

Advisory Commission and Committee Feedback Summary

In early 2019, per the request of the Council subcommittee regarding commissions, former Interim City Manager Timm Borden distributed a survey on Council-commission communication and effectiveness of advisory commissions and committees. Written responses were requested from all ten commissions and the Audit Committee as it includes appointed members of the public. Forty-one responses were received, however, not all respondents answered every question. The following is a short summary of the various responses received with examples.

1) How do you have the public interact with your Commission? For example, is it formal and the public is limited to a certain amount of time, or is it more informal and conversational with leave of the Chair? Would you like to change your current format? If so, in what manner? (40 responses)

Over half of the respondents identified their Commissions as being formal with their public interactions and the others identified as being informal. Those with formal interactions explained that they use comment cards and enforce time limits for public comment. Those with informal procedures explained that they don't impose time limits and the meetings are more conversational in nature. Most commissioners said that they liked the way the public currently interacts with their commission and would not want to change their current format. Out of the 13 respondents who did want to change their format, about half wanted to change from formal to informal and the other half preferred more formality. Those who wanted to change their format from informal to formal found that there were times when they would prefer public comment to be more contained when the issues were controversial or popular. Of those respondents, two mentioned that while more formality would be beneficial, they would still like to preserve flexibility. Others who wanted to change from formal to informal felt that time limits may make the public nervous and are too constricting.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

"Historically the meetings of the Commission have been more informal in nature, with very open participation from all attendees including residents. There is currently no structured community input process or time limits. This often leads to good dialog about critical topics, but also had sometimes shown challenges, when contentious topics were on the agenda, and this is an area of potential improvement to provide a more structured community input process."

"Currently public can come in and interact at the beginning of the commission meeting. While it is ok, I think there must be at least one other time during the meeting when the commission can open up a Q&A or comments time slot to give public another chance to interact with the commission. The Chair should reserve [the] right to decide when to stop the slot with a reasonable resolution/adjournment to any open issue being brought up during the public interaction and continue with the commission's regular agenda. Any boundless informal any-time interaction format might reduce the efficiency of the commission. Again, this may not be true to other commissions."

"It is more formal. I'm not sure we would be able to make it more conversational or informal due to the nature of where we meet and the fact that the meetings are televised. I especially think that if we have an item with a lot of interest or even something that might be controversial, that it is best to have some

kind of procedure and formalized control of the meetings. I am happy with the current way we conduct our meetings. We have come to that understanding over the past couple years about procedure and it works well...We also interact with the community at the many events we try to attend."

"We usually only have a few members of the public attend, if any. The interactions with the public are restricted to public comment, where the members get 3 minutes to speak. The commission is not supposed to ask follow-up questions or engage in a continued dialogue. I believe in some cases it would be appropriate to relax this format and have a format similar to a workshop, if the commission and staff think that continued discussion with the public would be productive..."

2) Do you use rules of order to conduct your meetings? If so, which rules? If not, would rules of order be useful from your perspective? (40 responses)

Almost half of the respondents said that their commissions currently use Robert's Rules of Order. There appeared to be confusion within commissions since some respondents said their commission used Robert's Rules of Order while a few within the same commission said no rules were used at all. Eleven respondents said they did use rules but could not specify which ones they used. Some of the respondents who use Robert's, use the rules with varying levels of flexibility such as only when voting or during public comment. Twelve respondents said they find rules useful regardless of which rules they use since it maintains structure. Four respondents said they prefer to have no rules in place at all so they could have more flexibility. Some of these respondents said the meeting is best run by making sure the Chair simply sticks to the agenda as much as possible. Two respondents explicitly said they would prefer to use Robert's, with one of those respondents specifying that purely advisory commissions could use a less formal or abbreviated list for simple meetings. Two respondents said they would like to try Rosenberg's instead of Robert's due to its more user-friendly format.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

"Again, our format changed to a more formal one recently. A couple of years ago, with a change of City Liaison, we were encouraged to adopt greater parliamentary formality, which we did but without consistency or agreement on which rules we were following. Very recently we evaluated a range of parliamentary procedures currently in use by other Commissions and/or at nearby cities and voted to adopt one. Unless an issue is particularly contentious, I don't feel this is necessary. Adherence to the agenda is important so the public notices can enable informed and appropriate public participation. However, constant strict adherence to procedure typically makes the meetings awkward as we struggle to accomplish the interactions we want while constantly referring to rules with which are unfamiliar and the implementation of which don't result in the outcomes desired. I feel a competent Chair can identify when an issue or discussion reaches a point at which it's necessary to invoke the use of parliamentary procedure, and meetings could then more flexibly proceed most of the time without it."

"I believe currently we use the Roberts Rule of Order format but after being asked to review the different formats of holding a meeting I personally think the Rosenberg's Rule of Order is a much more user friendly format and would welcome a change to it."

"No, we don't use any specific rules of order to conduct our meetings. I don't think rules of order would be useful specifically for [our] Commission as they would create a more detached, overly formal environment that simply doesn't suit the commission. I do think more of a focus could be made on staying on topic without diving into unrelated tangents, but I don't think that requires a whole new rules of order system."

"Yes, this is necessary for the meeting to work fairly and effectively. I would prefer *Robert's Rules of Order* as it encompasses a broader set of procedures and situations. This assures that we have a full palette to make legally sound policy decisions, and gives the Commission solid common ground with applicants and others we interact with. This level of formality is not necessary for the purely advisory commissions, but I think it's better to have uniformity of rules across the entire organization. The Council packet for the proposed Ethics Code included [an] abbreviated list of Robert's Rules for simple meetings, which would probably be a good standard."

"We don't currently use a specific Rules of Order, but we do stick to the agenda and the rules regarding discussion and voting. In general I would prefer to use a Rules of Order like Rosenberg's, and not Robert's."

3) Do you feel your Commissioners communicate with the Councilmembers sufficiently to advise the Council? Do you feel that Commissioners' communications with staff could be improved, and if so, how? (40 responses)

Nineteen of the commissioners that responded felt that the communication with the Councilmembers was not sufficient enough to advise the Council. Fourteen felt that the communication was sufficient. Out of the 19 who said communication with Council was not sufficient, the majority of responses identified that the communication was one-sided since there are not enough direct channels of communication to the entire Council. Some explained that the Mayor's monthly meeting is the only real chance for the commission to provide formal updates, which is why a couple of respondents suggested that the monthly meeting should also include the other Councilmembers. One recommended that the Mayor or Council should meet with individual commissions instead. Another commissioner explained that the Mayor's meeting is good as-is since their commission alternates their representative instead of always sending the Chair. The commissioners that were pleased with their communication with Council were those with stronger interactions with Councilmembers like the Planning Commission or the Audit Committee. Most commissioners who responded were satisfied with the communication with City staff and noted that staff has been easy to contact and quick to respond. Those who were dissatisfied with the staff's communication mainly expressed that the role of the staff liaison was unclear and they were unsure what exactly they could ask staff to do. The common theme amongst most answers is that communication is heavily dependent on the individual and their

willingness to communicate (i.e. requesting follow up meetings, attending events, etc.) which goes for both sides, commissioners and Council/staff.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

“Not really. The communication from commissioners is only through very few standard process – Mayor’s meeting and yearly work plan update which is not sufficient at all – this is based on my experience through Library commission. More frequent (Quarterly) update to the City council (standard template for all the commissions highlighting accomplishment, challenges and asks) is necessary. Commissioner’s communications with city staff could also be very well improved as the current communication is mostly administrative. While this helps, it is not clear on who makes the call on some of the budget asks and decisions etc. within the city. Just to get plugged into those process to understand the actions would certainly help the commissioners to be much more effective... for example, no idea how the budget allocation for the commission is happening and how the spent is tracked on a monthly basis etc.”

“I do feel that the only time we interact with council is when we attend the Mayor’s Meetings or attend a council meeting when one of [our] items are on the agenda. I feel like we can sufficiently advise council because staff is very thorough and many of [us] on commission have many years of experience in the community with various issues. If we don’t have enough information we will request more and/or postpone advising until we feel we can make an informed decision. I feel we have very good interaction and communication with staff. Many of us see staff on a daily basis in our regular interactions in the community. We also attend many events which also enable us to interact with staff. I personally feel we have a very good working relationship with staff.”

“No, I don’t think that we communicate with the Councilmembers sufficiently to advise the council. While the president of the Commission does go to the mayor meetings each month, I do not think this is sufficient enough for our ideas to be reached out properly to the council. I think that the Commissioners’ communications with staff could be improved by having each commission fill out a form after each meeting with requests or updates for the council or have more commissioners participate in the mayor meetings.”

4) This year, per decision of the prior Council, all Commissions will submit ideas regarding their annual work program to their respective City departments. The City departments will then develop their proposed work program, including Commission items, for Council consideration. Once Council adopts the final work program, the items pertaining to each Commission will serve as priority elements of their respective work programs. What do you think of this new process of approving work programs by City Council? Anything to improve? (41 responses)

Twenty-five respondents approved of the new process for the work programs. Some of the respondents who approved of the process mentioned that they would like to see more flexibility such as the ability to add certain items throughout the year instead of waiting until the next work program. These respondents may not be aware that in the current process, this can be done with approval of Council. Out of the 25 respondents who approved of the process, most were happy that this will align the commission’s goals

with the City's goals. These commissioners were pleased that this process will also bring more Council interaction to the commissions and provide more direction. The disapproving respondents were mainly concerned that this process is too stringent and doesn't allow for flexibility within the commissions. Some of the disapproving respondents said that this process takes away the freedom of the commission's ability to work on their own items of interest. A few respondents were unsure about these changes and want to learn more about the process or wait and see the process in play before deciding on it.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

"I think this is a good process improvement, and will work well for [our] Commission, as we are working primarily on longer term projects. These improvements will provide clarity and focus throughout the year. For Commissions with ... shorter term time horizons, there needs to be a way to include new items during the course of the year."

"Our current work program is very high-level and only pertains to the goals of the commission itself, not the work done by the City Staff. Using the new process would allow Staff and Commissioners to partner together and use our limited resources more wisely to effect the most useful changes. As an additional benefit, it would improve communication with the City Council regarding our projects. It would definitely require us to change our mindset on how we formulate our work plan, but I would welcome this change."

"Personally I think this is very in-efficient way of [conducting] business for the city. Any good ideas that missed the initial deadline have to wait until next year to be implemented. Commissioners should have certain flexibility to do their work."

"I think that although this may help keep the commissions in sync with the goals of the council, it may inhibit important changes that the individual commissions may want to make just because the City Council doesn't want those changes to occur. I feel that this might give the council too much power over the goals and actions of individual commissions."

"This only makes sense and I am glad the Council will play more active role in setting and approving the work item priorities. I believe this will help final outcomes of the commissions' efforts reflect the city's future direction more accurately."

"...this process seems to be a top-down approach of city council setting the specific work plan items and expect the commissions to just execute. If this is the case, this simply nullifies the freedom the commission has today and imposes lots of constraints. I would like to see that City enforces that every work plan item to be connected or correlated to the city's vision/mission goals and provide a boundary to operate. Commissions should operate within those boundaries but have the freedom to connect with the community members to serve for their best interest but align it to one of those city goals (ex. Operational efficiency, community outreach etc.) Approval of every work plan items for every commission is not what I want our city council to do. Rather trust the commissioners who joined the commissions with an intent to use their skills and experience for the benefit of our community..."

5) What do you think of the current process, if any, of setting your regular meeting agendas? Does any member of your Commission meet with a staff member to set meeting agendas? How do you wish to improve the current process of determining how items are placed on your agenda? For instance, would you prefer a system where items that require minimal city staff resources but are not on your annual work plan can be included on a regular meeting agenda? (40 responses)

There were 22 respondents who were satisfied with their current agenda setting process and 13 who were dissatisfied. The majority of all responses explained that the Chair meets with the staff liaison to set the agenda. Some of those dissatisfied with the current process commented that they weren't sure if the Chair and staff liaison were meeting at all, but also felt that this process did not allow for the rest of the commissioners participation or input. Other dissatisfied respondents recommended adding an agenda item at the end of their meeting so that the entire commission could discuss future agenda items. Some of the respondents that were satisfied with their current process said that the chair would ask the other commissioners for input before meeting with the staff liaison and therefore some of their input was placed on the agenda. A few said that they would discuss future agenda items during their meetings, either in oral communication or towards the end. A few respondents were happy to have staff make the agendas because they will help keep the commission on track with the work program. Most respondents were unsure about the meaning of "minimal City staff resources", but would still prefer more flexibility about adding items to the agenda. Ten respondents said they would prefer a system where they could add items requiring minimal city staff resources that were not on the annual work program.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

"Our current process is functional, but it's not really optimized. I would prefer that we can add items to our agenda at the prior meeting, and have "Future Agenda Items" and/or "Mayor's Meeting Report" on the agenda as a standing items (I was told we could not have these currently because they are not a 'standard' agenda item). It would also be helpful for the Staff Liaison to meet with the Chair on a regular monthly basis to set the agenda, which is not currently happening. Having the flexibility to have unique standing agenda items, seems like it would be helpful for other commissions, too. I have not had issues scheduling anything on our agenda."

"The current process is not very transparent on our end. To my knowledge, staff does not meet with any Commissioners to set meeting agendas. Given that a significant number of Commission meetings are cancelled each year due to lack of agenda items, I would recommend that staff identify meetings that lack agenda items or have space for additional agenda items. For these meetings, the Commissioners should be able to propose agenda items as long as they do not require significant staff resources."

"...when I was the Chair...I did meet with the city staff a couple of times to set up the meeting agenda. But in reality, most of the times, it was communication over the phone, which I think worked out perfectly. What I think was not clear at the beginning was that we didn't really give the other

Commissioners chances to add more agenda items. Then after I told them they can add agenda items, they started sending me emails before I spoke with the city staff every month. In general, I do think whatever procedure it is, we should collect ideas from all parties before we finalize the agenda. For the last question, I wouldn't mind [if] it [becomes] a regular meeting agenda."

"The agenda is staff's role. If individual commissioners meet with individual staff members to place items on the agenda, the result would be chaos at worst, or long meetings at best. Agenda items are best placed on the agenda through the annual work program process, regularly scheduled annual events/reports, or project-related issues encountered by staff. A commissioner must learn to be patient. Commissioners who want to place an item on the agenda and missed the annual work program process can use the time until the next work program cycle to do more research and conduct individual meetings to build support (all within the Brown Act, of course)."

6) With regard to the quality of your discussions, would you say that your conclusions are arrived at through a collaborative and input-based process or something more pre-determined? If the latter, what suggestions do you have for improving the qualitative nature of the process? Please be considerate but candid. (40 responses)

There were 26 respondents that said their conclusions are typically arrived at collaboratively and through an input-based process. The common response among these respondents was that each speaker is respected and allowed the freedom to voice their opinion regardless of what others may think. One respondent explained that their process allows for various presenters and experts to share their opinion and knowledge with the commission. There were four respondents who said their commission sometimes uses both pre-determined decisions and collaborative processes depending on the topic and on how knowledgeable the other commissioners are about the topic. Two of these respondents said their conclusions are sometimes more pre-determined when guidance or recommendations are brought in by staff or if people have researched a topic beforehand. In instances where conclusions are more pre-determined, there is always still room for discussion. A couple respondents explained that their commissions are normally very collaborative but have witnessed pre-determined instances where they suspected that certain commissioners were discussing agenda items outside of the meeting and breaking Brown Act policies. They suggested including training for all commissioners on Brown Act policies about not communicating with other members outside of meetings about agenda items. Other respondents believe Commissioners should do a better job researching topics beforehand and being prepared for meetings.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

"My experience has been [that] the conclusions of items of our commission were always collaborative. All commissioners had opportunities and fair and reasonable amount of time (we respect each other's time too) to provide input, all input was justified by the proposer and discussed by the full commission. In my opinion, the current process is working well for our commission."

“... Our commission has discussions where every commissioner is allowed the opportunity to speak and be heard in a respectful manner, but our conclusions are pre-determined and typically unanimous.”

“I think we get to decisions collaboratively. We do disagree with each other a lot, and we arrive at decisions only after we discuss our disagreements. We arrive at a conclusion that everyone agrees is the best course of action.”

“Usually collaborative unless city staff came with pre-determined guidance. We also experienced issue with new Commissioners who would like to bring up ideas that were discussed/decided in the past, and we end up spending time revisiting old issues.”

“... Regarding pre-determined conclusions, I think I may have seen an egregious pre-determination during [a] Commission meeting. This, I suspect, also violated the Brown Act. Here's why: it is customary for the chair position to rotate. This is especially important for those who are new to commissions, so they can watch and learn how to efficiently run a meeting...The annual nomination to rotate the chair died for lack of a second. Both another commissioner and I strongly suspect that this idea of a lack of a second was discussed between all three new commissioners beforehand...”

7) Do you feel your Commissioners are representative of the residents? Why or why not? (40 responses)

There were various interpretations of the word “representative”, which included various responses on representation based on race, education level, class, age, gender, or perspective. Using their own interpretation of the word, over half of the responses said their commissions were representative of the residents in Cupertino. Many said that they are representative of the residents’ perspectives and opinions not only because they share similar viewpoints, but also listen to what the residents have to say. The few who said their commission was not representative of the residents said that it was due to the fact that their commission required specific expertise. One respondent noted that since commissioners are volunteers, it is not likely that they are representative of the residents since there are residents who wouldn’t be able to volunteer.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

“I would say that we are very representative of the residents. Our commissioners range in age, location of residence (east or west side of Cupertino), having children or not, and include both heavy recreational/commuter cyclists and those that rarely get on a bike... Knowing that residents of Cupertino are so positive about improving their community in this way is a primary driver of the Commission. As commissioners, we are pleased to represent ALL of our residents, and listen to their ideas and their concerns.”

“No. The Commission is comprised of one business representative, one financial representative, and three residents. To my knowledge, all three of the residents are homeowners. Cupertino’s population is 38% renter. Given that homeowners and renters often hold different perspectives and experiences

regarding housing policy, I believe there should be some representation of tenants/renters on the Commission. Perhaps, similar to the business and financial representative, there can be one seat that can only be filled by somebody who is a renter.”

“They are not representative - nor should they be... Commissioners themselves should be representative of the small segment of the population that has experience and expertise in the area that the commission addresses. Commissioners should, of course, consider the interests of the residents - but not necessarily be guided by them. Commissioners should be guided by State laws and local ordinances, such as the zoning in the General Plan. Often residents do not like what is allowed by law, and that's where commissioners should diplomatically remind them that commissioners are bound by the ordinances passed by the Council...”

“No. Current commissioners all have experience and/or expertise in sustainability. Not all residents have our experience/expertise so it can be challenging for us to represent them. We don't have many opportunities to interact with the residents other than when they attend our meetings. It's hard to be the pulse of the community on the topic/issue when there are not many opportunities for interaction between the two groups.”

“I feel our Commission is representative of the residents we are supposed to represent...We have a mix of ethnicities and ages...Currently, the commission is predominantly female, but I would not say this affects our decisions.”

8) It has been suggested that a code of ethics is needed in order to maintain ethical standards and behavior. What are your thoughts on this proposition? If you support having a code of ethics, what would you like to see included in it? (41 responses)

Twenty-seven respondents support the idea of having a code of ethics. Of those respondents a few want a code that is more general and basic instead of specific and restrictive in order to allow for flexibility. On the other hand, a few said they want the code to be clear, detailed, and specific so there would be no opportunity for misinterpretation and it would be easier to keep people accountable. Nine respondents were against having a code of ethics. Of those respondents, some said that it wouldn't be enforceable or their commission doesn't need it. One person noted that the Brown Act is enough to keep things in order. Another commented that commissioners should just follow the example set by the City Council during meetings. There was also a suggestion that the codes should be specifically made for and by each commission, since each commission has different duties and responsibilities.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

“A code of ethics is a fine idea, but it would need to be specific and be careful to regulate behavior and not thought. It should not be so broad/nebulous that an argument could be made that no one is meeting it, or that violations of it could be used as an excuse for dis-appointing a commissioner that a Councilmember disagrees with. I think that many things are already codified, such as all the provisions

of the Brown Act, which already prevent a lot of unethical behavior. Here is what should be included (of course not limited to these items):

1. A gift policy for Commissioners and Councilmembers—not just reporting, but a limit.
2. Require City Commissioners to not work actively against projects endorsed or created by other City Commissions...
3. City Commissioners should consider themselves as a representative of our City, and as such, be held to a higher standard than before their term...They should treat our City Staff and other Commissioners with the respect that the institution requires, regardless of personal feelings.
4. Require appointee commission candidates to disclose at the time of their application any advocacy work they have made either for or against any City projects, plans, etc. within the last 2 years, highlighting especially those related to the commission for which they are applying.
5. Specify ethical requirements on how the City Council appoints commissioners. Appointments should be based on criteria such as expertise, ability to work with staff and the public, and commitment to fulfilling official duties. It should not be a political or personal reward..."

"I feel the "code of ethics" project serves the interests of a few who seek to control the words and behavior of others whom they disagree with politically. In my opinion, a "code of ethics" is both a distraction and a power grab. I appreciate the efforts of Council to focus on the important work that must be done to serve the City and its residents and to not get sidetracked by non-issues, such as the adoption of an unnecessary "code of ethics"."

"... I agree with this. While people think they will always act ethically, there are too many conflicts of interest possible. In today's political climate, it is imperative that we all act ethically in performing our duties. Almost all good corporations have a code of conduct to stress the criticality of ethical behavior..."

"The actions of the Council and Commissions are highly regulated to reach legal and appropriate outcomes. I don't think that there are many examples of egregious behavior in the scope of the commissions that immediately warrant more formality. The biggest issue is if a commission acts outside of their advisory charter, which should be corrected by the staff liaison... I don't have any opposition to developing a written code of ethics, behavior and expectations, but would hope that the content tracks closely with the many legal requirements imposed on the city government rather than creating a lot of new rules."

"I think a code of ethics is very important and should be adopted and maintained on regular basis. The code of ethics is a summary and reminder of laws and policies required of elected and appointed officials, and it's a good common standard and best practice for all of us public official of Cupertino to follow. We choose to serve the public, we are committed to comply with the laws and policies that are in place; it is nice and easy for us to have all regulations and practices in one place to refer to. The laws and policies were adopted by the public in the past; the code of ethics is a good reminder not only for the officials but also for the public. There should be trainings of the code of ethics required of public officials and offered to public on regular basis."

- 9) **From the perspective of higher-quality interaction between Council and Commissions, we would like to consider any suggestions you have with regard to events, procedures, and formats. Outside of formal updates at Council meetings and our annual appreciation dinner (and please feel free to comment on those as well), are there any other types of interactions you would like to see considered and delivered in order to improve our channels of communication? (40 responses)**

Eleven respondents wanted Councilmembers to attend their commission meetings at least once per year to increase communication and to better understand each other's values and goals. One respondent suggested adding council liaisons to each commission. One respondent wanted the Councilmembers to provide commissions with short summaries of the goals and items relevant to each commission, while a couple others suggested periodic written reports and updates from both Council and commissioners. Some individual suggestions included inviting commissioners to special meetings, adding one-on-one meetings with Councilmembers, having picnic events or retreats to get to know each other better, and adding Council office hours. Some had suggestions to improve the monthly Mayor's meeting by extending it to the full Council, adding more structure, and providing minutes. One respondent would like to allow commissions to write up dissenting opinions for Council in order to better understand opposing ideas. Another respondent recommended using technology such as remote conferencing to make meetings more efficient. A few responses suggested that the Council solicit feedback from the commissioners when deliberating on a particular proposal, which would help commissions identify the top issues in the City and find the ones that are relevant to that commission. Two respondents said that adding extra activities are unnecessary and would just be overloading schedules. As for the appreciation dinner, three respondents said they appreciated it, one respondent said it's nice but not substantive, and one respondent did not feel appreciated during the commission consolidation discussions and did not attend.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

"... The appreciation dinner is very nice (the food is good), but not substantive — there does not appear to be an expectation that the Council will be better informed about the particulars of projects after that event. It would be helpful for the Council to solicit feedback directly from the Commissioners prior to a vote on a particular proposal at City Council... A second item that would be helpful is to allow at least one member of the Commission to attend special meetings when they are held with Staff to discuss upcoming projects on the Council's agenda... Lastly, having a Councilmember occasionally attend our commission meetings would be useful. It would allow Councilmembers to better understand what is done at our commission, foster closer relations with the Council, and allow for more in-depth discussion on specific topics. Only twice in the last two years has this occurred."

"I definitely would like to see more events and formal as well as informal meetings where commissioners could communicate with city council members and increase communication and collaborations. Events where two or more commissions are assigned to work together towards increasing interest and awareness in the community. Set goals given or set assignments will also help to collaborate commissions."

“The Mayor’s monthly meeting with representatives from each Commission is an underutilized forum for the mayor to come up to speed on Commission activities and for commissions to learn about activities in other Commissions. The freeform format of these meetings often leads to wasted time and an unclear agenda. Each mayor conducts these meetings differently, some more efficiently than others. Council often undercuts the effectiveness of the Commissions by ignoring the recommendations of the Commissions or giving greater weight to resident input at Council meetings than was provided to the Commission. Council should give greater weight to public comment given to Commissions so residents see the value of participating at Commission meetings rather than feeling everything has to be presented to Council.”

“The interaction and communication opportunities I described in my answer to #3...are, I think enough to ensure adequate communication - if both councilmembers and commissioners work at availing themselves of these opportunities. Councilmembers are busy people, and commissioners are, too - not to mention staff. To add additional formal or administrated communication activities would, I think, result in overload.”

- Portion of #3 Response Referenced: “With Councilmembers: Yes, there is enough communication.
 - Proactive Councilmembers sometimes sit in on commission meetings just to listen, and this helps.
 - Sometimes Councilmembers will call me for clarification, and this also helps.
 - Councilmembers have sometimes called smaller meetings (through the City Manager) to discuss an issue informally and in more detail.
 - I have sometimes asked a councilmember to meet over coffee to discuss an issue one on one.
 - I also make it a point to attend public events, where there are often opportunities to chat one-on-one with Councilmembers in an informal setting. (I also make it a point to frequently attend meetings, drop-in sessions, or have one-on-one coffees with County supervisors, and State legislators, and/or members of congress.) Therefore, I don't think we need to change any procedures - it's up to individual Councilmembers and Commissioners to avail themselves of the communication opportunities that already exist (always, of course, complying with the Brown Act)...”

10) Outreach to the community is critical to our efforts; what mechanisms of outreach to the community would you suggest that we adopt or improve upon? (38 responses)

The 38 respondents had many varying suggestions for improving the community outreach mechanisms currently in place. 16 respondents want to increase outreach of meetings and events through online and paper formats such as:

- Nextdoor
- Instagram
- Fliers, posters and door hangers
- Whats App
- Twitter
- The City website
- WeChat
- The Scene
- Facebook

A couple respondents stated that there should be neighborhood specific meetings where topics are presented in neighborhoods which would be affected the most. One respondent wanted the City to create its own app instead of trying to communicate through various other websites and apps. A few

respondents mentioned that they really like City events such as Earth Day and the Volunteer Fair, as well as other community events like Bike to Work Day, the Fall Festival, since they are the best ways to engage with the public in person. A few respondents recommended having workshops and trainings for the public in order to teach them about what a commission is and what they do. Some respondents also recommended having more Townhall meetings to make it easier for the public to speak instead of just relying on City Council meetings. One respondent recommended adding remote conferencing to make it easier for the public to participate with commissions. Another respondent recommended paying for Facebook Ads to promote events. Another respondent recommended separate social media pages/accounts for the different City departments and commissions. A few respondents explained that they have experienced success when they put on a contest or competition in the past.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

“... I do think that outreach to the community can include “educational training” that might help set the foundation for why some decisions are taken or not taken. For example, offering community educational workshops explaining the purposes of the various commissions or various city government departments can help to explain why these organizations interact in the way that they do or why certain actions are explored first in the Planning Commission and then reach City Council.”

“... Commissioners are actively involved and are participating with the various outreach efforts from the city related to individual projects during the course of the year. Commissioners are also participating with other community events during the course of the year... Commissioners are also volunteering with other organizations in the city, allowing community and resident outreach.”

“Outreach to the Community: Diverse populations require diverse methods. Consider: [Adding] meetings held in the neighborhoods affected by a big policy. This has been done with the Bike/Ped Commission. Meetings are hard to attend. The closer they are to the person’s home, the more likely they can go. Plus, they will feel more listened to by the City. Keep the Scene magazine. Some residents are not in the electronic world at all. If they do not do so already, ensure that all Commissions include an item in the Scene that helps residents get to know the Commissioners, or understand their role...”

“... Although the City held many public workshops at City Hall, we should have held meetings and workshops in the neighborhoods near Vallco. Such meetings are not easy for staff... But that's okay - even if staff is confronted by angry neighbors, the neighbors will come away from the meeting feeling that they have been listened to. Signs at the site of a proposed project also help, as do mailers. Also, I think the City could do better with email notifications. Although I've signed up for email notifications for numerous issues, it seems that I have not always received complete and timely follow-up emails or notifications from the City and we should not neglect knocking on doors by staff and commissioners. Although most doors won't be answered, those who do answer will likely talk with their friends and neighbors about the conversation. Residents are often impressed that someone took the trouble to come to their door...”

11) Does your Commission prefer action minutes or summary minutes and why? How do you feel about having action minutes accompanied by audio recordings? (37 responses)

There were 12 respondents who prefer summary minutes over action minutes because they provide a more complete record of the meeting for the public and members who miss the meetings. There were eight respondents who like the idea of having action minutes accompanied by audio recordings because they think it would be the best way to quickly find information while also being able to go back and listen to the discussions online. There were six respondents who prefer action minutes over summary minutes because they say that they are easier to read and keep track of what decisions were made. One of those respondents said that summary minutes are just too hard to summarize in a neutral way, and can be hard when trying to approve them. Four of those six respondents explicitly said they do not want audio recordings because they are unnecessary. One of the four respondents who liked action minutes but does not want audio recordings said they would be hard to use since listeners would not know who was speaking. Out of the 12 respondents who liked summary minutes there were six who were against audio recording because it can cause technical difficulties, may result in additional work for staff, and limit ideas. One respondent said they would feel uncomfortable if the meetings were recorded and would be more hesitant to speak freely. Three other respondents preferred a combination of summary and action minutes so that the minutes clearly illustrate the discussion and also the resulting action.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

“I think a combination of action and summary minutes are important for the Committee. I interpret “action minutes” to mean a list of the action items that various Committee or City staff members have committed to take as a result of the Committee’s meetings. That is a convenient list of who needs to do what. On the other hand, often the Committee should show for the public record that its deliberations were reached in a fashion allowing for multiple inputs and considered various possibilities while ultimately deciding on a particular action. I think in many cases that record of why a decision was taken can be as important as what decision was taken and I interpret that to be “summary minutes.” I personally do not want audio recordings to be a permanent part of the Committee’s deliberations.”

“It is very important to have clearly spelled out action [items] for the commissioners to follow and respond. So, action items with deadlines (ETA) is a must. Having audio recordings and minutes is useful for the public to review and understand things happened in those meetings.”

“Our commission prefers action minutes because it is easier to keep track of who made what happen. I feel against having action minutes accompanied by audio recordings because I personally feel it is extraneous.”

“Our commission strongly prefers summary minutes; often we do not take any actions on an item besides discussions and plans, and we strongly feel that the public would not be adequately informed by action minutes. Action minutes accompanied by audio recordings, although arguably the most informative, have a large set of problems: in the event of equipment failure, the meeting would be

entirely unrecorded. In addition, our meetings often last three hours. It is far less helpful to the public to listen to three hours of raw audio to find one item than it is to read an accurate summary of the discussions and action that took place.”

“Our commission believes summary minutes are more valuable as the audience we are targeting to read these notes are more likely to understand a summary rather than action minutes. I do not endorse action minutes with audio recordings because I feel as though recording the meetings will limit ideas from being conveyed because of the fact of being recorded.”

“... I feel uncomfortable with the idea of recording our meetings, because being recorded and having other people be able to hear that recording whenever means that I would feel a little hesitant to speak openly. This isn't because we say things that we shouldn't-rather, because having every word we say recorded is a little off-putting.”

12) Starting this year, Commissions will be submitting a 200-300 word update of their current work to Council every other month. Do you have thoughts on this process? (37 responses)

There were 10 respondents that were in favor of this new process and think this will help with communication. There were 14 respondents who thought that this new process would only be useful if there were certain structures in place to ensure that Council provides feedback. A couple respondents wanted to know who would be responsible for writing these updates due to the Brown Act limitations and wondered if staff could be involved in the process. Others also thought the updates are too frequent and instead should be quarterly or biannually since there probably won't be many updates as some commissions meet less frequently than others. A couple respondents, while still happy with the process, would like there to be a larger word count or no word count at all to allow for quality updates. One respondent wanted a set template/format with deadlines set throughout the year. One respondent would like these updates to be passed on to other commissions as well as the public in order to keep everyone informed. Those opposed to the idea believe that they are unnecessary and just add more work for commissioners and staff. The majority of those opposed mainly came from commissions with video recordings or detailed minutes since Council and the public can always go back and watch/read what the commission has done. One respondent believed that this update would be a way for the Council to micromanage commissions and that it takes away the purpose of a commission being an advisory body. Another respondent would rather have a measurable outcome table instead of a written report in order to see progress on work program items.

The following comments are examples of viewpoints from various respondents:

“Is this really necessary? The Mayor's monthly commissioners meetings provide a good opportunity for the Mayor to have a face-to-face discussion about the work of commissions, and commissioners then have an opportunity to convey this information to their commission colleagues at their respective meetings. Also, Council members can read summary minutes and watch commission videos, as many of them do. They can even visit commission meetings, or drop in on events put on by a commission. I'm afraid that council members who are not experienced with the many opportunities available for

interacting with commissioners are perhaps trying to micromanage commissions. Councilmembers get adequate information when staff make their reports when a commission's action is placed on the Council agenda. What is the purpose of these reports? If Councilmembers will be using them to somehow inject their opinions into a commission's work before an issue comes before the council, this would undermine to normal procedures for commission/council interactions."

"I agree that Council should be aware of what the commissions are working on. I think an update every other month is too frequent. I would prefer to provide quarterly or biannual updates. This is based on how active our commission is. I prefer providing a written update versus attending a Council meeting to provide the update."

"I prefer to provide city council a measurable outcome table for the work plan items (SMART Goal Progress report) City need to build a dashboard system where every commission should fill in their work plan and update the progress which should be pulled out during City council meeting to track. Public will also look into that progress – today every commission provides completely differently and have no way to correlate the overall progress for the city."

"I think it would be useful, as long as the Councilmembers read these updates and consider them in their deliberations. I can imagine it will take a while to read the updates from all the commissions, and the Councilmembers will need to agree to make time to do this. I can also see that it would be helpful for a particular commission to see what other commissions are doing. For our commission, knowing especially what the Planning, Parks and Recreation and Public Safety Commission have in progress would be very helpful (without having to attend all their meetings). Thank you again for taking the time to answer the above questions. If you have any additional thoughts or comments that you would like to share, please feel free. Thank you for soliciting our input. I hope it is helpful, and that we all can work together more effectively based on the results of this survey."