



Staff Report

RESOLUTION MODIFYING THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

Summary

This report transmits for final approval the organization chart discussed and approved by motion at your May 12, 2009 City Council meeting.

A resolution is attached in order to formalize the City Council approval of the modified City Council Committee structure.

Background

At the May 12th meeting, the City Council approved a motion 3-1-1 (Feierbach No, Wozniak Abstaining) to approve the proposed subcommittee structure model # 2 with the following modifications:

- ✓ Add the Chamber of Commerce to the functions under the Economic Development Committee
- ✓ Include Education, Green Issues, Arts & Culture and Seniors in the structure

An excerpt from the minutes of that May 12th meeting is included later in this report

Discussion

Council Committees have the advantage of allowing for *in depth policy discussions and analysis* between Council, staff, vendors/contractors and the public in an informal setting. For complex issues, Council committees can vet issues and then produce meaningful policy proposals without taking up a great deal of time at regular City Council meetings that have time constraints where meetings routinely go until 10:30 or 11:00 pm at night. They are also a good platform to educate people prior to having a meaningful policy discussion. For controversial issues, committees are a place for the City Council to refer an issue when the Council is not yet ready to make a decision. A disadvantage of the committee system is it may be less “transparent” to the public than direct discussion with the full Council.

In the recent past, the City manager has suggested the Council consider evaluating how it

organizes itself to conduct informal policy discussions in Council Committee meetings. Currently, the City of Belmont has two standing Council Committees: Economic Development and Infrastructure. There is also a San Juan Canyon Committee which has not met for some time now. The Ad Hoc Committee on the Harbor Industrial Area has ceased to function and is now part of the Economic Development Committee. Further, by ordinance the City has established a City Council Audit Committee. At one point, we also had an Ad Hoc Committee on Garbage. This function eventually moved to the Infrastructure Committee as did the HIA function. Ad Hoc Committees include the Green Advisory Committee, the Notre Dame de Namur University Advisory Board and the School “2x2” Committee. In addition, Council members serve on numerous Joint Powers Authorities.

There is no ideal organization structure for how a City Council organizes itself to develop City policy. There is added value to staff by having sub-committee meetings. The Committees enable staff to air various ideas or approaches, enabling staff to provide a better and more focused product to Council. Without this opportunity, staff may fail to identify what the major concerns of Council may be. Here are some observations on the various models:

Existing - The existing structure is working, but has the potential to be modified in a way that would be beneficial from a policy development standpoint. One of the advantages of the existing structure is that it is transparent, as it pushes many policy issues before a TV camera at regular Council meetings early in the policy development process. Also, it is “tried and true,” so people are comfortable with it. The Finance Department administratively supports the Economic Development Committee and the Audit Committee. The Public Works Department administratively supports the Infrastructure Committee. These standing committees meet regularly. The Ad Hoc HIA committee has also held regular meetings. Functional topics that don’t fall into these existing committees either go directly to City Council for policy discussion or are referred to a City Commission. Disadvantages of the existing system are;

1. One Council Member has no sub-committee assignment; and
2. That it focuses on Economic Development and Infrastructure to the exclusion of almost everything else. This means things like capital projects, public safety, labor negotiations preparation, technology, parks maintenance, code enforcement, etc get little Council attention in an informal setting. If they do get time with the Council, they don’t get very much.

Alternative Model 1 - This model would simply add a third committee to handle everything not defined by the existing committees. It would effectively be the “everything else” committee. The committee would be responsible for policy issues related to Public Safety, Parks & Recreation, Budget, Human Resources, Technology, etc. It would have the advantage of capturing the policy issues missing in the existing model. This would be a minor modification from the existing system. One Council Member would have two committees.

Alternative Model 2 - This model would reinvent the existing system and create three new

committees. It could combine Economic Development and Infrastructure (Development related activities) into one committee and then create two new ones, Public Safety, Parks & Neighborhoods (Operations related activities) as well as one encompassing Budget, Finance, Human Resources, Technology and Administration (support activities). This model would represent significant change from the existing system. One Council Member would have two committees.

Note: City Council approved a motion May 12, 2009 selecting model 2 with some minor amendments as the preferred option

Alternative Model 3 - This model would also reinvent the existing system, but would only have two committees. However, instead of combining Economic Development and Infrastructure, this model keeps them separate and expands their scope to include other functions. The Infrastructure committee would expand its scope to include parks, public safety and neighborhoods (An external view of the community) while Economic Development would expand its scope to include the Admin functions of Budget, Finance, etc. (An external view of development, redevelopment and its related financing. This model would represent moderate change from the existing system. One Council Member would have no committee assignment.

Committee Assignments and Term

The City Council may want to have a discussion tonight or at another time about who will be on each of the three Committees, what the effective date of the change will be and whether or not members rotate between committees. Absent specific direction, staff will assume the change will take place at the same time as Council Intergovernmental assignments are made in January of each year.

Neighboring Cities

We see from reviewing other neighboring cities that each municipality has a different approach to structuring their Council Committees. For example the City of San Carlos has only three Council Subcommittees which are all Ad Hoc Committees and include Council Revenue, Economic Development, and San Carlos Transit Village. On the other side of the spectrum is the City of San Mateo which has active Council representation on their 11 Subcommittees, Commissions, and Boards. The City of Redwood City has six Subcommittees which include Architectural Review, Child Care Advisory, Historic Resources Advisory, Pride & Beautification, Home Improvement Loan, and Housing & Human Concerns. Therefore, each municipality is able to determine the most suitable structure for their community.

General Plan/Vision Statement

We get involved in town matters because we care about living here.

Fiscal Impact

No fiscal impact to this report.

Public Contact

Posting of City Council Agenda on the official City bulletin board and on the City website

City Council Action May 12, 2009

Here is an excerpt from the minutes of the May 12, 2009 City Council meeting:

Discussion and Direction Regarding the City Council Subcommittee Structure

City Manager Crist reviewed the current subcommittee structure, and noted that this topic was discussed at the Council's January retreat. He outlined the areas that are missing in the current structure, and clarified that one proposed model would be easy to implement, and others reorganize the current structure in order to add new topics. A more comprehensive subcommittee structure could make the City Council and staff more effective. He cited the Alameda de Las Pulgas restriping as an example of an issue that was handled well under the subcommittee process.

Councilmember Feierbach stated that City Council members are often pressured into agreeing to items that come forward through the subcommittee structure. She clarified that only one additional vote is needed at that point, which violates the spirit of the Brown Act.

Councilmember Feierbach responded that all subcommittee meetings are open to the public.

Councilmember Lieberman noted that subcommittees do not always make recommendations. He expressed support for Model 2 as proposed.

Mayor Braunstein concurred regarding Model 2, and expressed support for adding the Chamber of Commerce to the Economic Development committee. He also suggested the inclusion of education, green issues, arts and culture, and seniors to the structure.

Councilmember Wozniak commented regarding the division of responsibility regarding Commission meetings. She noted that other cities do not have ad hoc committees and questioned how things were accomplished in those cities. Belmont City Council members have many responsibilities, and she expressed concern regarding being over-burdened.

Discussion ensued.

Councilmember Lieberman suggested the formation of three standing committees with several areas within each committee. He recommended giving flexibility to the City Manager to bring issues to one of the three committees as needed. He also expressed support for adding the Chamber of Commerce to Economic Development.

Councilmember Dickenson expressed support for moving ahead with this plan.

ACTION: On a motion by Councilmember Dickenson, seconded by Councilmember Lieberman, and approved by a show of hands (3-1-1, Feierbach no/Wozniak abstain) to approve the proposed Subcommittee Structure Model 2, with modifications as recommended.

Recommendation

Approve the attached resolution modifying the City Council Subcommittee structure consistent with model # 2 (with revisions) of 3 described in this report.

Alternatives

1. Retain existing structure
2. Request additional staff research

Attachments

- A. Resolution
- B. Organization Chart- Model # 2 with revisions dated July 2009

Respectfully submitted,

Jack R. Crist
City Manager

Staff Contact:
Jack Crist
(650) 595-7410
jcrist@belmont.gov

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELMONT MODIFYING
THE CITY COUNCIL SUBCOMMITTEE ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE**

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Belmont discussed it's Council subcommittee structure at a workshop in January 2009 and a regular City Council meeting May 12, 2009; and

WHEREAS, the City Manager presented alternative organizations structures for consideration by the City Council labeled Model's One, Two and Three; and

WHEREAS, the City Council at it's May 12, 2009 meeting approved a motion to approve the proposed subcommittee structure model 2, with modifications as recommended; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Belmont hereby approves the Model 2, with modifications, organization structure for its City Council Subcommittees, a copy of which is attached and incorporated herein by reference

* * * * *

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly passed and adopted by the City Council of the City of Belmont at a regular meeting thereof held on July 28, 2009 by the following vote:

AYES, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

NOES, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

ABSTAIN, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

ABSENT, COUNCILMEMBERS: _____

CLERK of the City of Belmont

APPROVED:

MAYOR of the City of Belmont

Model #2 Revised 7/09 - Alternative Belmont City Council Committee Organization

City Council
Three Standing Committee Structure
2 Council Members on each Committee

Audit Committee

Council Committees

Economic Development Infrastructure
Responsible for:

- Utility Rates
- Infrastructure Planning
- Planning Commission
- Harbor Industrial Area
 - JPA Oversight
- Economic Development
- Community Development
 - Chamber Contract

Safety, Parks and Neighborhoods
Responsible for:

- Belmont San Carlos Fire
 - Police
- Emergency Preparedness
 - CERT
- Parks and Recreation
 - Code Enforcement
 - Parks Commission
 - Ambulance
- Neighborhood Issues
 - Education
 - Green Issues
 - Arts & Culture
 - Seniors & Youth

Budget/Finance Human Resources Technology Administration
Responsible for:

- Budget Policy
- Finance Policy
- Treasury Policy
 - Capital Budgeting
 - Labor Negotiations
- Human Resource Policy
- Information Technology
 - Debt Issuance
 - Municipal Code
 - Finance Commission