

Notes from Special Committee on Council Processes Meeting

November 12, 2024, 8:00 am, Allison Conference Room

CMs present: Flaherty, Asare (virtual), Piedmont-Smith

Staff present: Lisa Lehner (Council attorney), Nicole Bolden (Clerk), Jennifer Crossley (Deputy Clerk)

Title 2 Revisions re. boards and commissions

We reviewed the proposed revisions regarding the purpose and duties of the advisory boards and commissions, which have mostly been approved by the commissions themselves. CM Flaherty added a few non-substantive revisions to the Bloomington Commission on Sustainability, and we revised one point under Commission on the Status of Women.

Public comment: None

Motion: Approve the revisions to boards and commissions as included in the meeting packet, and as revised during today's meeting.

Vote: Approved 3-0

Changes to Council regular session processes

- CM Asare said the pain points in our current process are (1) the amount of time we spend on questions, and (2) how productively this time is used. He said that deliberative conversations would be more productive than the formal structure of regular sessions. He said other cities use committee meetings as a first discussion of a legislative item.
- CM Flaherty agreed that a more collaborative and deliberative exchange could be held in committee meetings than in regular sessions. He also said that the council should not feel pressured to vote at second hearing, instead could refer item to a third reading – but he acknowledged we often feel pressure to finish in two hearings. He is not opposed to Committee of the Whole (CW) as long as it is used in the right way.
- Lisa Lehner spoke about the situation in which a CM who is not on a committee wants to attend the committee meeting. If this leads to a quorum of the whole council bring present, then the meeting would have had to be noticed as a meeting of the whole council (Committee of the Whole).
- CM Piedmont-Smith also agreed that committee meetings would be a better venue for discussion, and that CW could work well as long as it is structured more loosely than it has been in the past, so that there can really be a back-and-forth among staff and CMs.
- CM Asare said that committee meetings could also have a fact-finding function, like a hearing.
- CM Piedmont-Smith noted that, currently our code requires all committee meetings take place on Wednesday evenings, so we might want to take a fresh look at that.
- CM Flaherty summarized that, in regular session we have debate on a motion, whereas in committee we can have deliberation.
- Due to the time, and given that CM Asare could only stay until 9 am, the chair informally postponed discussion to our next meeting.

Public Comment

- Terry Amsler: Said he hopes the CBAs don't move away from the public-facing side like tomorrow's meeting seems to do. Related to tomorrow's council agenda, will there be input from the 3 commissions to be merged? He's concerned about the impact on public participation to replace 3 commissions with 1 – something the Novak report did not consider. Also, there are other forms of Robert's Rules of Order that could be considered. He has info about other ways to hold CBAs. Finally, he asked about input on the evolving job description of the Director of Public Engagement in the mayor's office.
- Eric Ost: Says we should allow public to attend and record all meetings of council members, and make it as easy as possible.

Adjourned 9:02 am.