



Staff Report

DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION ON FUTURE PRIORITY CALENDAR PROCESS

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Summary

The Priority Calendar is developed two times a year, in the Spring and Fall. Each time it is brought to Council in a two step process. Given our interest in continuous improvement, Staff would like to receive feedback from Council on the recent Council Priorities Calendar process.

Staff also recommends a modification to the current process, whereby Council establishes the Council Priorities (Step 1) as part of the budget development in late January or early February, before Staff begins to develop the proposed budget. Then, in late July or early August, Council would approve a Fiscal Year Council Priorities Calendar as Step 2 of the process.

Background

As part of the initiative on "Preparing the Next Generation" by the City Managers Department of the League of California Cities, the City Managers Associations of Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties sponsor a "Management Talent Exchange Program" (MTEP) for aspiring managers in local governments seeking growth and development opportunities.

MTEP facilitates 3-month exchanges among public agencies in the two counties so that participants can acquire new experiences, new relationships, and new competencies. The City of Belmont participated in the program this year and has acquired an Acting Assistant City Manager for the three months period of time.

The MTEP thus afforded the City of Belmont an opportunity to have a fresh set of eyes on the priority process. Since the MTEP is set up for learning from other organizations, the participants are encouraged to ask questions as to why a process is done in a particular manner and potentially bring new ideas or different approaches back to their home organization. A couple of observations of note regarding the current priorities process used in Belmont are that it is not tied to the budget and is not conducted on the basis of a fiscal year.

Discussion

Staff would like to hear from Council as to the effectiveness of the current process, and try to improve the process if it is not meeting Council Members’ interests. It will be helpful to receive Council’s input on the process while it is still fresh in our minds.

In addition, in an effort to: make the process more efficient, have the priorities more closely tied to the City budget process, and have priorities established on a fiscal year basis, staff would also like to recommend a minor modification to the current process which can be easily implemented immediately and will not have to wait until the new Assistant City Manager is hired.

Staff would like to recommend that we essentially create more separation between the two step process currently used, and thus recommends the following timeline:

Early January	Commissions provide input on current council priorities
Late January/early February	Council establishes priorities (Step 1), which include ranking of priority lists
June	Budget hearing and approval of budget
Early July	Staff draws the line for priorities to be worked on during next fiscal year, based on Council direction and budget adoption
Late July/Early August	Council adopts Council Priorities Calendar for entire fiscal year (Step 2)

Currently, Council establishes the priority calendar for approximately six months at a time in April and again in October of each year. This is currently accomplished in a two step process, with Step 2 occurring at the Council meeting following Step 1.

All aspects of the current process would remain in tact, except the two step process would be separated by several months. Council would see the priorities two times a year, but it would be considered the Council Priority Calendar for that particular fiscal year, instead of two calendars per year. It will also be tied to the City budget process, which currently it is not.

With this modified process, staff will continue to update council on the status and progress of each council priority through the monthly updates contained in the Monthly Wrap. Council would also continue to receive the City Manager’s weekly Council Follow-Up Log that describes the status and progress on Item 9’s and other key items of interest, and Council would continue to receive Commission input once a year on the priorities.

Fiscal Impact

No Fiscal Impact to this report.

Public Contact

Posting of City Council agenda.

Recommendation

Staff requests Council provide staff with input on the recent Council Priorities Calendar process. Staff also recommends a modification to the current process, whereby Council establishes the Council Priorities (Step 1) as part of the budget development in late January or early February, and in late July or early August, Council would approve a Fiscal Year Council Priorities calendar as Step 2 or the process. Finally staff request Council adoption of the timeline described above.

Alternatives

1. Council may elect to implement the modified process on a trial basis. Staff would suggest a minimum of a two year trial to adequately evaluate.
2. Council may elect to implement the modification recommended along with other suggested changes.
3. Council may elect to keep the current process without any modifications.

Respectfully submitted,

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