



Legislation Text

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ITEM TITLE:

Work Session: Discussion Regarding City Boards, Commissions, and Other Citizen Advisory Groups

SUBMITTED BY: Mark Detter, City Manager

FISCAL NOTES:

Expenditure Required: N/A

Unencumbered Balance: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file

SUMMARY STATEMENT:

This work session is a follow-up discussion to the recent City Council strategic planning retreat.

Topics to discuss this evening:

1. Process to establish Council appointed citizen advisory groups.

- Board and commissions are incorporated in Valdez Municipal Code and established by ordinance (*excerpt attached*).
- Process for establishment of other citizen advisory groups (ie, a “task force”) needs to be incorporated in City Council Policies and Procedures (*document attached*)
- Staff recommendation for establishment of task forces:
 - Consider delegating/directing work to established city boards and commissions first.
 - For example, based upon the mission and purpose of established commissions, staff recommends the economic development portion of the current work on housing (incentives, etc.) should be assigned to the City Economic Diversification Commission. The commission would then work through the topic, with staff support and stakeholder/public involvement, to develop a recommendation to Council.
 - If the topic does not fit into the mission/purpose of an existing city board or commission, or if the work requires more specialized citizen involvement, then Council would

formally establish a **temporary** task force by Council resolution.

- Council resolution establishing the task force should include, at a minimum:
 - Task Force name
 - Scope of work
 - Timeline for work and sunset date
 - Member composition (can be appointed by name or solicited from the general public thru the city's application portal, depending on topic)
 - Expected task force work products and delivery date to Council
 - City department providing staff support to the Task Force.
 - Resolution used to establish Mayor's Economic Recovery Task Force (*attached*) could be used as a model to create a standardized resolution template
 - If there is Council consensus with this approach, the process would be incorporated as a formally approved change to Council Policies & Procedures.

2. Process to account for existing citizen advisory groups which were not originally established by resolution.

- Staff are looking for Council guidance about how they would like to address each of existing task forces (*see attached memo for recommendations*):
 - Beautification Task Force,
 - Flood Mitigation Task Force, and
 - Hospital Expansion Task Force.
- Options for Council consideration:
 1. Formally establish the existing task force by resolution,
 2. Turn the task force into a commission by ordinance, or
 3. Formally sunset the task force.

3. Recruitment and selection of Council appointees to established city boards and commissions.

- Current list of established boards, commissions, and committees to which Council appoints citizen representatives:
 - Library Board

- Planning & Zoning Commission
- Ports & Harbors Commission
- Parks & Recreation Commission
- Economic Diversification Commission
- Valdez Museum & Historical Archive Board of Directors
- City Permanent Fund Investment Committee
- *Note 1: Council appoints only Council Members to the City Audit Committee and to serve as the Council's representative on the VCVB Board of Directors.*
- *Note 2: Council appoints citizen representatives (1) to the Providence Valdez Medical Center Health Advisory Council under the current PVMC Operating and Management Agreement, (2) to the Prince William Sound Aquaculture Corporation Board of Directors, (3) to the Regional Citizen Advisory Council Board of Directors, and (4) to the AGPA Board of Directors. However, those boards are separate entities, independent of the city.*
- Current process for advertising vacancies for city boards and commissions is well established and managed by the City Clerk's Office. Online board and commission application portal provides the best avenue for receipt, tracking, and processing of applications and managing current appointments. Alternate paper application process, with follow-on manual entry into the electronic database by the Clerk's Office, is available for those who have barriers to using the electronic option.
- Council has expressed interest in discussing ways to encourage a more robust applicant pool for these volunteer positions. Like other areas in the community, interest in volunteering in general is often limited and/or comprised of the same group of individuals.

Some options to consider for increasing interest might include, but are not limited to:

- Reducing the term of appointment from the standard three-year term to a two-year term to reduce commitment barriers while still ensuring quality participation and continuity of knowledge of board members and commissioners (*Exception: Planning & Zoning Commissioners must serve three-year terms by Charter.*)
- Active recruitment of candidates for vacancies directly by City Council Members. Annual expiration of terms for specific boards/commissions occurs within the same month every year, so advance planning with notice from the Clerk's Office would be easily possible.
- Reduce the size of certain boards & commissions from seven to five members (*would require change by ordinance for each board and commission*).
- As a reminder, Council is not obligated to appoint applicants to boards and commission if they do not feel they are a suitable candidate, even when only one application is received for a particular vacancy.
- Some board members and commissioners struggle with attendance following

appointment, and therefore some boards and commissions struggle with maintenance of a quorum for their meetings.

Starting in 2019, the Clerk's Office added specific questions to the online board/commission application to very clearly set expectations regarding time and task commitments associated with board/commission service.

The process for resignation or replacement of board members or commissioners who are unable to regularly attend meetings is established. Attendance is being actively tracked and notice is given to commissioners who are experiencing challenges. Staff want to make Council aware that several formal requests for removal of commissioners due to attendance may be presented for their approval over the next six months.

4. Providence Alaska request for new appointment process for PVMC Health Advisory Council (HAC).

- Providence has approached the city manager requesting an update to the standard process by which PVMC HAC applications are collected and vetted prior to presentation to the Council for appointment. Staff would like to discuss this change with Council to determine any areas of concern.
- Section 24.e of the current PVMC Operating and Management Agreement (attached) requires a PMVC HAC to be established, with citizen appointments made by Council. However, the process nuances for routine application submission and vetting of applicants are not specifically outlined in that verbiage, with the exception that Council makes the formal appointment of HAC members.
- Currently, HAC vacancies are advertised **to the general public**, applications received, and appointees selected by Council in the same way as other city boards and commissions. **All applications received are presented to Council for consideration.**
- Providence would like to change the way applications are solicited, submitted, and vetted as outlined in Providence's recently approved PVMC Community Advisory Council charter (attached).
 - In this charter, "PVMC Community Advisory Council" replaces the "PVMC HAC", with the charter replacing the previous PVMC HAC by-laws.
- Within their new charter, when vacancies occur on the PVMC Community Advisory Council:
 - The PVMC Community Advisory Council would solicit for citizen applicants instead of the City Clerk's Office.

- Applications will be received and vetted by the PVMC Community Advisory Council first.
- Out of those applications, the PVMC Community Advisory Council would then select nominees to present to the Valdez City Council and the Providence Alaska Regional Board for formal appointment. ***(Not all applications would be forwarded to Council for consideration; only those nominated by the PVMC Community Advisory Council.)***

5. Communications pathways between Council and citizen advisory groups.

- There has significant interest expressed in renewing a formal routine for open, direct, two-way communications between City Council and its appointed board members and commissioners.
- Ensuring Council and board/commission priorities are the same is also crucial.
- Over the years, communication between Council and its appointed boards/commissions has taken many forms, including but not limited to:
 - Regularly scheduled joint work sessions between Council and the board or commission.
 - Regularly scheduled reports given by the board or commission to Council during a regular meeting (in-person or written and including in the agenda packet).
 - Attaching approved commission or board meeting minutes to Council agenda packets as an appendix item.
 - Council hosted thank you event/dinner for board members and commissioners.
- Staff are looking for Council direction about their preference for establishing a routine and/or process for communicating with their appointed citizen advisory groups.