



**CITY OF LOS ALTOS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
January 12, 2016**

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Agenda Item # 7

SUBJECT: Consider recommended changes to the Commission and Committee recruitment, interview and appointment process, and direct staff accordingly

BACKGROUND

The City Council appoints residents to serve on City Commissions and Committees for the purpose of advising the Council on certain policy areas. Currently, there are 11 Commissions and one Committee. Members are typically appointed to four-year terms and serve at the pleasure of the Council. With the exception of the Youth Commission, terms expire in February and are staggered to expire every two years.

Historically, the City has conducted an annual recruitment in January for those positions with terms expiring in February. In addition, the City may recruit for vacancies on Commissions as they arise throughout the year. Following the recruitment period, Council interviews applicants and makes appointments at a regular Council meeting.

During the 2015 recruitment process, several Council members noted difficulties and challenges with the recruitment, interview and appointment process. On October 13, 2015, the City Council appointed Mayor Pro Tem Prochnow and Councilmember Mordo to a subcommittee to work with staff in developing recommendations for the recruitment and interview process.

As the terms, recruitment and interviews for the Youth Commission are handled separately, changes are not being considered for that Commission. As such, the analysis and recommendations presented herein focus on the remaining 10 Commissions and one Committee.

EXISTING POLICY

Los Altos Municipal Code Chapter 2.08 – City Commissions Generally; City Council Norms and Procedures; and Commission and Committee Handbook

PREVIOUS COUNCIL CONSIDERATION

None

DISCUSSION

The Council subcommittee and staff met and identified a number of factors which led to some of the challenges of the 2015 recruitment process. The review noted that more terms expired in February 2015 than in any other year with 27 terms expiring. As a comparison, 11 terms expire in 2016, 24 in 2017 and eight in 2018. In addition, there were three unexpected vacancies from members resigning prior to the end of their terms. All told, there were 30 positions for which the City recruited in 2015.

In addition to the standing Commission and Committee appointments, the City formed the ad hoc Downtown Buildings Committee at the same time creating another nine positions for which the City

recruited and for which the City Council was required to interview applicants. Due to the number of qualified applicants, the Council eventually appointed 11 individuals to serve on this Committee.

Additionally, for the first time, the City Council interviewed those Commissioners who were seeking reappointment to a Commission on which they were currently serving. This change was intended to ensure the best combination of returning and new Commissioners and to provide Council an opportunity to speak with all applicants for the Commissions.

With all these factors, the Council interviewed 54 individuals for the various positions. Due to the number of applicants, interviews were conducted on three separate nights over a two-week period. Between 2008 and 2014, the highest number of applicants interviewed during the annual recruitment process was 17 with an average of approximately 12.

Finally, due to the eight-day advance noticing requirements for regular Council meetings identified in the City's Open Government Policy, the meeting at which the Council appointed individuals to the Commissions occurred two weeks after the interviews were conducted. This same circumstance also occurred during the fall 2015 recruitment in which applicants were interviewed on October 20, 2015, but not appointed until November 10, 2015. This leads to extended delays in actually seating Commissioners and can leave applicants wondering about the status of the appointments.

Subcommittee recommendations

To help facilitate the recruitment and interview process, the following changes, listed in no particular order, are recommended for Council consideration:

1. Add an applicant requirement to attend a Commission meeting prior to being considered for appointment
2. Create and provide an online training regarding the Brown Act for new and prospective Commissioners
3. Adjust the expiration of two Commissions from odd years to even years
4. Adjust the terms so that approximately half of each year's terms expire in March and half expire in September
5. Interview applicants for each Commission separately

Requirement to attend Commission meeting

The subcommittee felt that having applicants attend at least one Commission meeting was important to ensure that those interviewed are aware of the commitment for serving on a Commission as well as to provide a basic understanding of Commission format and operation.

Online Brown Act training

The subcommittee felt that providing training for new Commissioners, as well as those contemplating applying for a Commission, would help them to understand some of the unique rules and requirements under which City Commissions function. The training would not be comprehensive, but would provide a basic understanding of the Brown Act and other related procedures and requirements.

Consider recommended changes to the Commission and Committee recruitment, interview and appointment process, and direct staff accordingly

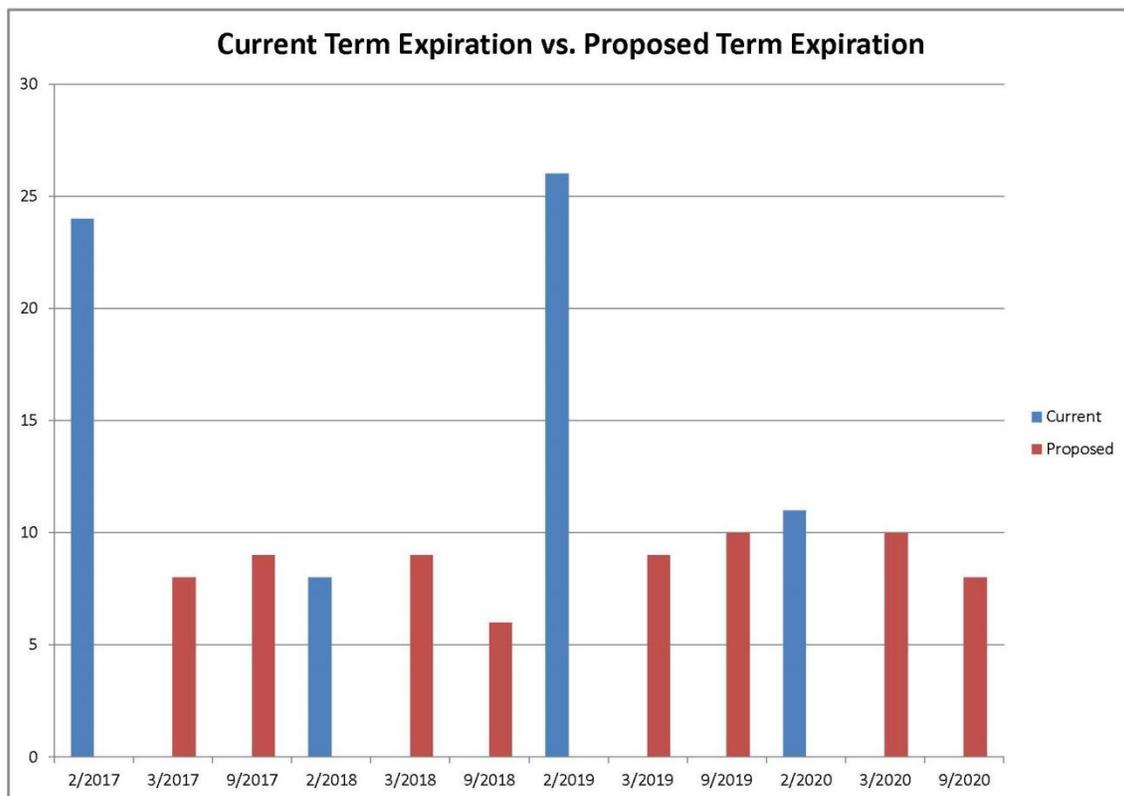
Adjustment of Commission terms

There are two parts of the recommendations for adjusting Commission terms, as noted below:

The first would be to balance the number of terms expiring between odd years and even years so that no one year has significantly more openings than another as is the current case.

The second would be to have terms expire in March and September rather than February. This would further spread out the expirations, thereby reducing the number of applicants and interviews. Having terms expire twice a year would further allow the City to set the recruitments on a biannual schedule. Rather than conducting multiple recruitments for unexpected vacancies, any open position would remain vacant until the next recruitment period. This will allow Council to plan ahead of time when Commission interviews will be held.

As shown in the following chart, if no change is made to term expirations, each odd year can expect to see a significantly larger number of Commission openings, 24 or 26, than in even years, 8 or 11. By balancing and adjusting the terms as recommended, the number of expiring terms at any one time will be between six and 10.



Interviews separated by Commission

One of the difficulties in grouping interviews by Commission has been that applicants were allowed to apply for multiple Commissions, thereby making it difficult to sort certain applications into one group versus another. To help with this, the subcommittee developed a change to the Commission

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Application. Rather than having applicants rank the Commissions they are interested in serving (and thus allowing them to apply for multiple Commissions), the application now asks applicants to identify one Commission for which they are applying. A follow up question of “Are there any other Commissions/Committee you are interested in/qualified for” allows individuals to express interest in other Commissions. This change has already been implemented in order to prioritize the applicant’s interest.

Appointment process

Currently, the Council Norms and Procedures and the Commission and Committee Handbook require that interviews for Commission vacancies be conducted at a special meeting and appointments be made at a subsequent regular Council meeting, which tends to be several weeks following the interviews.

There is no requirement in the Brown Act that Commission and Committee appointments be made at a regular meeting. Council could consider structuring the agenda for the Commission interviews in a way that allows the Council to make appointments on the same evening that the interviews are held.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Posting of the meeting agenda serves as notice to the general public.

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

None

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Not applicable

RECOMMENDATION

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ALTERNATIVES

1. Adopt one or more of the recommendations identified by the subcommittee
2. Identify additional options to streamline the Commission/Committee recruitment and selection process
3. Do not make any changes to the Commission and Committee recruitment, interview and appointment process

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Approved by: Marcia Somers, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS: None

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