TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
ATTN: POLICY AND SERVICES COMMITTEE
FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
DATE: JUNE 18, 2002 CMR:290:02
SUBJECT: TIMELY STAFF REPORTS

RECOMMENDATION

Staff requests that the Policy and Services Committee recommend that Council approve a six-month trial period for the process of delivering the Council packet early.

BACKGROUND

On February 14, 2002, Vice Mayor Mossar, and Council Members Beecham, Kleinberg and Kishimoto submitted a Council Colleagues memorandum on the issue of timely staff reports. The memorandum requested that Council direct the Policy and Services Committee to establish a new policy which would allow the distribution of staff reports and supporting documents at least an additional week in advance of an agendized hearing. The request was made to provide Council with extra time to review the reports, discuss the issues with interested parties and obtain additional information from staff.

DISCUSSION

Currently, staff reports and supporting documentation are distributed on the Thursday preceding the Monday Council meeting. Staff is sympathetic to the Council’s desire to receive Council agenda items one week earlier than the current practice. The current distribution practice limits council member and community review of the Council packet prior to the Council meeting. It also makes it difficult for council members to discuss issues with interested parties and leaves a minimal amount of time for council members to request additional information from staff.

Council and the community are in the process of dealing with a large number of important and complex issues. These issues include: completing the Zoning Ordinance Update, reducing traffic in neighborhood streets, achieving safe routes to school,
delivering affordable and attainable housing for residents, maintaining and improving existing infrastructure and identifying a successful bond measure for the libraries and other community facilities.

Distributing the Council packet one week earlier will give council members more time to review the detailed documents associated with agenda items (e.g. staff reports, environmental impact reports, construction drawings and elevations, letters from the public, schedules, exhibits, and maps). It will also give council members more time to request clarification from staff. This change in policy will be especially helpful in light of Council’s heavy workload.

The early distribution of the Council packet will also benefit the community by providing more time to review staff reports and supporting materials related to upcoming agenda items. This will allow an increase in communication between council members and members of the community.

After careful review of the timely staff reports issue, staff intends to distribute the Council packet one week earlier beginning with the first Council agenda in September 2002. Accelerating the distribution of the Council packet will inevitably create some minor problems that staff will have to address. Many of these issues have been identified and staff is confident they can be resolved. Staff identified the following concerns as those that might impact public comment and the packet production process:

- Early distribution of the Council packet might create some confusion since two Council packets will be distributed prior to a given Council meeting. To reduce any potential confusion, each Council packet will be produced on different colored paper. The City Clerk will continue to have one copy of the current evening’s packet available at each Council meeting. Items not ready for packet distribution will be individually delivered and color-coded with the color of their respective packet.
- Currently, the public submits letters with regard to packet items by noon on the Wednesday prior to the upcoming Council meeting. The public’s intent is for these letters to be included with the staff report that will be heard during the next Council meeting. Since the packet will be distributed a week earlier, these letters would be “at place” items, which would give Council a substantial number of letters to read prior to that night’s meeting.
- There would need to be a restriction against agenda revisions after the initial notice goes public. Late agenda changes would cause considerable confusion for the Council, Clerk’s Office and the public.
- There will be increased demand from the public for staff reports.
- The Clerk’s Office will be required to have two public bins in the Council Chambers, which contain concurrent Council packets, which could be confusing to the public.
- Early packet distribution will impact capital project implementation schedules and will have a cumulative impact on total project delivery timelines for major city projects.
Typically, council members make agenda related staff requests the morning of the Council meeting. This new procedure will give council members an additional week to review the packet. In order to streamline Council’s work, staff recommends that council members bring all relevant questions to staff’s attention before the Wednesday immediately prior to the Council meeting. This will give Council almost a full week to review the materials and ask clarifying questions of staff; and can provide staff with an opportunity to incorporate needed clarifications to reports in its Monday night presentations. It should also eliminate the need to have items pulled from the Consent Calendar during Council meetings.

There may be some unforeseen issues that arise as a result of this new procedure; staff intends to institute this change on a six-month trial basis and incorporate an evaluation process at the end of the trial. The evaluation is recommended to be an item for the Policy and Services Committee agenda.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

This recommendation 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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