

# Lompoc City Council Agenda Item



**City Council Meeting Date:** December 15, 2015

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

**FROM:** Patrick Wiemiller, City Manager  
p\_wiemiller@ci.lompoc.ca.us

**SUBJECT:** Structure of City Boards, Commissions, and Committees

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## **Recommendation:**

Staff recommends the City Council:

- 1) Review and consider the purpose and mission of each Council-appointed City board, commission, and committee, whose members are citizens who live in and near Lompoc; and
- 2) Identify and agree upon the work flow process for City Council, staff, and member citizens for each of those boards, commissions, and committees; and
- 3) Make amendments to the Council Handbook and Commission Handbook, if needed, to reflect changes; or
- 4) Provide other direction.

## **Background:**

Citizen awareness and involvement is a positive force in any community. Lompoc is blessed to have an extensive level of citizen involvement within the governance structure of the City, certainly more than would be typically found in a city the size of Lompoc. Altogether, there are currently 91 positions on Lompoc Council-appointed boards, commissions, and committees that are filled by citizens who live in and near Lompoc.

The current list of citizen boards, commissions and committees in Lompoc are:

- Airport Commission (7 members)
- Beautification and Appearance Commission (5 members)
- Citizens Committee to Oversee Park Maintenance & City Pool Assessment District (5 members)
- Economic Development Committee (15 members and 8 alternates)

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- Human Services Commission (5 members)
- Library Commission (5 members)
- Mobilehome Rent Stabilization Board (5 members)
- Parks and Recreation Commission (5 members)
- Planning Commission (5 members)
- Public Safety Commission (5 members)
- Senior Commission (5 members)
- Utilities Commission (5 members)
- Youth Commission (11 members)

The proper configuration of City-governance starts with the City Council, serving as the legislative, policy-setting, and priority-setting governing body elected by the people. City Council appoints two City-positions, the City Manager and the City Attorney, to carry out the policies of City Council. The City Manager, in turn, consults with the City Attorney and directs City staff in performing the services to the public based on the policies and priorities established by City Council.

When used properly, a Council-appointed citizen board, committee or commission (collectively, hereinafter, “committee”) can enhance that City governance model by providing input in specific subject matter. For instance, a citizen-committee may be able to examine issues in greater detail than would City Council (based on the existing depth and breadth of City Council workload), and, therefore, a citizen committee may be able to advise City Council on policy issues. As an alternative, a citizen-committee may be used as a “trier of fact” to allocate resources based upon criteria established by City Council. Citizen-committees may serve other roles and purposes, as well.

In any case, it is essential the flow of assignments be from the City Council to the City Manager, then to City staff, and then to any citizen-committee that may exist. The slight variation that exists is in regards to the Planning Commission, which serves as a quasi-judicial body of the City and, therefore, takes certain actions that directly generate workload for City staff. But even that is fundamentally the result of City policies adopted by City Council regarding land uses within the City.

Caution must be taken the flow of assignments does not deviate from the pattern described immediately above, because when deviation does exist, manageability of the process quickly erodes and governance of the City destabilizes.

### **Discussion:**

It is worth restating: citizen awareness and involvement is a positive force in any community. Indeed, it is a part of the legacy and character of Lompoc. It is a valuable tool, and as with any tool, can improve matters if properly used. But a fact that cannot be ignored is, as with any tool, it can cause harm if improperly used. That is all the

more reason, from time to time, to be intentional in continuing what has been formed in the past, or to make course corrections if that is the appropriate action.

Specifically, the flow of assignments is essential as described in the previous section. That flow of assignments is from the City Council to the City Manager, then to City staff, and then to each authorized committee. Such a flow of assignments is essential for the governance model to be manageable, particularly in an environment, as we have here in Lompoc, with thirteen different citizen committees.

Each of those citizen committees takes a tremendous amount of City staff resources (time, energy, and attention) to ensure their function. City staff is present at each meeting to advise, report, and interact with the committee members. Each committee meeting is operated under the guidelines of the Brown Act, meaning, in each instance, an agenda is produced, properly posted, minutes recorded and published, physical locations secured and prepared, public access verified, and any other accommodation necessary is resolved. For each committee meeting, staff gathers information and prepares reports. Given that our City staff is lean, and each staff member has their own responsibilities and daily operational imperatives aside from assisting the committees, it is challenging to keep that much work flowing through that many committees *even when each committee works as designed and assigned*. If one or more of the committees begins to operate outside of the intended design, then the governance model can quickly erode and the management of the process can become untenable.

Some isolated instances have already occurred where one or more individual citizen committee members have attempted to create assignments for City staff. That is inappropriate and not consistent with the City's governance model. Taken to a dramatic extreme, if all 91 citizen members are empowered to act upon their own personal agenda and to make assignments to staff, rather than maintaining strict adherence to the work flow of the existing City governance model, the ability to carry out the policies and priorities of City Council would be quickly lost.

To ensure the City Council's policies and priorities are protected, and Lompoc's governance model is preserved, a number of sections of the Council Handbook and the Commission Handbook may need to be addressed and amended. Several suggested areas follow:

- Section C2 of the Council Handbook states, "Boards, commissions, and committees wishing to announce official positions on issues shall first forward the matter to Council, with recommendations." It is recommended instead, if City Council desires to be advised on an official position of an issue, then the City Council assign that task to the appropriate committee.
- On page 36 of the Commission Handbook, in the Relations with City Council section, it is stated, "If a board, commission, or committee wishes to express a

position on a particular project, program, or legislation relative to their general duties that position should be forwarded to the City Council for appropriate consideration. This includes both written and/or oral statements.” Again, it is recommended instead, if City Council desires to be advised on an official position of an issue, then the City Council assign that task to the appropriate committee.

- On page 36 of the Commission Handbook, the role of City Council Members, as liaisons for various committees, is discussed. It is recommended the City Council Members discuss whether or not they wish to continue having liaison assignments to committees, and if that is City Council’s desire, then to articulate the specific expectations related to:
  1. Attendance. If attendance is expected, then it should be specified. The current Handbook language states, “Councilmembers are encouraged to occasionally attend meetings of each Council Advisory Body.”
  2. Participation. The level of participation of a liaison (and a non-liaison) Council Member should be clearly articulated. For instance, does a Council Member have the same participatory role at a committee meeting as a citizen committee member? Or is the liaison (or non-liaison) Council Member to behave and be treated as any other member of the public in attendance, limiting comments to oral communication and/or public comment periods?
  3. Role. The role or duty of the liaison should be clearly defined. Is the liaison to report to the citizen committee only the positions officially taken by the majority of the City Council, or is the liaison free to share his/her personal opinions on topics?
  4. Reporting. The Handbook states, “Councilmember/liaison will then report to Council concerning Committee meetings.” It seems only some and not all liaison reporting is taking place at City Council meetings. Should the liaison assignments be listed in the “Council Requests, Comments, and Meeting Reports” section of the agenda of each City Council meeting to help accommodate that communication?

The foregoing is not meant as an exhaustive list, but rather just the minimum number of issues that should be discussed and resolved to ensure the City Council’s expectations are met.

It is recognized it may take more than one Council meeting to discuss all the issues regarding the City’s committee policies that need attention. It is also anticipated there will be more in-depth discussions regarding those issues at each joint meeting of the

City Council with each citizen committee as the meeting schedule of calendar year 2016 progresses.

**Fiscal Impact:**

There is no fiscal impact resulting from making changes to the Council Handbook and/or the Commission Handbook, nor from the individual examination of the purpose and mission of each citizen committee.

**Conclusion:**

Based on the necessity to be intentional and purposeful in the approach to City governance in Lompoc, it is recommended the City Council review the overall structure of its boards, commissions, and committees, and either reaffirm the missions and duties of each body, or restate those missions and duties and reflect the changes in the Council Handbook and/or the Committee Handbook as appropriate. It is further recommended the City Council review its own individual and group relationships with the various boards, commissions, and committees. Finally, it is recommended, at each upcoming joint meeting during the 2016 calendar year, the City Council reaffirm or restate the mission and duty of each individual board, commission, and committee as an agenda item of the joint meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

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Patrick Wiemiller, City Manager