



Staff Report

File #: 23-0004

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

DATE: 01/04/2023

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: City Manager's Office - City Clerk

SUBJECT:

Request from Vice Mayor Richins and Council Member Steiner to consider holding the Committee of the Whole and Study Session meetings on the first and third Wednesday of the month, respectively.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Vice Mayor Richins and Council Member Steiner are asking the City Council to consider revising the meeting schedule. Currently, the Committee of the Whole is held on the second Wednesday of the month and the Study Session is held on the fourth Wednesday of the month. Vice Mayor Richins and Council Member Steiner are requesting that the meetings be held on the same day as City Council meetings, the first and third Wednesday of each month, respectively.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council provide staff with direction on whether to revise the monthly meeting schedule by holding Committee of Whole meetings on the first Wednesday of each month, and any Study Sessions on the third Wednesday of each month.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

Vice Mayor Richins and Council Member Steiner requested a future agenda it to evaluate the possibility of reducing meeting days to two Wednesdays a month. The City Council currently meets four Wednesdays each month: the first and third Wednesdays are City Council meetings, the second Wednesday is the Committee of the Whole (COTW), and the fourth Wednesday is a Study Session.

Prior to 2021, the City Council held three meetings per month: two City Council meetings and a Study Session. In 2021, the work of council sub committees was consolidated into a COTW, which meets on the second Wednesday of the month.

Each of these four council meetings meets the Brown Act standard of a public meeting, which

requires that the agenda for public meetings be posted at least 72 hours before the meeting. The Office of the City Clerk is responsible for preparing and the posting the agenda for each meeting. The creation of an agenda is initiated and monitored by the City Clerk's office. Staff prepare reports and presentations, which are routed to various departments during the agenda posting week. The City Clerk's office ensures that the agenda packet is complete, with the required approvals, and posted at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Governor Newsom has lifted the COVID-19 State of Emergency and the State of Emergency will end on February 28, 2023. Accordingly, Brown Act bodies must fully return to in-person public meetings. Virtual attendance will no longer be an option, it will only be allowed on just cause or emergency circumstances.

ANALYSIS:

Staff is proposing two options for Council consideration. Option 1 is to update the meeting schedule to hold two meeting days per month. Option 2 is to retain the current schedule of four meeting days per month. Each of these is analyzed below.

Proposed Options:

Option 1. Update the meeting schedule to meet twice a month.

1st Wednesday of the month

Committee of the Whole at 4:00 p.m.

City Council at 6:30 p.m.

3rd Wednesday of the month

Study Session at 4:00 p.m.

City Council at 6:30 p.m.

Changing the number of meeting days from four to two would change both the opportunity for community involvement and staff workflow.

Pros:

By consolidating the meetings to fewer days, it may increase public participation because residents would need to make fewer adjustments to their work or social schedules to participate in these public meetings.

The current process requires our City Council to review agenda items and reach out to staff and residents regarding agenda items each week. Revising the meeting schedule to meet twice a month would consolidate these efforts to twice per month.

Reducing the number of meeting days would provide more flexibility for Council and staff to pursue other commitments outside of regular operational hours.

Reducing the number of meeting days would consolidate the agenda creation process to two weeks per month, rather than the four weeks that exists presently. Each week staff is simultaneously

preparing to present for a Wednesday meeting while writing and reviewing staff reports for the upcoming meeting. Option 1 would provide more time for staff to focus on preparing and vetting staff reports and presentations. Changing the meeting schedule to two Wednesdays per month would also allow staff to streamline the agenda process and work on other pending projects. Currently, the Office of the City Clerk staff is working with all departments on a weekly basis regarding Staff Reports and presentations for that week's agenda.

Option 1 would reduce the amount of time dedicated to preparing the Council Chambers and Board Room for each meeting, including technology setup, broadcasting preparation, preparing public documents, and taking public comment in advance.

Cons:

Option 1 will reduce the frequency of meeting days, which may reduce public participation for residents who cannot be present on either of the two meeting days.

The consolidation of meetings into fewer days may reduce the overall number of items that can be presented during the COTW and Study Session because of time constraints. The current schedule for COTW and Study Session has a start time of 4:00 pm and generally end sometime around 6:00 pm. For days where there is no Closed Session, there would be the same amount of time for a typical COTW or Study session before the Council Meeting at 6:30 pm. It would take an adjustment period to manage the depth of items presented and/or the number of items heard in a COTW or Study Session to ensure they occur at a time when there is a light or no closed session. For meeting days where there is a heavier Closed Session agenda accompanied by a more robust COTW or Study Session agenda, the Closed Session would need to be scheduled at a different time, perhaps immediately following the regular meeting. Additionally, if the City Council's schedule permits, the COTW and Study Session start time could be amended to begin at an earlier time, if desired.

Option 2. Continue with the current meeting schedule, four Wednesdays a month.

1st Wednesday of the month

City Council meeting at 6:30 p.m.

2nd Wednesday of the month

Committee of the Whole at 4:00 p.m.

3rd Wednesday of the month

City Council meeting at 6:30 p.m.

4th Wednesday of the month

Study Session at 4:00 p.m.

Pros:

Option 2 retains the current schedule of meetings, which has a know participation pattern for the community.

The current schedule allows for meetings to go long if there are items that require more discussion than anticipated. Having no set end time provides flexibility for Council to consider many more items if needed.

Option 2 does not require additional consideration of how to address closed session items.

Cons:

Option 2 retains the existing weekly agenda preparation cycle for staff, where the staff are preparing reports on future topics while simultaneously preparing for presentations on different topics for the Wednesday meeting.

Option 2 commits Council and staff to four meeting days per month.

Option 2 requires more dedicated time to preparing the Council Chambers and Board Room for each meeting, including technology setup, broadcasting preparation, preparing public documents, and taking public comment in advance.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

This proposed item does not have a fiscal impact.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. This action is to revise our public meeting schedule. There is no possibility that this action will have a significant effect on the environment. Therefore, no environmental analysis is required.

PREPARED BY: SYLVIA EDWARDS, CITY CLERK

REVIEWED BY: ROGER BRADLEY, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER