City of Arts & Innovation

Commission on Disabilities

TO: **COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES** **DATE: March 20, 2025**

FROM: **GENERAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT** **WARD: ALL**

SUBJECT: **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE GOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES COMMITTEE**

ISSUE:

That the Commission on Disabilities provide feedback, suggestions, or recommendations for consideration in future review sessions conducted by the Governmental Processes Committee.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Commission on Disabilities provide feedback, suggestions, or recommendations for consideration in future review sessions conducted by the Governmental Processes Committee.

BACKGROUND:

The Inclusiveness, Community Engagement, and Governmental Processes Committee (ICGC) received and discussed the Rules of Procedure and Order of Business for the City Council through a series of meetings held between January 2022 and November 2023. As part of that review process, on July 6, 2022, the ICGC received and discussed an update to City Council Rules of Procedure and Order of Business related to the number and role of Boards and Commissions. Through discussion the ICGC requested that the item be continued for further review and discussion.

On September 7, 2022, ICGC once again discussed an update to the City Council Rules of Procedure and Order of Business related to the number and role of Boards and Commissions. The committee directed staff to review the number and role of Boards and Commissions outside of the City Council Rules of Procedure and Order of Business with the intent to bring a resolution specific to the Boards and Commissions back for consideration at a later date.

On June 8, 2023, as a preliminary exploration of possible structural changes, the Airport Commission received a report and discussed the potential of merging with the Transportation Board. This discussion was intended to serve as a pilot or case study to evaluate the feasibility of consolidating advisory bodies with related subject matter. Ultimately, the Airport Commission did not support the recommended merger, citing distinct responsibilities and technical focus. Following this, staff paused the broader review to assess how effectively the newly implemented

Workplans guided each body's work and to determine whether a standardized resolution was needed to streamline operations.

Recently, on March 14, 2024, the Budget Engagement Commission (BEC) received a report proposing a reduction in the Commission's membership from eighteen to eleven members. The proposal was intended to improve the Commission's ability to meet quorum and streamline participation. After discussion, with 2 members absent, 6 yes votes and 4 no votes, the BEC voted to recommend amending Riverside Municipal Code (RMC) section 2.90.030 to reduce its composition to seven Ward-appointed seats and four Citywide seats. The Commission recommended that reductions be implemented through a phased approach by immediately eliminating vacant seats and allowing additional reductions to occur as current member terms expire. The Commission's recommendation was referred to the Governmental Processes Committee for further discussion.

DISCUSSION:

Boards and Commissions serve an important role as advisory bodies that provide recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on various matters affecting the community and give residents an additional outlet to engage in local government. There are currently 16 active Boards and Commissions, with more than 150 volunteer seats combined. As summarized in the chart below, their specific roles and responsibilities are defined either by the City Charter or the RMC.

Charter-Established Boards and Commissions:

Board/Commission	Total Membership	Section	Responsibilities/Duties
Planning Commission	9	Charter §806	Advises City Council on proposed changes to the General Plan, land use, zoning, and development applications.
Human Resources Board	9	Charter §807	The Human Resources Board advises the City Council on personnel administration and recommends changes to personnel rules and regulations.
Board of Library Trustees	9	Charter §808	Oversees the administration and management of library services and resources.
Park and Recreation Commission	9	Charter §809	Advises on development and maintenance of public parks and recreation programs.
Community Police Review Commission	9	Charter §810	Reviews complaints against sworn officers and provides oversight on police-community relations.
Board of Public Utilities	9	Charter	Oversees the operations, budget,

Board/Commission	Total Membership	Section	Responsibilities/Duties
		§§1201–1202	rates, and contracts of the City's utility services and advise the City Council on utility-related matters.

Municipal Code-Established Boards and Commissions:

Board/Commission	Total Membership	Reference	Responsibilities/Duties
Airport Commission	9	RMC §2.60	Advises on airport policies, planning, and operations.
Budget Engagement Commission	18 (proposed 11)	RMC §2.90	Reviews and provides input on the City's annual budget and financial planning.
Cultural Heritage Board	9	RMC §20.15	Makes recommendations on the preservation and protection of cultural and historic resources.
Commission on Aging	11	RMC §2.64	Advises on policies and programs affecting older adult residents.
Commission on Disabilities	11	RMC §2.66	Promotes accessibility, inclusion, and support for residents with disabilities.
Commission of the Deaf	11	RMC §2.100	Provides input on policies and services affecting the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.
Board of Ethics	9	RMC §2.80	Reviews ethics complaints and promotes ethical standards in City government.
Human Relations Commission	15	RMC §2.16	Advises on issues related to equity, inclusion, and community relations.
Museum of Riverside Board	9	RMC §2.12	Supports the operation and promotion of the Museum of Riverside.
Transportation Board	9	RMC §2.62	Provides input on transportation planning, traffic issues, and mobility strategies.

The City Council has expressed ongoing interest in evaluating the structure and effectiveness of the City's Boards and Commissions. Over time, issues such as declining participation, difficulty achieving quorum, overlapping duties, and outdated structures have prompted discussion about possible restructuring, consolidation, or standardization efforts. The intent is to align advisory functions with City priorities, improve efficiency, and ensure meaningful community engagement. The following questions have guided this review:

- Are the number and scope of Boards and Commissions appropriate?

- Is membership size optimized for functionality?
- Are quorum and attendance issues affecting performance?
- Are there opportunities to consolidate or streamline?
- Is there a need for a standard governance framework?

Membership Challenges and Quorum Issues

Many Boards and Commissions have experienced ongoing difficulty in meeting quorum. Quorum is determined based on the total membership of the body – not on the number of seats that are currently filled. For example, if a Commission has 9 membership seats, five members must be present to meet quorum, even if several seats are vacant. This structure creates challenges, particularly for larger Commissions that have difficulty filling or maintaining appointments. As a result, 18 meetings in total were canceled over the past twelve months due to the inability to meet quorum:

- Commission on Aging: 1 cancelled meeting
- Airport Commission: 1 cancelled meeting
- Budget Engagement Commission: 3 cancelled meetings
- Community Police Review Commission: 3 cancelled meetings
- Commission of the Deaf: 1 cancelled meeting
- Commission on Disabilities: 2 cancelled meetings
- Human Resources Board: 3 cancelled meetings
- Park and Recreation Commission: 3 cancelled meetings
- Transportation Board: 1 cancelled meeting

In addition, there have been ongoing challenges in filling vacancies and maintaining appointments of Board and Commission member seats. Currently, there are 31 vacant Board and Commission seats across all Wards. One strategy to address these issues is to reduce the total number of members per commission to make quorum easier to achieve and keep member seats filled. Another option could be to reduce the frequency of meetings or meeting on an as-needed basis.

Overlapping Responsibilities and Opportunities for Consolidation

Some Boards and Commissions focus on similar topics or serve similar purposes. For example, both the Commission on Disabilities and the Commission of the Deaf work to support accessibility and inclusion. The Museum Board and the Cultural Heritage Board both help preserve and promote local culture. In these cases, it may make sense to combine efforts—either by merging two commissions or having them work together more closely. In other cases, keeping the commissions separate might still make sense, but they could improve coordination through joint meetings or shared updates.

Standardizing Governance Framework

As it stands currently, each Board and Commission is responsible for developing and reviewing their own standing rules or bylaws. The adoption of a Citywide Resolution that sets clear and consistent rules for all Boards and Commissions could be considered. This resolution could be similar to the Council's adopted Rules of Procedure and would cover:

- How members are appointed and number of members
- What each group's role and responsibilities are
- How meetings are run and quorum requirements
- What kind of training new members should receive
- What's expected of members in terms of participation and engagement

A shared set of rules and expectations would help all Commissions operate more smoothly, improve transparency, and ensure consistency across the board—while still allowing flexibility for commissions that need to follow special rules under the City Charter.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This item aligns with Envision Riverside 2025 Strategic Priority 5, High Performing Government, Goal 5.3 – Enhance communication and collaboration with community members to improve transparency, build public trust, and encourage shared decision-making.

It aligns with Envision Riverside 2025 Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – This review enhances transparency and public accountability by ensuring that Boards and Commissions are functioning effectively, meeting consistently, and serving their intended advisory roles. Community involvement remains a priority through ongoing opportunities for public comment and participation in advisory processes.

2. **Equity** – Streamlining membership structures and clarifying responsibilities ensures more equitable access to participation and improves representation across all Wards. A standardized governance framework helps ensure all commissions operate under fair and consistent expectations.

3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – Reducing inactive or overlapping commissions and right-sizing membership supports more efficient use of City resources, including staff time and administrative support. Resources saved can be redirected toward higher-impact programs and services.

4. **Innovation** – The proposed standardization and restructuring provide an opportunity to modernize how Boards and Commissions operate, including clearer onboarding, digital access to materials, and improved collaboration tools for commissioners and the public.

5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Establishing a consistent framework for governance and participation supports long-term stability, reduces redundancy, and helps ensure that advisory bodies remain relevant and effective in adapting to future community needs.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by: Fred Tobar, Administrative Analyst

Attachment: Presentation