



Governmental Processes Committee

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: GOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES COMMITTEE **DATE: NOVEMBER 18, 2025**

FROM: CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE **WARDS: ALL**

SUBJECT: WORKSHOP – REVIEW OF BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

ISSUE:

That the Governmental Processes Committee conduct a workshop and provide direction to staff regarding Board and Commission membership structures, roles, potential consolidation opportunities, and the development of a Citywide governance Resolution.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Governmental Processes Committee conduct a workshop and provide direction to staff regarding Board and Commission membership structures, consolidation opportunities, and the development of a Citywide governance Resolution.

BACKGROUND:

In May 2025, the Governmental Processes Committee (GPC) conducted an initial workshop to review Boards and Commission membership structures, roles, potential consolidation opportunities, and the development of a Citywide governance Resolution. Through discussion, the committee directed staff to solicit feedback and recommendations from each Board and Commission before returning for further consideration. Additional discussion points and suggestions from the GPC included:

- Consider codifying a process whereby the Chair of each Board or Commission serves as the primary liaison for agenda setting and coordination with staff.
- Evaluate whether the number of active Boards and Commissions (16) is typical for cities of comparable size. The City Clerk noted that while this number is not unusual, it varies widely.
- Explore opportunities for consolidation. Committee members noted that the City Council may need to drive that decision in order to yield changes.

- To address challenges related to vacancies, the Committee recommended encouraging the Mayor to exercise her Charter given authority to appoint vacant Board and Commission seats if they remain unfilled for more than 60 days.
- Consider amending the Charter to allow the Mayor to appoint Citywide representatives for seats that are difficult to fill by ward, should a Charter Review Committee be convened in the future.

DISCUSSION:

Following the May 2025 meeting, City Manager's Office distributed a request to the staff of all sixteen Boards and Commissions asking that they agendize a discussion related to the GPC's ongoing review and submit any feedback or recommendations for consideration. The purpose of this outreach was to inform each Board and Commission of the City Council's interest in potential changes and invite feedback on these topics.

As of the publishing of this report, nine of the sixteen Boards and Commissions submitted feedback. The input provides insight into operational concerns, governance preferences, and resistance to structural changes.

Summary of Board and Commission Feedback

Four of the nine responding bodies expressed strong opposition to consolidation, citing specialized duties, legal mandates, or the importance of focused representation. Several Commissions requested clearer guidance on their roles, stronger communication with City Council and staff, and more consistent onboarding or training. Quorum challenges and attendance issues were flagged by some, alongside interest in more flexible scheduling. A detailed table summarizing the feedback from the nine responding Boards and Commissions is provided below. The table outlines key input and each body's position on the idea of consolidating with another body.

Board / Commission	Key Input and Recommendations	Position on Consolidation
Board of Public Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expressed preference to maintain independent bylaws, rather than being subject to a standard framework - Noted that several issues raised during the review do not apply to this board 	Opposed
Budget Engagement Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recently reviewed quorum issues and voted to reduce membership from 18 to 9 	No Comment

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Board / Commission	Key Input and Recommendations	Position on Consolidation
Commission on Aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requested agenda distribution at least 7 days before meeting - Requested advanced notice if quorum is not expected - Suggested expanding membership eligibility to include relevant professionals under age 55 (e.g., gerontology experts, students) 	No Comment
Commission on Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requested clearer guidance on responsibilities and expectations - Requested more referrals and updates from Council and City departments - Encouraged more collaboration across commissions - Noted that current meeting times may limit participation 	No Comment
Community Police Review Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommended onboarding new commissioners 6 months in advance to avoid quorum delays - Requested more in-depth training - Previously raised concern about difficulty filling ward-based seats; suggested exploring citywide appointments 	No Comment
Cultural Heritage Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recommended retaining 9-member structure but supported temporary vacancy filling mechanisms - Opposed consolidation due to specialized duties - Supported standardized bylaws, with flexibility for board-specific rules 	Opposed
Human Relations Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supported retaining 15-member structure for broad representation - Urged timely appointments - Strongly opposed consolidation, citing unique mission 	Opposed
Park and Recreation Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reported strong quorum and effective 10-meeting/year schedule - Stated existing Standing Rules are sufficient and aligned with Charter - Opposed consolidation, citing unique role - Suggested periodic community forums for public input 	Opposed

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Board / Commission	Key Input and Recommendations	Position on Consolidation
Transportation Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Suggested reducing size from 9 to 7 members or reducing at-large seats - Monthly meetings are appropriate - If consolidated, recommend combining with Planning Commission - Suggested increased outreach and recruitment by City Clerk 	Open

Comparison to Peer Cities

As part of the review, staff conducted a comparative analysis of Boards and Commissions in similarly sized cities within the regional market basket. While Riverside currently maintains 16 active Boards and Commissions, other cities in the region operate a wider range, ranging from 13 in Anaheim to 30 in Long Beach. Several cities, including Pasadena, Burbank, and Glendale, maintain between 18 and 26 advisory bodies. However, the frequency of meetings varies widely. Notably, monthly meetings were by far the most common structure across the reviewed cities, followed by quarterly and bi-monthly formats. As-needed meetings were the least commonly used. These findings suggest that Riverside falls within a typical range in terms of the number of advisory bodies and meeting frequency. A full breakdown of Boards and Commissions across the comparison cities, including meeting frequency, is provided in the Boards and Commissions Comparison Table (Attachment).

Governance and Operational Consistency

While the City Charter authorizes each Board and Commission to adopt its own standing rules, the current decentralized approach has led to operational inconsistencies in areas such as agenda setting, officer roles, and meeting conduct. As part of the Committee's ongoing review, there has been interest in exploring whether a governance framework could provide greater consistency across Boards and Commissions. Feedback from some Commissions referenced the need for clearer guidance and expectations.

The Committee may wish to discuss whether there is value in the development of a Citywide Governance Resolution for Boards and Commissions. This resolution could be modeled on the City Council's adopted Rules of Procedure and Order of Business and would establish a baseline governance framework applicable to all advisory bodies, while still allowing each Board or Commission to retain or supplement its own standing rules.

This approach would balance the Charter's intent with the need for consistency and improved functionality. The resolution could include standards related to:

- The Chair's role in agenda-setting and liaison responsibilities
- Meeting procedures (defaulting to Roberts Rules), public comment, and decorum
- Member expectations, absences, and quorum clarification
- A common structure for bylaws (with Board-specific supplements)
- A recurring review process to ensure bylaws remain current and aligned with City goals.

Commissions would still retain the ability to adopt commission-specific provisions, provided they do not conflict with the City Charter or Council-adopted standards.

Consolidation and Structural Reform

Despite limited support for consolidation among responding boards, the Committee previously noted that such decisions may need to be Council-initiated. Opportunities for structural realignment may still exist, especially where mission overlaps occur. Should the Committee wish to pursue specific consolidation opportunities, staff can return with additional analysis or scenarios for City Council consideration. Any consolidation or redefinition of a board's responsibilities would require Council action by ordinance, in accordance with Charter Section 800.

Vacancy and Appointment Issues

There are currently 27 vacancies across all Boards and Commissions. The Committee previously encouraged the Mayor to exercise her appointment authority when seats remain unfilled after 60 days, as permitted by the Charter, Section 803. Staff supports this direction and suggests codifying a protocol to trigger Mayoral action by way of internal tracking or notification process.

Additionally, the Committee suggested that a future Charter Review Committee could evaluate amendments allowing the Mayor to appoint citywide representatives for ward-specific seats that prove difficult to fill. While outside the scope of the current review, staff recommend flagging this item for long-term consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the receipt of this report.

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Attachments:

1. Boards and Commissions Comparison Table
2. Presentation