TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: CITY MANAGER  
DEPARTMENT: CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE  
DATE: JANUARY 18, 2005  
CMR: 127:05  
SUBJECT: BOARD AND COMMISSION SCOPE OF WORK REVIEW  

This is an informational report and no Council action is required.

BACKGROUND

During the Council meeting on October 14, 2003, then-Mayor Mossar asked staff to review the scope of work for the various boards and commissions.

The City of Palo Alto currently has eight boards and commissions. They include: the Architectural Review Board, the Historic Resources Board, the Human Relations Commission, the Library Advisory Commission, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Planning and Transportation Commission, the Public Art Commission and the Utilities Advisory Commission.

The boards and commissions responsibilities are defined by the PAMC as follows:

Architectural Review Board – 5 members
- The Architectural Review Board is charged with design review of all new construction, and changes and additions to commercial, industrial and multiple-family projects. Its responsibilities include:
  - Promoting orderly and harmonious development of the City of Palo Alto
  - Enhancing the desirability of residence or investment in the City of Palo Alto
  - Encouraging the attainment of the most desirable use of land and improvements
  - Enhancing the desirability of living condition upon the immediate site or in adjacent areas
  - Promoting visual environments which are of high aesthetic quality and variety and which, at the same time are conducive to each other

Historic Resources Board – 7 members
- The Historic Resources Board’s responsibilities include:
  - Rendering advice and guidance to a property owner upon the owner’s application for alteration of any historic single family or duplex building in the downtown area, and any such building designated as significant elsewhere in the city.
  - Informing the Architectural Review Board of the historical and/or architectural significance of historic commercial and multiple-family structures in the downtown area.
and any such buildings designated as significant elsewhere in the city that are under review by the Architectural Review Board. Submit recommendations to the Architectural Review Board regarding proposed exterior alterations of such historic structures.

- Recommending to the Council the designation of additional buildings and districts as historic.
- Researching available information and add historical information to the inventory sheets of historic structures/sites. This inventory is maintained in the department of Planning and Community Environment.
- Performing such other functions as may be delegated from time to time to the Historic Resources Board by the City Council.

**Human Relations Commission – 7 members**

The Human Relations Commission has the discretion to act with respect to any human relations matter when the Commission finds that any person or group does not benefit fully from public or private opportunities or resources in the community, or is unfairly or differently treated due to factors of concern to the Commission.

- public or private opportunities or resources in the community include, but are not limited to, those associated with ownership and rental of housing, employment, education and governmental services and benefits;
- factors of concern to the Commission including but not limited to, socioeconomic class or status, physical condition or handicap, married or unmarried state, emotional condition, intellectual ability, age, sex, sexual preference, race, cultural characteristics, ethnic background, ancestry, citizenship, and religious, conscientious or philosophical belief; and
- the Commission will conduct such studies and undertake such responsibilities as the Council may direct.

**Library Advisory Commission – 7 members**

The purpose of the Library Advisory Commission is to advise the City Council on matters relating to the Palo Alto City Library, excluding daily administrative operations. Its duties are:

- To advise the City Council on planning and policy matters pertaining to:
  - The goals of and the services provided by the Palo Alto City Library
  - The future delivery of services by the Palo Alto City Library
  - The City Manager's recommendations pertaining to the disposition of major gifts of money, personal property and real property to the City to be used for library purposes.
  - The construction and renovation of capital facilities of the Palo Alto City Library.
  - Joint action projects with other public or private information entities, including libraries.
- To review state legislative proposals that may affect the operation of the library;
• To review the City Manager's proposed budget for capital improvements and operations relating to the library and forward comments to one or more applicable committees of the City Council;

• To provide advice upon such other matters as the City Council may from time to time assign;

• To receive community input concerning the library; and

• To review and comment on fund-raising efforts on behalf of the library.

Parks and Recreation Commission – 7 members
The purpose of this Commission is to advise the City Council on matters pertaining to the activities of the Parks and Golf Division and the Recreation, Open Space and Sciences Division of the Community Services Department, excluding daily administrative operations. The Commission’s responsibilities include:

• Advising the City Council on planning and policy matters pertaining to:
  
  o The goals of and the services provided by the Parks and Golf Division and the Recreation, Open Space and Sciences Division of the Community Services Department.
  
  o The future delivery of services by the Parks and Golf Division and the Recreation, Open Space and Sciences Division of the Community Services Department.
  
  o The City Manager's recommendations pertaining to the disposition of major gifts of money, personal property and real property to the City to be used for parks, golf, science, open space and recreation activities.
  
  o The construction and renovation of capital facilities of the Parks and Golf Division and the Recreation, Open Space and Sciences Division of the Community Services Department.
  
  o Joint action projects with other public or private parks, open space and recreation entities.

• Review state legislative proposals that may affect the operation of the Parks and Golf Division and Recreation, Open Space and Sciences Division of the Community Services Department.

• Review the City Manager's proposed budget for capital improvements and operations relating to the Parks and Golf Division and Recreation, Open Space and Sciences Division of the Community Services Department, and thereafter forward any comments to one or more of the applicable committees of the City Council.

• Provide advice upon such other matters as the City Council may from time to time assign.

• Receive community input concerning parks, open space and recreation activities.
• Review and comment on fund-raising efforts on behalf of the Parks and Golf Division and Recreation, Open Space and Sciences Division of the Community Services Department.

• The parks and recreation commission shall not have the power or authority to cause the expenditure of City funds or to bind the City to any written or implied contract.

Planning and Transportation Commission – 7 members

The Planning and Transportation Commission's primary responsibilities include:

• Preparing and making recommendations to the City Council on the City's Comprehensive Plan regarding development, public facilities and transportation in Palo Alto;

• Considering and making recommendations to the City Council on zoning map and zoning ordinance changes;

• Reviewing and making recommendations to the City Council on subdivisions, on appeals on variances and use permits; and

• Considering other policies and programs affecting development and land use in Palo Alto for final City Council action

The P&TC may be requested by the City Council, the City Manager, or the Director of Planning and Community Environment provide advice on any matter pertaining to land use planning and transportation systems affecting the City.

Public Art Commission – 7 members

The Public Art Commission is responsible for administering the City of Palo Alto's Art in Public Places program. Its responsibilities include:

• To advise the City in matters pertaining to the quality, quantity, scope, and style of art in public places.

• To periodically review, at least once a year, the capital improvement program with the Director of Arts and Culture and such other members of the City staff as may be appropriate for inclusion of works of art in various projects.

• To devise methods of selecting and commissioning artists with respect to the design, execution, and placement of art in public places and, pursuant to such methods, to advise the Director of Arts and Culture on the selection and commissioning of artists for such purposes.

• To advise the City regarding the amounts to be expended on art in public places.

• To advise and assist the Director of Arts and Culture in obtaining financial assistance for art in public places from private, corporate, and governmental sources.

• To review plans for the installation of art in public places.
• To review the inventory of art in public places and to advise the City in matters pertaining to the maintenance, placement, alteration, sale, transfer, ownership, and acceptance or refusal of donations of, and other mailers pertaining to, art in public places.

• To recommend the retention of consultants, consistent with the City’s consultant selection procedures, to assist the City in making decisions concerning the art in public places program.

• To advise the City on such other matters pertaining to the art in public places program as may be appropriate.

• To advise and assist private property owners who desire such advice and assistance regarding the selection and installation of works of art to be located on their property in the public view.

• To act as a liaison between local artists and private property owners desiring to install works of art on their private property in public view.

• To give recognition to, and to maintain, an inventory of meritorious works of art in the public view.

• To endeavor to preserve works of art in the public view deemed to be meritorious by the public art commission through agreements with the property owner and/or the artist.

Utilities Advisory Commission – 5 members
The purpose of the Utilities Advisory Commission shall be to advise the City Council on long-range planning and policy matters relating to the electric, gas and water utilities, excluding daily operations. Its responsibilities include:

• Advise the City Council on planning and policy matters pertaining to:
  o Acquisition and development of electric, gas and water resources
  o Joint action projects with other public or private entities which involve electric, gas or water resources
  o Environmental implications of electric, gas or water utility projects
  o Conservation and demand management

• Review and make recommendations to the City Council on the consistency with adopted plans and policies of major electric, gas or water utility projects

• Formulate and review legislative proposals regarding electric, gas and water utilities

• Review the electric, gas, and water utility capital improvement programs, operating budgets, and rates, and thereafter forward any comments to the Finance Committee or its successor

• Provide advice upon such other matters as the city council may from time to time assign.
DISCUSSION

As a result of the direction to review the scope of work for boards and commissions, staff initiated meetings with department managers and staff liaisons to ensure that the current operation of the various boards and commissions is consistent with the roles, responsibilities and authority given to each within the Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC).

During these meetings, board and commission liaisons reviewed the PAMC-defined roles and responsibilities of their respective board and commissions. It was determined that the current descriptions accurately reflect the current work that is being conducted by these bodies and staff is not recommending any changes.

However, staff did believe that additional training, for staff and the members of the City’s boards and commissions, would help to make the meetings more efficient and productive. In February 2004, board and commission liaisons received a half-day training session on parliamentary procedures and methods to effectively run a meeting. After this class, a decision was made to extend a similar training class to both staff liaisons and board and commission members. The first classes were offered in November 2004. The next set of classes will be offered in February 2005. The class involved training in the requirements of the Brown Act, conflict of interest, relationship between chair and staff liaison, procedural rules, and techniques on how to effectively run a meeting. Staff plans to continue to offer this training on an as-needed basis.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report does not represent any change to existing City policies.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This staff report does not represent a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

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