

# Proposal for Council Meetings and Committees

To make City Council meetings work better for the citizens of Austin, the new Council proposes changes to City Council meeting procedures and the Council Committee operations, to create:

- Greater opportunity to tackle major problems
- Greater opportunity for meaningful public and City Commission engagement, earlier in the legislative process and before decisions are final
- Better use of staff time and resources
- Culture of public engagement and improved customer service

## Immediate Steps to Improve Council Procedures, Evaluate After 6 Months

### 1. Manage Council agenda to avoid late night meetings and foster greater public participation:

- Rotate Council meeting agenda items on a regular schedule by subject to save staff, public and Council time. Example: week 1 and 3 zoning, week 2 and 4 other items.
- Hold Council meetings more frequently to reduce the number of agenda items per meeting and to end meetings at a reasonable time.
- Move Executive sessions to a day other than Council meetings as appropriate.

### 2. Enhance opportunity for meaningful public engagement earlier, before decisions are final

- Move public hearings earlier in the process to Council Committees. At request of 4 Councilmembers, schedule additional public hearing before Council for a limited time period with the goal of establishing a time certain for testimony that is accessible for the public.
- Assign all proposed ordinances/resolutions to Council Committees before being considered by the Council. (Does not apply to time sensitive items or items already further along in the process. This does not change the City Manager's ability to bring items directly to the Council.)

### 3. Dramatically enhance access to and completeness of minutes, back-up, tracking follow-up action on resolutions, and other records of Council Committee and Commission proceedings to support transparency. Create accessible documents that clearly explain Council processes to public.

### 4. Take immediate steps to initiate longer term improvements for public engagement beginning with discussing the following issues during a "deep dive" session with the entire Council for the purpose of soliciting ideas to enhance staff's current engagement efforts:

- Evaluate creating a mediator position (on staff or contract) to reduce conflict for planning, zoning, contracting, and purchasing issues.
- Initiate a public process to research, obtain public input, and make recommendations to Council on best practices for public engagement in city government. Create Public Engagement Task Force supported by experts in public engagement best practices.
- Align City Commissions with Council Committee structure over time to enhance public engagement and better address Commission recommendations.

## Possible List of Council Standing Committees

Council Committees	Scope
<b>Audit</b>	<b>Audit Oversight</b> (for example: audit reports, bond oversight, citizen commission oversight, purchasing and contract audits)
<b>Finance</b>	<b>Financial Policy Oversight and Government Performance</b> (for example: financial policies, bond programs, retirement systems, employee benefits, banking/investment policies, performance metrics/reporting, bond oversight, budget alignment with priorities, policy impact on affordability)
<b>Mobility</b>	<b>All Transportation Modes</b> (for example: roads, ABIA, transit, pedestrian, bicycle, ground transportation, taxi, Lone Star Rail, TX High Speed Rail, core transit corridors)
<b>Public Utilities</b>	<b>Utility Oversight</b> (for example: Austin Water, Austin Resource Recovery, Drainage Utility, utility / telecommunications regulatory issues)
<b>Austin Energy</b>	<b>Utility Oversight – Austin Energy</b>
<b>Health &amp; Human Services</b>	<b>Health and Human Services</b> (for example: equity, social services, education, public health, health care services, animal welfare, targeted populations)
<b>Public Safety</b>	<b>Public Safety</b> (for example: criminal justice, code enforcement, disaster preparedness, fire, police, EMS, judicial/quasi-judicial)
<b>Planning and Neighborhoods</b>	<b>Land Use</b> (for example: Imagine Austin, Land Development Code, development processes, neighborhood planning, noise, zoning, annexations, eminent domain, landmark review, design)
<b>Open Space Environment, and Sustainability</b>	<b>Environment</b> (for example: climate protection, forestry, waterfront, heritage trees, open space, parks, rivers and lakes, trash, recycling and compost, sustainability)
<b>Housing and Community Development</b>	<b>Housing and Community Development</b> (for example: affordable housing, community services block grants)
<b>Economic Development</b>	<b>Economic Development</b> (for example: job training, small and minority business development, economic incentives, improvement districts, economic development corporation oversight, general trade and commerce, MBE/WBE contracting practices)
<b>Innovation and Creative Industries</b>	<b>Innovation and Creativity</b> (for example: emerging technology, tourism, events, entertainment, live music, film/tv production, sports, library, art)
<b>Intergovernmental Affairs</b>	<b>Legislative Priorities, Intergovernmental Relations:</b> Federal, State, local intergovernmental affairs (for example: Legislative Agendas, Interlocal Agreements, Joint Programs/Committees)

NOTE: Council Committees may work jointly when there is overlap on a particular issue and will also collaborate with City Departments, City Commissions, and intergovernmental/other Committees that Councilmembers sit on.

Affordability Task Force – Council may create one or more Task Forces to address cost of living and affordability issues.

# How An Item Moves to City Council Meeting

Groups contributing to the development of items:

