe Streets Committee (consider a future Vision Zero Task Force); and
- Continue temporarily, and put recruiting on hold, pending further discussion, for--Noise Control Board, in context of public safety discussion; and Nuclear Free Committee, pending outcome of Sustainable Investment Task Force;
- 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.

A handful of issues have not been finalized, pending additional information, experience, and/or review of task force recommendations. These include status of the Noise Control Board and Nuclear Free Committee, a possible Sustainable Finance Committee recommended by the Sustainable Banking Task Force, and a possible Public Safety Committee recommended by the Public Safety Task Force. A future Council meeting will focus on adopting any code changes needed to implement Council decisions on these groups.

Council Priority

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

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

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.

Fiscal Considerations

Providing stipends to committee members, and some of the updated recruitment, administrative and operational procedures, have modest staff and budget impacts. Estimated costs were considered in decisions about adopting changes.

Racial Equity Considerations

Previous Council-appointed committees did not generally reflect the diversity of the population of Takoma Park. The implemented changes support more diverse and representative Council-appointed committees in a number of ways. For example, the fresh approach to recruitment and appointment of Committee members has resulted in appointments that more closely reflect the diversity of our community. This includes member stipends to address financial and social barriers to committee participation that residents of color face more often than white residents. Improvements in training and operations of committees help ensure that committees and their members function in a way that is welcoming to all residents and bolster committees' capacity to apply race equity considerations to their work. Council adopted a code of conduct for committee members (Resolution 2020-22, October 7, 2020) in part to clearly state that discrimination by any committee member will not be tolerated.

Attachments and Links

[Takoma Park Code, Chapter 2.16 Advisory Committees](#)

[Takoma Park Code, Chapter 2.17 Boards and Commissions](#)

October 6, 2021 – [City Council Discussion of Committee Member Appointment and Selection Process](#)

Summary of Board and Committee Information, Membership and Vacancies