

Proposed City Council Deliberation Process

Council Committee Structure

Goal – *To make City Council and Council Committee meetings work better for the citizens of Austin, Council Members, and City staff by:*

- Providing greater opportunity for meaningful public and City Commission engagement, earlier in the legislative process.
- Enhancing the culture of public engagement and improving customer service.
- Providing greater opportunity to tackle major problems.
- Providing more predictable scheduling to receive public input.
- Reducing late night meetings.
- Making better use of staff time and resources.

Proposed Process Changes –

1. Manage Council Agenda to avoid late night meetings and foster greater public participation.
 - a) Hold Council meetings more frequently to reduce the number of agenda items per meeting and to end meetings at a reasonable time.
 - b) 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.
 - c) Move Executive sessions a day other than Council meetings, such as Work Sessions.
2. Enhance opportunity for meaningful public engagement earlier in the legislative process.
 - a) Move majority of public input to Council Committees...earlier in the process.
 - b) Maintain the ability to receive public input at Council meetings if: 1) public input was not received via a Council Committee or 2) by the request of 4 Council members. Public input during Council meetings will be received during a limited timeframe with the goal of establishing a time certain for testimony that is accessible for the public.
 - c) Assign all proposed ordinances/resolutions to Council Committees (see Exhibit A and B) 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.) See Exhibit C for workflow.
3. Enhance access to and completeness of minutes, post-Committee reports, back-up material, tracking follow-up action on resolutions, and other records of Council Committee and Commission proceedings to support transparency. Create accessible documents (including real time access to amendments and documents during a City Council meeting) that clearly explain Council processes to public.
4. Initiate public engagement improvements
 - a) Schedule "deep dive" session to describe existing public engagement processes, tools, techniques and to solicit ideas to enhance efforts
 - b) Evaluate creating a mediator position (on staff or via consultant contract) to reduce conflict for planning, zoning, contracting, and purchasing issues.
 - c) Create a Public Engagement Task Force supported by experts in public engagement best practices to initiate a public process to research, obtain public input, and make recommendations to the City Manager and City Council on best practices for public engagement in city government.
5. Align Citizen Boards/Commissions with Council Committee structure over time to enhance public engagement and better address Commission recommendations.