



Commission on Aging

CONSENT CALENDAR

May 26, 2015

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Commission on Aging

Submitted by: Josephine Ratnam, Chair, Commission on Aging

Subject: Annual Meetings of Commission Appointees

RECOMMENDATION

That all City Council members and the Mayor hold annual "working" meetings that gather together their appointed Commission members. The purpose of the meetings would be for personal contact, information sharing and networking.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

The City will incur minimal costs in the implementation of this recommendation.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Currently there is very little established policy, either formal or informal, regarding face-to-face contact between Council members, the Mayor and their appointees to the various City Commissions and none addressing any such contact between a Councilmember (and the Mayor) and his or her full group of commissioners.

As things stand, since appointment to commissions are in general for four (4) years and often overlap Councilmember's (and the Mayor's) terms, if a given district seat changes hands, on occasion new Council members (and Mayor) and their inherited commissioners have never met in person. In addition to this, since reappointment of commissioners to a second term is often a routine matter, it is possible that eight (8) years can pass with little or no direct contact between a Councilmember (or the Mayor) and his or her appointee.

As far as contact between a Councilmember's (or the Mayor's) group of commissioners goes, there is no consistent policy and to the Commission on Aging's (CoA) observation in many, many cases commissioners have no idea of even the name of their counterparts on other commissions much less any understanding of who these people might be and how best to work with them towards common goals. Indeed, though some commissions are in constant contact with one another, since there is little established policy encouraging broad based communication between commissions, the simple fact that shared interests exist is far too often missed.

BACKGROUND

Over the past couple of years outreach and communication to other commissions has been part of the CoA work plan. A few individual commissioners have sat in on other commissions' meetings, introduced themselves, tried to establish lines of communication and then reported back to the CoA, especially as regards issue relating to the aging population. This has proved moderately fruitful, but time consuming and very hit or miss. During that same time period one commissioner had an appointing council member that held annual commissioner meetings and reported back. This practice seemed much more useful and a couple of other commissioners who had had similar experiences before this period confirmed this which started us down the road that led to this action item.

To the best of the CoA's discovery, in the past various Council members (and Mayor) have come up with individual ways of establishing lines of communications with their commissioners and between them. Though the CoA fully appreciates Council members' (and the Mayor's) need for latitude in determining these relationships, the end results are often uneven and sporadic. In the case of the annual commissioners meeting, over the years some Council members have always held such meetings, others only on occasion and some not at all. Over those same years the individual commissions have had memberships with widely varying exposure to and understanding of the broad set of Municipal concerns that affect their work and much of the time in meetings can be spent bringing everyone up to date regarding these.

The CoA voted at its regular meeting of January 21, 2015 to recommend that City Council members (and the Mayor) hold annual "working" meetings that gather together their appointed Commission members. The purpose of the meetings would be for personal contact, information sharing and networking. (M/S/C) Jacquilin/Hallberg; Ayes: Castello-Kramer, Hallberg, Jacquilin, Lazaris, Porter, Ratnam, Schechner, Stross; Noes: None; Abstain: None

The CoA requested support from all City Commissions and the following have informed the CoA of positions taken on this recommendation:

Commission on Disability at its March 18, 2015 meeting, the Commission on Disability unanimously passed the following motion: "Support the Commission on Aging's recommendation urging council members and the Mayor to pledge to hold annual meetings with their commission appointees." (M/S/C) Murray/Singer
Ayes: Trahan, Murray, Kwong, Singer, Graham; Noes: none; Absent: Weiss, Walsh, Leeder

Energy Commission at its February 25, 2015 meeting passed a motion that City Council members (and the Mayor) hold annual "working" meetings that gather together their appointed Commission members. The purpose of the meetings would be for personal contact, information sharing and networking. (M/S/C) James/Gallardo; Ayes:

Bell, Gallardo, Lee, Murray, Wang; Noes: Schlachter; Abstentions: James; Absent: Constantine.

Housing Advisory Commission at its March 5, 2015 meeting passed a motion to support the Commission on Aging's recommendation for all City Council members and the Mayor to hold annual working meetings that gather together their appointed Commission members. (M/S/C): Tregub/Wolfe. Ayes: Abramson, Magofna, Skjerping, Tregub, and Wolfe; Noes: None; Abstain: Abramson, Darrow, Drake, and Gordon; Absent: None.

Human Welfare and Community Action Commission at its March 12, 2015 meeting passed a motion to support the recommendation of the Commission on Aging but also requests that the Commission on Aging consider including the following:

1. A group meeting with the Mayor and council members that includes all commissioners.
2. Extend the invitation to elected commissioners.

(M/S/C): Sood/McMullan; Ayes – Davila, Sood, McMullan, Browne, Omodele, Trigueros, Cross; Noes: None; Abstain: Dunner; Absent: Luu, Flanders

Commission on Labor at its March 18, 2015 meeting the motion to endorse the Commission on Aging recommendation to City Council failed. (M/S/F) Fillingim/Frankel Ayes: Frankel, Yu, Fillingim; Noes: Kessler, Bloom, Dixon; Abstention: Teter

Personnel Board at its March 2, 2015 meeting voted to table the item and not consider it at this time. The Board did not feel it was necessary to create this formal mandatory meeting because they already communicate with their Council Members. (M/S/C): Dixon/Huynh. Ayes: Dixon, Huynh, Kidd, Murray, Roter; Noes: None; Abstain: None; Absent: Vizas, Wenk

Police Review Commission at its March 11, 2015 meeting passed a motion to "Strongly urge that Councilmembers hold annual meetings with their Commissioners at their discretion" (M/S/C) (Lippman/Vicente) Ayes: Bartlett, Finley, Lippman, Lowhurst, Perezvelez, Rogers, Sherman and Vicente; Noes: none; Abstain: Bernstein; Absent: Allen.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

There are no identifiable environmental effects.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The CoA feels that Council members (and the Mayor) establishing the habit of an annual commissioners meeting is a very simple and cost effective way of both addressing the concerns expressed above and of opening doors to new opportunities insofar as:

1. It ensures a basic level of the needed personal contact between Council members and their commissioners.
2. For all attendees it puts a "human face" on the work of the various commissions and creates the sense of a broader community effort, the value of which should not be underestimated.
3. A well run meeting where each commissioner has a chance to briefly recap the last year's work of the commission he or she sits on establishes a baseline of information regarding Municipal concerns.
4. It encourages greater communication between the commissions which will result in:
 - a) Greater appreciation of one another's work
 - b) Greater awareness of the current scope of one another's work
 - c) Greater appreciation of the complexity of the Council's work
 - d) More efficient use of time in commission meetings
 - e) Equal opportunity for all commissioners for access to useful information
 - f) The recognition of and better cooperation in achieving shared goals
 - g) More efficient sharing of resources
 - h) Increased transparency between commissions
5. In general, it will enliven the working relationship between Berkeley's elected officials and its citizen commissions and help ensure that our investment in this cooperative effort will yield greater returns.

Again, the CoA's suggestion here is that these be casual and friendly working meetings, not just social events. Though we fully appreciate that Council members (and the Mayor) already carry a heavy load, the CoA strongly feels that these yearly meetings will be of so much value to the municipality that we unanimously urge individual Council members (and the Mayor) to take this additional, small burden upon themselves.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

The CoA had considered that holding the meetings should be done on good faith, that they need not be an official requirement but instead should take the form of a pledge to "do his or her best to hold such yearly events". After further consideration, that language was removed from the recommendation and the accompanying background of the report.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the content and recommendations of the Commission's report.

CONTACT PERSON

Leah Talley, Commission Secretary, HHCS, 981-5178