

**Council Meeting: January 26, 2010****SUBJECT: Revisiting the Council Policy on “Dropped” Study Issues****BACKGROUND**

The study issues process, a component of Sunnyvale’s Planning and Management System (PAMS), has been utilized since the late 1970s and provides both City Council and City staff with a valuable planning and management tool.

The study issues process is an integral part of the City’s PAMS, linking long-range strategic planning and short-range action planning. It provides a structured approach for addressing the large number of policy issues that are raised each year. This allows Council to separate those issues supported by a minority of the Council from those championed by the majority, and ensures that resources are spent only on those issues deemed most important when ranked in comparison to all other issues.

At the Study Issues Workshop, Council chooses whether to drop, defer, or rank all pending issues. Current Council policy, *7.3.26 Study Issues Process*, provides a method for responding to issues that have been deferred multiple times; the policy states that any issue that has been deferred twice will automatically be removed from the list of issues for Council consideration the subsequent calendar year. Issues that the Council has chosen to “drop” from consideration, however, are currently eligible for sponsorship and consideration the following year. In an effort to ensure that the study issues process is as efficient as possible, staff recommends Council consider a revision to the policy such that “dropped” issues would also be precluded from coming back to Council the following year.

EXISTING POLICY

Council Policy 7.3.26 Study Issues Process Policy Purpose: the study issues process provides a method for identifying, prioritizing and analyzing policy issues in an efficient and effective way.

DISCUSSION

Each year new study issues are generated to address policy issues of current concern. Throughout the year, limited staff resources are expended developing and processing previously deferred or dropped issues which were subsequently re-sponsored. Council action on June 24, 2008 (RTC 08-180

Study Issues Process) developed a mechanism for addressing previously deferred issues – establishing that after two consecutive deferrals by Council, the item is removed from consideration in the following year. At that time, however, Council did not consider action to address previously dropped issues which continue to reappear.

Current Practice

One of the pros of the current process is that it provides Councilmembers great flexibility to include issues for consideration at the Council Study Issues Workshop – regardless of the actions at the previous year’s workshop. One of the cons, however, is that it results in City resources being spent on preparing and processing study issue papers that have been demonstrated not to be considered priority issues by a majority of Councilmembers, and therefore have little to no chance of study. The current process also allows a minority of the Council to thwart the will of the majority.

An Option

One option to consider would be to revise the current Council Policy (7.3.26 *Study Issues Process*) such that “dropped” issues would be precluded from coming back to Council the following year. Selecting this option would reduce the number of low-priority issues considered by Council at the workshop and free up staff time for higher priority study and service delivery issues.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact resulting from this report.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, at the Sunnyvale Senior Center, Community Center and Department of Public Safety; and by making the agenda and report available at the Sunnyvale Public Library, the Office of the City Clerk and on the City's Web site.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Maintain existing practice – allow a “dropped” study issue to be reintroduced as a new study issue, under the guidelines specified in Council Policy 7.3.26, for consideration the following year.
2. Further streamline the study issues process; adopt the proposed revisions to Council Policy 7.3.26 *Study Issues Process* as identified in Attachment A such that “dropped” issues would be precluded from coming back to Council the following year.

3. Revise Council Policy 7.3.26 *Study Issues Process* such that “dropped” issues would be precluded from coming back to Council for multiple years as determined by Council.
4. Refer this matter to the study issues process.
5. Other action as directed by Council.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Alternative 2:

Further streamline the study issues process; adopt the proposed revisions to Council Policy 7.3.26 *Study Issues Process* as identified in Attachment A such that “dropped” issues would be precluded from coming back to Council the following year.

This alternative could further previous Council efforts to reduce the number of issues brought for consideration at the Workshop. Removing issues from the list for one year after they have been dropped would also help to utilize staff resources and bring Council attention to more timely issues that have sufficient Council support for ranking and study.

Reviewed by:

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Approved by:

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City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Proposed Revised Council Policy 7.3.26 *Study Issues Process*

Policy 7.3.26 Study Issues Process

POLICY PURPOSE:

One of Council’s primary roles is to establish City policy. It does so by creating new policies and revising/deleting old policies by majority vote. Council’s time is limited, however, as is the number of policies it is able to consider in any given year. The study issues process provides a method for identifying, prioritizing and analyzing policy issues in an efficient and effective way. It provides a structured approach for addressing the large number of policy issues that are raised and considered by Council for study each year.

It is the purpose of this policy to identify those aspects of the City’s Study Issue process for which Council has established required standards. Those aspects of the City’s Study Issue not addressed by this policy are considered administrative or operational in nature, and shall be established under the authority of the city manager.

POLICY STATEMENT:

1. Study Issue Sponsorship

A Council sponsored study issue must receive the support of at least two councilmembers in order for staff to prepare a study issue paper, and for the issue to be considered at the Council Study Issues Workshop.

2. Selection of Issues for Study

Any substantive policy change (large or relatively small) is subject to the study issues process (i.e. evaluated for ranking at the Council Study Issues Workshop).

Policy related issues include such items as proposed ordinances, new or expanded service delivery programs, changes to existing Council policy, and/or amendments to the General Plan. Exceptions to this approach include emergency issues, and urgent policy issues that must be completed in the short term to avoid serious negative consequences to the City, subject to a majority vote of Council.

3. Deadlines for Councilmember-Proposed Study Issues

A. New Council-proposed study issue topics are due to the city manager no later than three weeks in advance of the annual study issues workshop. If the public hearing is held less than three weeks before the workshop, councilmembers may also sponsor issues *introduced by the public* at the public hearing, but must do so during that Council meeting.

B. Any Council-generated study issues proposed later than three weeks in advance of the annual workshop, with the exception of those sponsored under A. above, shall be considered in the next year’s study issues process.

4. Drop or Deferral of Issues

A. At the Study Issues Workshop, Council shall drop, defer, or rank in priority order each proposed study issue. ~~Any issue that is dropped by a majority vote of Council will not be eligible for consideration at the next year’s Workshop.~~ Issues shall be deferred a maximum of two consecutive years; ~~any issue that has been deferred twice will automatically be removed from the list of issues for Council consideration~~ at the next year’s Workshop.

B. There shall be no option to resurrect an issue:

Deleted: with no option to resurrect for that year

Inserted: with no option to resurrect for that year

Deleted: . A

Deleted: the subsequent calendar year

- a. The year following action by a majority of Council to drop it.
- b. The year following action by Council to defer the issue if it is the second consecutive vote by a majority of Council to defer the issue.

5. Sub-Element Revisions

Unless adjusted by a majority of Council, Sub-Elements of the City's General Plan shall be revised according to the schedule of revisions depicted in the Council-approved Capital Improvement Project Plan included in the City's ten year budget. As each sub-element is reviewed and updated, pending policy issues are addressed, resulting in fewer policy-related study issues being generated and proposed for Council consideration each year. Sub-element revisions shall not be ranked by Council during the study issues ranking process.

6. Ranking Method

Council shall vote utilizing a combination of *Forced Ranking* (for departments with ten or fewer issues to rank) and *Choice Ranking* (for departments with eleven or more issues to rank) for ranking study issues at the annual workshop. Specifically,

- **Forced Ranking** (for ranking ten or fewer issues) – Councilmembers individually and simultaneously rank each issue that was not deferred or dropped. Ranking are from “1” to the total number of issues, with “1” representing the highest priority issue for study. Each number can be used only one (no ties) and each issue must receive a ranking.
- **Choice Ranking** (for ranking eleven or more issue) – The total number of items to be ranked (after deferring or dropping issues) is divided by three and each Councilmember is given the resulting number of votes (rounding up). For example, if there are twelve issues, each Councilmember will receive four votes. Councilmembers allocate their votes, one each, to their highest priority issues. Some issues will receive votes and others may not. A tally is made of votes received for each issue. Two-way ties between issues are resolved by quick hand votes of the Council. The final ranking is determined by the number of votes received.

This method shall also be utilized by boards/commissions when ranking study issues for Council consideration.

7. Number of Study Issues Conducted Each Year

Following Council's determination of study issue priorities, the city manager shall advise Council of staff's capacity for completing ranked issues. Council reserves the right to expand that capacity by increasing budgeted resources.

(Adopted: RTC #08-180 (June 24, 2008); Amended: RTC #08-344 (December 2, 2008))

Lead Department: Office of the City Manager