



RIVERSIDE PUBLIC UTILITIES

Board Memorandum

BOARD OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

DATE: JUNE 23, 2025

SUBJECT: REVIEW AND COMMENT ON BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS OVERVIEW FOR THE GOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES COMMITTEE

ISSUES:

Consider reviewing and discussing Boards and Commissions membership structures, roles, potential consolidation opportunities, and the development of a Citywide governance resolution and provide comments and recommendations to the Governmental Processes Committee.

RECOMMENDATION):

That the Board of Public Utilities:

1. Receive a presentation on Board and Commission membership structures, consolidation opportunities, and the development of a Citywide governance Resolution; and,
2. Provide comments or recommendations to 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.

On March 14, 2025, 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 (GPC) for further discussion.

On May 7, 2025, the GPC conducted a workshop to consider the discussions at prior meetings and the recommendation from the BEC. At the workshop, the GPC received a presentation from the City Manager’s Office on the topics outlined in the Discussion Section below. After receiving public comment, the GPC members requested that all boards and commissions for the City receive the report and be provided the opportunity to provide comments back to the GPC for consideration. The GPC will consider comments and recommendations from each board and commission at its August meeting. For reference, comments from the public and from Committee members are summarized at the end of the Discussion section for consideration.

DISCUSSION:

The following discussion section was presented to the GPC on May 7, 2025. The report has been updated with information relevant specifically to Riverside Public Utilities (RPU) and the Board of Public Utilities (RPU Board). The RPU Board is asked to discuss these topics and offer any recommendations for the GPC to consider at a future meeting anticipated in August of 2025.

Board 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. The Board of Public Utilities is established in the Charter of the City of Riverside with 9 seats and is identified in Table 1. As summarized in the Tables below, their specific roles and responsibilities are defined either by the City Charter (Table 1) or the RMC (Table 2).

Table 1: Charter-Established Boards and Commissions: (Continues to next page)

| 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. |

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

Table 2: 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. |

| Board/Commission | Total Membership | Reference | Responsibilities/Duties |
|----------------------|------------------|-----------|---|
| 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

The Board of Public Utilities did not have any cancellations due to lack of quorum in 2024. One meeting was moved to a Special Meeting in November 2024 to avoid a potential lack of quorum that would have occurred during the week of the Thanksgiving Holiday. The issue was addressed before the meeting was cancelled due to lack of quorum.

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. The RPU Board has two vacancies, Wards 1 and 6. Two strategies were identified in the meeting for consideration but would likely not be applicable to the RPU Board. One strategy identified at the GPC meeting was to address the issue by reducing 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 opting to meet 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.

At this time, RPU staff have not identified any other Board or Commission that appears to have overlapping responsibilities or responsibilities for which consolidation would remedy the situation.

Standardizing Governance Framework

As it stands currently, each Board and Commission is responsible for developing and reviewing their own standing rules or bylaws. City Charter section 804 authorizes each Board or Commission to prescribe its own rules and regulations, provided they are consistent with the City Charter. 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 (attached for reference) 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 all boards and commissions—while still allowing flexibility for each board and commission that needs to follow special rules under the City Charter.

For the RPU Board, the Board Standing Rules and Policy Guide establish its governance framework. Standardizing certain components of the standing rules and/or other policies could be considered.

May 7, 2025 - Comments and Discussion

At the GPC's workshop on Boards and Commissions held on May 7, 2025, members of the public as well as Committee members provided comments and identified several items for consideration. None of the comments specifically applied to the RPU Board; however, the comments are generalized below to provide context for the discussion undertaken and the direction provided to staff. This information may support the discussion of the Board. Minutes for the May 7, 2025

GPC meeting were not available at the time this Board report was prepared.

Topic: Number of Board and Commissions

The City Clerk noted that the number of Boards and Commissions in the City of Riverside is not unusual. Each city is unique and the number of boards and commissions can be fewer or greater and depends on the needs of the community and the willingness of community members to participate.

Topic: Quorum issues

- Recommendation for the Board Chair to play a more significant role in ensuring members will be attending meetings prior to the meeting being held.
- Reduce the membership for all Boards and Commissions to fewer seats – 9 seats was primarily discussed (1 member for each ward and 2 citywide seats). In particular, it was suggested that the BEC should be reduced to 9 members.
- Adjust meeting schedule for non-policy boards and commissions from monthly to every other month or as needed.
- Combine boards and commissions that have similar responsibilities into a single body.
- It was asked if the quorum issues were affected by vacancies.

Topic: Concerns expressed by Board and Commission Members (at the meeting and to the Committee members at other meetings)

- Feeling that the Board and Commission members were disrespected – sometimes by staff but often by the public who attends and comments at meetings (this was also noted to contribute to quorum issues as well as added to vacancies).
- Board and Commission members did not feel that their voices were listened to when seeking to have items added to the agenda.
- Some Board and Commission members questioned how agendas were set and if the members had a say in the items on an agenda (see question and staff response below for more details).
- It was requested that non-policy Board and Commission members be allowed to attend remotely since they are volunteering.

Topic: Consideration of a Citywide governance policy

- One community member noted that they believed that Boards and Commissions should retain authority to establish their own bylaws because each body deals with unique issues.
- Recommendation that the charter be amended to remove the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Library Trustees Commission and add them to the Riverside Municipal Code.

Questions or comments responded to by Staff

- **What constitutes a quorum and does the City have the authority to change it?**
 - Quorum requirements are established by the Ralph M. Brown Act, (e.g. set by the State and cannot be changed by the City)
 - Quorum is 50% + 1 of the total seats and not filled seats or members present on the Board or Commission.
- **The Charter states that the Mayor shall appoint members to Boards and Commission seats if the seat is vacant longer than 60 days.**
 - There must be representation from each Ward and some Wards are difficult to recruit from

- Should there be consideration of filling a seat with a citywide representative if a ward representative cannot be identified
- **Agenda setting**
 - Many Departments go through a process to review the agendas with the Board or Commission Chair prior to meetings
 - Items on the agenda need to be within the purview of the Board or Commission
 - The annual Board Work Plan is intended to help identify items the Board or Commission would like to consider each year and allow staff the time to prepare the reports

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 EACH of the 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 the receipt of this report.

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| Prepared by: | Tracy Sato, Utilities Assistant General Manager/Strategic Initiatives |
| Approved by: | David A. Garcia, Utilities General Manager |
| Certified as to | |

availability of funds: Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer
Approved by: Rafael Guzman, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Rebecca McKee-Reimbold, Interim City Attorney

Attachments:

1. May 7, 2025 Governmental Processes Committee Staff Report
2. City Council Rules of Procedure
3. Presentation