



CITY OF PALO ALTO OFFICE OF THE CITY ATTORNEY

December 14, 2015

The Honorable City Council
Palo Alto, California

Adoption of an Ordinance Amending Municipal Code Section 2.04.200 to Move the Day of Policy and Services and Finance Committee Meetings From Tuesdays to Wednesdays Beginning in 2016

Recommendation

The Policy and Services Committee unanimously recommends that Council approve the attached ordinance amending Municipal Code section 2.04.200 Standing Committee Meetings to move the regular day of Policy and Services (P&S) and Finance Committee meetings from Tuesdays to Wednesdays, with Policy and Services meeting on the third Wednesday of each month and Finance meeting on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month.

Background

During the January 2015 retreat, a Council Member proposed that Council consider moving the day of the Council standing committees (Policy and Services and Finance), from Tuesday to some other day. The proposal responded to the challenges that Council Members face preparing for and attending committee meetings on the night following the regular Monday night Council meeting. Council referred the proposal to the P&S Committee for review and recommendation.

The Policy and Services Committee considered the matter on August 25, 2015. The Committee discussed potential alternate days that would relieve the logistical pressures of back-to-back evening meetings but would not cause other problems, such as constraints on available meeting space, the ability of the public to attend meetings, impacts on staff that support the Committees and City commissions, and conflicts with other community or intergovernmental meetings. The Committee focused on Wednesday as the most appropriate alternate night for standing committee meetings. The Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) and Utilities Advisory Committee (UAC) meet on Wednesday nights as well. Policy and Services determined that staff conflicts between UAC and Finance could occur, and therefore directed that Finance Committee meetings be scheduled on Wednesdays when the UAC does not meet. With that refinement, Policy and Services unanimously recommended that Council move the standing committee meetings from Tuesday to Wednesday nights.

Discussion

Policy and Services recommends adopting the attached ordinance to move regular Council standing committee (Finance and Policy and Services) meetings from Tuesday to Wednesday nights. Special meetings may still be scheduled on alternate dates or times. In May, when two

budget hearings often are required during a single week, staff anticipates cancelling the Wednesday standing Finance Committee meeting and scheduling special Finance Committee meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This will allow two non-consecutive Finance Committee meetings to be held during a week.

Resource Impact

Adoption of the attached ordinance requires no additional staff resources. Implementation of the ordinance may impact staff effectiveness, potentially by creating conflicts with other duties.

At the same time, staff intends to bring back to Council a supplemental discussion on additional policy changes to the ordinance and our practices, following your adoption of the changes proposed by Policy and Services in the ordinance attached to this item.

First, the distinction between Finance and Policy and Services agendas are no longer relevant and for clarity and consistency, a subsequent ordinance change should be brought forward that reduces the *Regular Meeting* frequency for Finance to once a month, similar to Policy and Services. In practice, both committees are meeting twice a month with regularity and many meetings schedule their start before 7 pm., necessitating calling most meetings a *Special Meeting* anyway.

Second, when either committee meets more than once a month, those would be treated as *Special Meetings*. That second (*Special Meeting*) should be scheduled in the daytime, beginning at 2 pm or later, with an end time of 6 pm. The same kind of issues of preparation and effectiveness that informed the Tuesday- to-Wednesday recommended change exists for staff in a major way, with the dramatic increase in night meetings and the span of complex issues and oversight being taken by Council committees in recent years.

Policy Implications

This action is consistent with existing City policy.

Environmental Review

This is not a project for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment A: Ordinance Amending Standing Committee Meetings (PDF)

Department Head: Molly Stump, City Attorney

Ordinance No. _____

Ordinance of the Council of the City of Palo Alto Amending Municipal Code Section 2.04.200 (Standing Committee Meetings) to Move the Day of Standing Meetings for the Policy and Services and Finance Committees from Tuesdays to Wednesdays

The Council of the City of Palo Alto does ORDAIN as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 2.04.200 Standing Committee Meetings of Chapter 2.04 of the Palo Alto Municipal Code is amended to read as follows:

“2.04.200 Standing committee meetings.

(a) Regular Meetings. Each standing committee shall meet on its designated meeting night(s) at 7:00 p.m. at the City Hall. The policy and services committee shall meet on the ~~second third Tuesday Wednesday~~ of each month and the finance committee shall meet on the ~~first and third second and fourth Tuesday Wednesday~~ of each month. When additional meetings are necessary, the chairperson of each committee may call a special meeting as provided in subsection (b) of this section.

(b) Special Meetings. Special meetings of standing committees may be called by the chairperson with the consent of a majority of the committee's members, but a special meeting so called shall be held at City Hall, or other locations if appropriate, and forty-eight hours' notice must be given to every council member.”

SECTION 2. The City Council finds that this ordinance is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines, because it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility of significant environmental effects occurring as a result of the adoption of this ordinance.

SECTION 3. This ordinance shall become effective upon the commencement of the thirty-first day after the date of its adoption.

INTRODUCED:

PASSED:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSTENTIONS:

ABSENT:

NOT YET APPROVED

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

City Clerk

Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

City Manager

City Attorney