



Agenda Item C.3
DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEM
Meeting Date: August 15, 2018

TO: Public Engagement Commission

FROM: Carmen Nichols, Deputy City Manager
Valerie Kushnerov, Community Relations Manager

SUBJECT: City Council Meeting Start Times

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive information on the research conducted for Council meeting start times and consider revising the recommendation to the City Council.

BACKGROUND:

As part of the settlement agreement with the Goleta District Elections Committee (DEC), the City Council agreed to consider six specific items, including whether City Council meetings should be held only after 5 p.m. The explanation from the DEC was that if meetings were held in the evenings, then more of the public could participate and this schedule may encourage more candidates to run for City Council. If established by the City Council, an evening only schedule will be in place well before district elections in 2022.

At the June 13, 2018. PEC meeting, the PEC discussed whether the City Council meetings should be held after 5 p.m. To provide the Commission with feedback on what other cities do, staff requested information from other cities about City Council meeting start times and received 36 responses from across California. Thirty-five (35) cities reported having evening-only meetings. For the purpose of this discussion, evening was considered any meeting starting at 4 p.m. or later. The majority of them have a meeting start time between 6-7:00 p.m. Only one of the responding cities does not hold evening meetings with its meetings beginning at 9 a.m.

Within our region, the meeting frequency and start times vary.

CITY	FREQUENCY	START TIME	POPULATION
City of Buellton	Twice/month	6:00 p.m.	5,095
City of Carpinteria	Twice/month	5:30 p.m.	13,684
City of Lompoc	Twice/month	6:30 p.m.	43,712
City of Santa Barbara	Weekly	2:00 p.m.	91,930
City of Santa Maria	Twice/month	5:30 p.m.	106,290

City of Solvang	Twice/month	6:30 p.m.	5,802
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Three cities that responded reported that they had previously held daytime meetings and switched to evening-only meetings. These are the City of Compton, the City of Dunsmuir, and the City of Sacramento. The City of Compton reported an increase in public participation and the City of Dunsmuir reported a significant increase in attendance. The City of Sacramento said that it was hard to track because the items of significant public interest had already been held in the evening.

After some deliberation, the PEC voted 5-2 to recommend the City Council consider whatever process is appropriate to move City Council meetings to the evenings. The PEC suggested that meetings be scheduled three times per month on the first, second and third Tuesdays of the month with a start time of 4:30 p.m.

DISCUSSION:

Staff took the recommendation of the PEC and began discussing the operational implications of such a change, given that this information was not prepared for or presented to the PEC at the June 13th meeting.

California Government Code §35805 states that City Council shall hold meetings at least once a month at fixed times by ordinance or resolution adopted by the City Council. Goleta City Council meetings are currently held on the first and third Tuesdays of the month with one session beginning at 1:30 p.m. and a second session beginning at 6:00 p.m. Informational and business item are scheduled to provide timely updates and receive direction and authority from City Council. Project timelines rely on proper scheduling of items to keep projects on track and are often coordinated with other Commission and Committee meetings. It is the practice of the City to place administrative items on the afternoon agenda and the items of greater public interest on the evening agenda so more members of the public can participate. The afternoon agenda includes some presentations, minutes from prior meeting(s), and consent calendar items, as well as other discussion items that are typically of an administrative nature. The consent calendar can always be modified by a majority action of the City Council, and reports can be pulled for discussion. Part of agenda planning is a meeting with the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem to discuss upcoming meeting items and schedule.

City Council meetings are available for live streaming on the City's website and Channel 19 allowing members of the public to watch meetings as they are occurring. Meetings are also recorded and indexed by agenda item so that they can be accessed on the City's website by any member of the public with internet connection, at any time. Meetings are also rebroadcasted Wednesdays at 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Channel 19. Typically, the agenda and reports are released to the public seven days before the meeting allowing the public an opportunity for review and questions prior to and at the meeting.

Below is a table of the number of meetings in the last three years as well as the average duration.

Table 1. Number of Meetings and Duration Times

	Total # of meetings	# of reg. mtgs.	# of worksh ops	# of special meeting	# of joint meetings with PC	ave. regular mtgs.	ave. special mtgs.	ave. worksh ops	ave. of joint mtgs
2016	27	21	4	1	1	283	125	159	327
2017	30	20	6	3	1	386	203	253	69
2018	15	11	2	1	1	355	177	157	253

The average time for regularly scheduled City Council meetings in 2018 spread between the afternoon session, closed session and the evening session is nearly 6 hours and in the three-year period, the average has ranged between 4.7 hours and 6.4 hours. On average, the evening meetings currently end between 9:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. The workload isn't decreasing and the number of meetings is on track in 2018 to exceed the total number of meetings in the previous two years.

For the City of Goleta, if meetings were held twice a month and the start time of the meetings were scheduled to begin at 4:30 p.m., it could have the following impacts:

- More members of the public may be able to attend and participate on all items of the agenda.
 - Late meetings could create a fatigue factor for the City Council, members of the public and staff.
 - To continue current meeting ending times (between 9:30 and 10:30 p.m.), items could be delayed or continued to future meetings and therefore could slow down the pace at which topics are addressed.
 - Additional meetings may need to be scheduled to get through the regular workload which could result in an increase in staff time and videotaping costs.
- One of the ways to decrease the length of time would be to reduce or eliminate recognition item presentations or informational presentation items at the meeting.

Efforts to reduce agenda items and/or meeting duration are currently underway, including proposed changes to the City's Purchasing Ordinance to streamline contract approval and administration, and a reduction in the presentation time for agenda items by limiting power point outlines to more complex items only. These efforts will be incorporated as a matter of process improvements and efficiency, regardless of change in time and frequency of meetings.

The increase in the frequency of meetings to more than twice per month could require additional staffing resources in each department, allowing staff to focus on report review and packet preparation, while others focus on research and day to day operational needs. If meetings were held at 4:30 p.m. and three times a month, it would have the following impacts:

- The City Clerk's Division would be in packet and agenda preparation mode

throughout the entire month which would limit their capacity to address other duties and support the City's other committees and commissions. The Clerk's Division would, at a minimum, need to hire one additional full-time staff member for agenda and packet preparation. Estimated ongoing cost: \$110,000 annually (salary and benefits).

- Staff members of various departments (authoring department, Clerk, Finance Department, City Attorney, and City Manager's Office) review all staff reports. The frequency of review would allow less time for staff reports research and preparation of items in the respective departments without additional staffing. Business meetings and other operational functions would be impacted.
- Design Review Board's schedule and other Commission and Committee work will be impacted. The Municipal Code would have to be modified by Ordinance to reschedule the DRB meetings to another day of the week.
- Other incidental costs include videotaping and meal costs for Council and staff working through the dinner hour.
 - Approximately \$12,000 per year for videotaping costs to add one meeting per month
 - Meals: Undetermined at this time, how many meeting would go from closed session into regular session without a reasonable break.

To provide evening only meetings, and in consideration of the organizational impacts of the suggested schedule, staff is proposing the following recommendation:

1. City Council meetings to remain on the first and third Tuesdays of the month.
2. Discontinue the practice of pre-cancelling the first meeting of July and August, and only cancel the meeting if the schedule allows for items to be shifted without a significant delay of projects or other City business.
3. Continue the practice of the cancellation of the first meeting in January because the packet preparation period is at a time when City Hall is closed.
4. Schedule closed session at 4:30 p.m. with a City Council meeting start time of 6:30 p.m. The administrative items would be dealt with first with the majority of items of public interest being heard well past 6:30 p.m.
5. Agenda items will be scheduled with a goal of generally ending the meeting at a designated time by the City Council, with the understanding that meetings may go past that time. As currently done, the City Council may decide to stop at 10:00 p.m. and vote on continuing the meeting or to continue agenda items to the next regular or schedule a special meeting.
6. Reduce the number and length of public presentations.
7. Reduce the number or eliminate public recognitions and revise the City Council recognition policy. Certificates and proclamations could still be issued to a recipient without the public presentation. . The Mayor can announce the recipients and purpose of recognition during the Councilmember Report item.

In consideration of the proposed schedule, it is expected that City Council and staff may work through the closed session into the regular meeting. For that reason, meal arrangements for City Council and staff attending closed session could be made.

It is important to note that not all of the time City Council members spend on City business will be in the evenings. City Council members have other commitments during the day that include sub-committee meetings, meetings with the City Manager and staff, and intergovernmental committee meetings, community events, conferences and workshops. While the evening-only City Council meetings could be an advantage for Council members who hold outside employment or other personal obligations, there are still a significant number of other commitments that can only occur during regular business hours.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The impacts have not yet been fully studied, however, it is expected that increasing the number of meetings to three per month would require additional staffing resources that are not yet fully known. It is anticipated that additional staffing will be needed in the City Manager's Department, Finance Department, and City Clerk Division. At the level of Management Analyst, these three additional positions would be approximately \$330,000, not including soft costs (e.g. technology, desks, and workspace). It is not yet determined how other departments could be impacted.

Recording and rebroadcasting meetings would trigger additional costs of approximately \$12,000 per year. Other incidental costs have not yet been determined.

Reviewed By:

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'C. Nichols', is written over a horizontal line.

Carmen Nichols
Deputy City Manager