



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 26, 2016
To: City Council
From: Bryan Montgomery, City Manager 
Joshua McMurray, Planning Manager

SUBJECT: Discussion regarding Citizen Planning Advisory Committee and Planning Commission

Background

At the request of Councilmember Perry, this memo reviews previous discussions and an update on the possible ways to achieve more direct citizen input in various planning/zoning items.

Due to budget, the lack of significant planning items on the horizon and the Council's desire to review all of the planning agenda items, the City Council assumed the role of the Planning Commission in February of 2009. With the desire to more directly involve residents in the discussion on planning items, in March of 2014 the Council adopted a resolution calling for a group of "Citizen Planning Advisors" (see attached resolution). Unfortunately, after repeated solicitations for applications, only one resident applied. We do believe there is more interest now, particularly from some of the graduates of the Citizen Leadership Academy.

Cost of a Planning Commission

A formal Planning Commission (i.e. not the City Council acting as the Planning Commission) would be even more expensive now than was last reported. The staff load on the Planning Division is now more significant and we believe another full-time Planner would need to be hired if we had a separate Planning Commission. The situation now is that the two Planners are getting close to their capacity (in time), though we feel that current staffing could continue for another 2-3 years. A separate Planning Commission, however, would certainly push that over the top.

While we could hire a more junior Planner and have existing staff handle the Planning Commission duties, it would be hard to find a qualified Planner that is only willing to work part-time. A full-time Assistant Planner with salary and benefits is over \$100,000 in total cost. Of course, that Planner would be able to help with some other matters, but we wouldn't have likely brought that position on if it were not for the tasks required for the separate Planning Commission.

The other cost impacts relate to having staff from Engineering attend each Planning Commission meeting, as well as a minutes clerk and the City Attorney. The Clerk's Office would also have the task of pulling together the agenda packets and performing all of the required postings for the meetings. Other staff, including myself, would also attend a good share of the meetings. Some additional costs would also be incurred to train the new Planning Commissioners. In total, it would likely be over \$125,000 in cost to form a separate Planning Commission. (For some perspective, this is approaching the cost of an additional police officer).

Of course, there would be increased costs to both residential and commercial developers for a separate Planning Commission. The current scenario is far more streamlined and allows the Council to have immediate input and authority on these important development items – a preference of those seeking to invest in Oakley.

Citizen Planning Advisors

This concept continues to be, in Staff's opinion, the most cost-effective option to more directly involve a group of citizens to review certain planning items going to the City Council (the total cost would be less than \$10,000 per year). The idea is to send designated planning applications by email to those appointed as Advisors at the same time that applications are routed to other entities for review. The Advisors would have the opportunity to make comments and suggestions that can then be incorporated into the Staff Report. (Of course, not all suggestions may become part of Staff's recommendations, but the list of comments and suggestions would be provided to the City Council as part of the Staff Report).

Staff does recommend some slight modifications/clarifications to the approved resolution for the Citizen Planning Advisors:

- With more apparent interest in serving, the number of Advisors may better be placed at five, but no more than seven
- The scope of projects for the Advisors' review would be similar to that of a separate Planning Commission (Conditional Use Permits, Design Reviews, Variances).
- Comments and suggestions should have the same time set forth in the initial routing of a project (typically 30 days or less). The input would be submitted by email.
- Staff wouldn't necessarily respond to or include all suggestions in the Staff recommendations, but all can be listed for City Council's information.

- The applicant(s) would have an opportunity to respond to the Advisors' comments and suggestions.
- The comments would be provided to the City Council as part of the Staff Report. The comments would be grouped together to remove the names of the Advisors.

Staff believes that these adjustments will improve the success of the Citizen Planning Advisors concept; and, that the concept is the most cost-effective way of more directly involving residents in the review process.

Recommendation

Discuss the information in the memorandum and direct Staff to bring back some minor adjustments to the Citizen Planning Advisors concept and begin soliciting applications.

Attachment

1. Citizen Planning Advisors - March 14, 2014 Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 15-14

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OAKLEY
ESTABLISHING CITIZEN PLANNING ADVISORS**

WHEREAS the City Council is the Planning Agency of the City of Oakley; and

WHEREAS the Council desires to encourage more citizen participation and input in the subdivision and Design Review process;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

1. There is hereby established the volunteer office of "Citizen Planning Advisor", which shall have the duties as specified herein.
2. The City Council may, from time to time, appoint three, but not more than five, Citizen Planning Advisors, who shall serve terms of two years.
3. The City shall use its established application process for recruiting and selecting the Advisors. Emphasis in the appointment selection shall be based upon each applicant's knowledge and interest in urban and community planning and any knowledge or experience in the disciplines of architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, environmental studies, traffic engineering, or related disciplines.
4. Every Citizen Planning Advisor shall be deemed to be a "designated employee" under the City's Conflict of Interest Code and shall be assigned Disclosure Categories 1 – 4 and file Disclosure Statements and otherwise comply with all requirements of the Conflict of Interest Code and regulations of the City and the State of California. Although they are included in the term "designated employee", Citizen Planning Advisors shall be volunteers and not be employees of the City and not be entitled to compensation or benefits of any kind or nature. They may, however, be entitled to receive training or reimbursement of expenses if approved in advance of incurring any expense or training by the City Manager.
5. City staff will route to Citizen Planning Advisors subdivision and Design Review projects after the applications for such projects are "deemed complete" per Government Code Section 65920 et. seq. Each Advisor will use the adopted Residential and Commercial/Industrial Design Guidelines to review projects and may submit comments on the project to City staff.
6. City staff shall attach any comments received from the Citizen Planning Advisors to the reports given to the City Council.
7. City staff shall have no obligation to respond to comments from Citizen Planning Advisors.

8. City staff shall conduct at least one training session for each Citizen Planning Advisor and shall coordinate at least an annual meeting for the Citizen Planning Advisors to discuss the operations of this program.
9. Notwithstanding the creation of the Citizen Planning Advisor program, the City Council shall remain the Planning Agency for the City of Oakley.
10. This program shall be reviewed by the City Council at the conclusion of the first two years and thereafter from time to time. Citizen Planning Advisors serve at the pleasure of the majority of the City Council, and may be removed from office prior to the expiration of the term at the discretion of a majority of the members of the City Council.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Oakley at a meeting held on the 11th of March, 2014 by the following vote: 5-0

AYES: Burgis, Hardcastle, Pope, Rios, Romick
NOES:
ABSTENTION:
ABSENT:

APPROVED:


Raddy Pope, Mayor

ATTEST:


Libby Vreonis, City Clerk

13 March
Date