

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: City Staff

Subject: Modification to the Start Time for City Council Meetings, Discussion of the Deliberation Process and Resolution Effecting Changes as Recommended or Direction to Staff to Return with a Resolution Reflecting Council Preferences

Introduction

This report recommends that the City Council take public comment, consider a modification to the start time for City Council meetings, discuss the deliberation process and other potential changes in the meeting process that will help insure the efficiency and timeliness of the Council meetings, and adopt the attached Resolution effecting changes or direct that a Resolution with alternate content be prepared.

Background

At the January 9, 2001 City Council meeting, staff was directed to return with recommendations for changing the start time of Council meetings and altering the categories and order of business with the objective of increasing the efficiency of meetings while ensuring broad public participation. On January 23, 2001, Council adopted a resolution changing the start time for Council meetings to 5:15 p.m. and certain other changes to the categories and order of business for Council agendas.

Discussion

During the past six months the Council meetings have been scheduled to commence at 5:15 p.m. This earlier start time was desirable so that 1) Public Sessions could begin and end at hours convenient for public participation with the goal of concluding Council meetings by 11:00 p. m. 2) Closed Sessions would not be rushed early in the evening or conducted at so late an hour that some Council members could not be present and 3) given there is generally a larger number of staff present for Consent Calendar items, these items would be heard at the beginning of the meeting and staff could be released, thus not incurring overtime in most cases.

During Council discussion on the earlier start time, concern was expressed that 5:15 p.m. might be too early for some Council members, especially those working presently and from time-to-time outside the city. It was, however, agreed that the earlier start time would be tried and modified later, if necessary.

Over the past six months, with exception of the special meeting schedule associated with the annual budget process and two special Closed Session meetings, the Council has had only one special meeting in addition to the two regularly scheduled meetings per month. However, Council has not regularly had a quorum at the earlier start time to begin the meeting. Generally, the meetings have begun 15 to 20 minutes after the scheduled start time. As well, the Council meetings have not concluded before 11:00 p.m. Several Council members have expressed concern with the early start time as well and the lateness of the meetings.

The Mayor and Mayor Pro-Tempore have met with staff to assess the Council meeting modifications approved in January along with the concerns expressed by various Council members.

Generally, the order of business is working well. However, modifying the start time to 5:45 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. might ensure a quorum to begin the Council meeting. The Consent Calendar would continue to be considered first. Closed Session would follow with the continued goal of reconvening open session by 6:45 p.m.

The length of Council meetings is often governed by the high level of public input that occurs on some matters. There are strategies that Council should consider that could help achieve more efficiency and timeliness of the meetings, yet maintain healthy deliberation on matters before Council. The following are strategies for Council to consider.

- 1) When an item is presented by staff, Council members have the opportunity to ask questions for clarification before public comment is taken. Council members should avoid deliberating the item and merely ask questions for clarification.
- 2) Public Comment is the opportunity for the public to provide input for Council to consider as it deliberates on a specific item. Council members, again, should merely ask questions for clarification and avoid appearing to debate or cross-examine the person making the public comment.
- 3) With respect to Council deliberations, Council members may want to concur on how best to communicate in the most efficient manner that will allow members to

feel that their points of view have received adequate consideration. Some additional reminders that might be helpful to consider include, avoid repeating the same point by several individuals, always be mindful of the length of one's comments, and perhaps limit the number of "rounds" of comment on an item.

Finally, staff will continue to place items on agendas to support the efficiency and timeliness of the Council meetings.

Budget /Financial Impact

The proposed modification in the start time of City Council meetings will have no direct fiscal impact, although as indicated, it is possible that overtime expenditures are being reduced by having the Consent Calendar handled at the beginning of the meeting.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the City Council take public comment, discuss the above changes and adopt the attached Resolution, if desired, or direct staff to return with a Resolution reflecting Council's preference for change.

Prepared by: Gordon R. Anderson, Assistant City Manager

Attachment: Resolution amending Resolution Number 9614 (CCS) Regarding the Rules of Order and Procedure for the Conduct of City Council Meetings