

## **Subcommittee Meeting: November 28, 2011**

### **Subject: Consideration of Change to Frequency of Sustainability Commission Meetings, Change of Location of Library Board Meetings, and Adoption of Commission Liaison Policy**

#### **REPORT IN BRIEF**

Three issues have been brought before Council for consideration. The first involves the frequency of meetings of the Sustainability Commission, which currently meets every other month. The second involves the location of meetings for the Board of Library Trustees. The third involves drafting policy recommendations in response to Council's approval of the adoption of a liaison policy for boards and commissions.

#### **BACKGROUND**

Regarding the Sustainability Commission, commission members have requested that Council consider increasing the frequency of its meetings from once every other month to once a month, to match that of other boards and commissions.

Regarding the Board of Library Trustees, board members have requested that Council policy be modified to change the location of its meetings from the library program room to the library conference room on the second floor.

Regarding the issue of appointing Council liaisons, Council voted to adopt a liaison policy for boards and commissions, and it referred this issue back to the subcommittee to draft specific language for putting the policy into effect.

#### **EXISTING POLICY**

Regarding the frequency of Sustainability Commission meetings, Council Policy 7.2.19 2A(X) states

Sustainability Commission: This seven-member commission acts in an advisory capacity to the City Council to provide expertise on major policy areas related to the environmental sustainability goals of the Climate Action Plan (CAP) and General Plan. Meetings are held bi-monthly beginning in January on the third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the West Conference Room at City Hall. If the third Monday is a City observed holiday, the meeting will be held on the third Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. in the West Conference Room.

Regarding the location of meetings for the Board of Library Trustees, Council Policy 7.2.19 2A(IV) states

Board of Library Trustees: formed by City Charter Section 1013. This five-member board acts in an advisory capacity to the City Council on library related issues. Meetings are held on the first Monday of each month at 7 p.m. in the Library Program Room. If the first Monday is a City observed holiday, the

meeting will be held on the second Monday of the month in the Library Program Room.

Currently, no policies exist regarding Council liaisons to Boards and Commissions

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Sustainability Commission**

Sustainability Commission members have raised two specific concerns about the lack of frequent Commission meetings. The first is that the Commission's workload justifies more frequent meetings. The second is that the infrequency of meetings causes the Commission to miss opportunities to provide input on certain issues within the Commission's purview due to timing concerns. Accordingly, they request increasing the frequency of its meetings from bi-monthly to monthly.

Cases of inconvenient timing have already arisen in the commission's first year of operation, and an increase in meeting frequency will definitely serve to minimize such occurrences. While the commission can likely find topics to fill the additional meeting time, and while there has been a short-term need for increased meetings, the long-term demand for more meeting time has not yet been demonstrated, and it may or may not exist.

### **Board of Library Trustees**

Library Board Trustees have requested to relocate their meetings from Library Program Room A to the second floor Library Conference Room. The current location has advantages and disadvantages. The primary advantages are a significant amount of available space and convenient access for members of the public. One disadvantage stems from its proximity to the library bathrooms, which result in a significant amount of noise and interruptions from curious but otherwise uninterested library patrons. In addition, the monthly meetings render the library program room (both room A, and the joined use of program rooms A and B) unavailable for other events. Particularly when program rooms A and B are joined, this represents a significant amount of city meeting space. The proposed location is more remote, which is more conducive for undisturbed meetings. However, its location in the second floor administrative space discourages public participation, and such a move may require new signage or other additional public information. Additionally, the proposed meeting room is quite small with a total capacity of eight people. This renders it unusable for meetings with high public participation. If this change is adopted, the new meeting room would be the smallest of all meeting spaces used by commissions. In the past several years, few meetings have had more than two members of the public present, the notable exceptions being debates involving the 2007 library bond measure and the issues surrounding Raynor Center.

In its current form, Council policy dictates the meeting place of all boards and commissions. Removing this requirement and leaving locations to the discretion of staff

or the boards and commissions would require extensive rewriting of Council Policy section 7.2.19 2(A).

## **Council Liaison Policy**

At its September 13, 2011 meeting, Council approved creating a Council liaison policy for boards and commission, returning the issue to the subcommittee for specific language. Some of the issues that need to be addressed by Council policy include

- The specific role and responsibilities of a liaison.
- The length of time a councilmember serves as a liaison to a given board or commission.
- The process for dealing with problems that may arise when a liaison oversteps boundaries.

Draft policy language:

### 7.2.19 2(S) Council Liaisons to Boards and Commissions

The City Council shall appoint one councilmember to each board and commission to serve as a council liaison to each board and commission. Appointments shall be made once a year as part of the City Council intergovernmental relations appointment process, with the method of assignment left to Council's discretion. To the extent possible, councilmembers shall not serve as liaison to the same commission for successive terms. Attendance at board or commission meetings by the council liaison is not mandatory. The Planning Commission, the Personnel Board, and the Board of Building Code Appeals are excluded from the council liaison process.

During a board or commission meeting, the Council liaison shall serve a role similar to that of the staff liaison, responding to the needs of the commissioners as appropriate and as requested. The liaison shall specifically serve as commission parliamentarian when procedural questions arise. The primary responsibility for providing information to boardmembers or commissioners belongs to the staff liaison, but the council liaison may provide additional information when questions fall beyond the scope of staff's expertise. At all times, final procedural authority resides with the board or commission chair, and the council liaison shall act in a fashion that respects the authority of the commission chair at all times. The council liaison shall not act to influence the policy recommendations formed by the board or commission.

When questions or concerns arise regarding the conduct of a council liaison, the chair of the board or commission should consult with the Mayor for possible resolution. When the liaison in question is the Mayor, the chair should consult with the Vice Mayor for possible resolution.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Doubling the frequency of Sustainability Commission meetings will double the cost associating with staffing and preparing for the meetings.

There is no direct fiscal impact from relocating the Board of Library Trustee meetings. There is a slight potential for an increase in revenue, since the Library Program Room would have greater availability for use for other public meetings.

Appointment of Council liaisons to Boards and Commissions will result in a slight increase in staffing requirements. Staff must coordinate the appointment of the liaisons. Further, it is likely that the presence of Councilmembers at commission meetings will increase the duration of those meetings, which increases the demands of the commissions' staff liaisons. Finally, the Council liaisons must be included in the distribution list for Commission meeting agendas, which requires staff time to coordinate distribution, in addition to any actual increase in distribution costs.

### **PUBLIC CONTACT**

Public contact was made by posting the Subcommittee 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.

Additionally, this report was distributed to all Boardmembers and Commissioners prior to the subcommittee meeting.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The subcommittee recommends:

Regarding the Sustainability Commission, staff supports either bi-monthly or monthly meetings, and staff believes the added expense of monthly meetings can be absorbed by flexing staff's time.

Regarding the Library Board location, staff takes no position.

Regarding council liaisons, staff strongly endorses the basic concept, as it should reinforce the relationship between Council and its advisory boards. Staff recommends that Councilmembers rotate assignments amongst the various boards and commissions, with rotations occurring every 4 to 6 months, so that every Councilmember has exposure to every board and commission.