



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – June 1, 2022 Agenda Item 3

Work Session

City Committees, Commissions and Boards: Update, Recruitment, and Discussion of Specific Committees

Recommended Council Action

Hear and discuss options for council action for several city committees, commissions and boards, with a focus on spring recruitment for new and continuing members.

Context with Key Issues

Last summer the Council made numerous changes to the system for Council-appointed volunteer boards, commissions and committees, adopting code changes in Sept. 2021 to implement many of these changes. The Council made appointments last fall to 9 boards, commissions and committees after an intensive recruiting process that yielded over 100 applications, as well as annual appointments to the Youth Council. A few decisions were not finalized, pending additional information, experience, and review of task force recommendations.

This work session returns to those issues, in the context of spring recruitment for new and continuing members. Specific topics include status of the Noise Control Board, Nuclear Free Committee, a possible Sustainable Finance Committee recommended by the Sustainable Banking Task Force, and a possible Public Safety Committee recommended by the Public Safety Task Force. A future Council meeting will focus on adopting any code changes needed to implement Council decisions.

The changes implemented in September 2021 included:

- Continue 5 quasi-judicial & regulatory groups and 5 standing committees (and address minor code issues after reappointments);
- Discontinue 3 groups--Personnel Appeals Board, Facade Advisory Board, Commemoration Commission, and Complete Safe Streets (consider a future Vision Zero task force);
- Discontinue two groups in their current form: Committee on the Environment (was reconstituted in code as Sustainable Maryland Committee) and Complete Safe Streets Committee (consider a future Vision Zero Task Force); and
- Continue temporarily, and put recruiting on hold, pending further discussion, for--Noise Control Board, in context of public safety discussion; and Nuclear Free Committee, pending outcome of Sustainable Investment Task Force;
- Establish a common membership, terms, and purposes for Council-appointed groups;
- Provide limited exceptions for specific committees;
- Retain specific code language for quasi-judicial and regulatory groups;
- Streamline code language for non-regulatory standing committees; and
- Codify the Youth Council and Grants Review Committee.

The Council has had as a priority to review the structure, appointment processes, and practices for Council-appointed committees, in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness, attract new members, and explore innovative ways to engage residents who tend to be harder to reach. The desired outcome is to enable more diverse, engaged, productive, and rewarding committee membership.

Council held a series of work sessions from Feb.-Oct. 2021, to identify and adopt changes needed to achieve these goals, and to recruit and appoint new members. Work sessions focused on administrative and operational improvements, changes in the recruitment and appointment process, and reviewing the number and overall purposes of committees. Committees and their members have had the opportunity to contribute to these discussions.

Council Priority

Engaged, Responsive & Service-oriented Government: Improve and Formalize Systems for Council-Appointed Committees.

Goal: Improve and formalize systems for Council-appointed committees.

Strategy: Review existing structure, appointment processes, and practices for Council-appointed committees, and make changes to increase efficiency and effectiveness and attract new members; explore innovative ways to engage residents who tend to be harder to reach.

Desired outcome: Diverse, engaged, productive, and rewarding committee membership.

Environmental Considerations

There is no direct environmental impact from the review of the Council-appointed committees. A Council action related to the Nuclear Free Committee or other committees focused on climate-change or sustainability initiatives could have a positive or negative impact on environmental initiatives in the future, depending on final direction in this area and the future work of the committee and other committees.

Fiscal Considerations

Providing stipends to committee members, and some of the updated recruitment, administrative and operational procedures have staff and budget impacts. Estimated costs will be considered in decisions about adopting changes.

Racial Equity Considerations

Creating and supporting more diverse and representative Council-appointed committees is at the forefront of this initiative. Previous Council-appointed committees did not generally reflect the diversity of the population of Takoma Park. The implemented changes address this issue in a number of ways. For example, the fresh approach to recruitment and appointment of Committee members resulted in appointments that more closely reflect the diversity of our community. This includes member stipends to address financial and social barriers to committee participation that residents of color face more often than white residents. Improvements in training and operations of committees are critical to ensuring that committees and their members function in a way that is welcoming to all residents and to bolstering committees' capacity to apply race equity considerations to their work. Council adopted a code of conduct for committee members (Resolution 2020-22, October 7, 2020) in part to clearly state that discrimination by any committee member will not be tolerated.

Attachments and Links

October 6 – [City Council Discussion of Committee Member Appointment and Selection Process](#)

[Takoma Park Code, Chapter 2.16 Advisory Committees](#)

[Takoma Park Code, Chapter 2.17 Boards and Commissions](#)