



# *CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT*

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**MEETING DATE:** January 18, 2011

**ITEM NUMBER:**

**SUBJECT:** CREATION OF CITY COUNCIL WORKING GROUPS

**DATE:** JANUARY 13, 2011

**FROM:** CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

**PRESENTATION BY:** THOMAS R. HATCH, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council consider the creation of one or more ad-hoc City Council Working Groups.

## **BACKGROUND:**

At the City Council Study Session of January 11, 2011, the City Council discussed the significant workload of the entire legislative body and explored ways to divide the projects and distribute the work to not overburden any one member. The concept of creating one or more Working Groups of the City Council was discussed. The idea would be for the City Council to indicate those members who wish to participate in a two-member advisory and ad-hoc Working Group to be tasked with reviewing ideas and concepts along with staff in a more preliminary and informal manner before an idea or topic is presented to the full City Council at either a Study Session or regular City Council meeting. The City Council would entrust a Working Group with additional responsibility to review ideas and discuss concepts in an informal setting. Informal settings are more appropriate and efficient for the review of preliminary ideas and the minor details that are part of these early discussions.

## **ANALYSIS:**

Given the extensive workload and many priorities of the new City Council, it would be more efficient and productive for the City Council to create Working Groups to divide up the responsibilities. Two council member Working Groups would provide an appropriate venue for learning about specific topics and discussing the details of the issue outside of a formal City Council meeting. Such ad-hoc Working Groups would be able to provide some leadership or guidance on an issue that will enable staff to further develop and design a particular policy question in preparation for review and action by the full City Council. These informal discussions would also help staff efficiently bring the City Council a work product that has been explored in depth by the advisory group and hopefully will more closely meet the needs and expectations of the Council. It would be anticipated that a meeting of a particular Working

Group could be requested by either of the two members of the Group or by City staff as needed. Some Groups may meet more often and others may only meet one or twice a year, or until the issue being addressed by the Working Group has been acted on by the Council as a whole.

While legislative actions take place within the confines of regularly established City Council meetings conducted in compliance with State law and adopted procedures, a good amount of policy discussion and constituent service occurs outside of the regular meetings. There are many times that one or two members of the City Council want to work on an individual goal or project. At the same time, staff is often aware of other members of the City Council who are also interested in working on the same goal or project. As an example, it is clear that all five members of the current Council have expressed interest in economic development/business support efforts at some point in the recent past. It would be a violation of State law for more than two members of the City Council to participate in discussions and develop consensus on one particular topic outside of a regular City Council meeting. A two-person Working Group would make it easy for all to understand that the two Council members involved in a particular Working Group could not discuss the topic(s) with any other member of the City Council prior to review by the full Council.

Many cities have created sub committees or working groups with one or two members of a city council including the City of Costa Mesa. In addition, it is often the case that the City Manager or other staff will meet informally with two members of the City Council that are both interested in the same topic. In short, informal Working Groups already occur on a regular basis but taking this step to define specific topics for advisory and ad-hoc groups with particular member participation, further organizes the workload and helps prevent unintended violations of the Brown Act. It would also be expected that for items that are brought forward by a Working Group for full City Council consideration, that the members of that Working Group would inform the public and the other members of the City Council about any preliminary discussions concerning the issue.

Based on the discussion and priorities expressed at the January 11, 2011 Study Session, the following Working Groups are proposed but are open for discussion:

<b>Working Group</b>	<b>Proposed Members</b>
Economic Development & Development	Mayor Pro Tem Righeimer & Council Member Mensinger
Sports & Recreation	Council Member Leece & Council Member Mensinger
Policies/Procedures & General Plan/ Circulation	Council Member Bever & Mayor Monahan
Budget & Capital Improvements	Mayor Monahan & Mayor Pro Tem Righeimer
Public Safety & Homeless/Motel Issues	Council Member Bever & Council Member Leece

Instead of attempting to specifically define the scope of responsibilities for each Working Group, it is recommended that the two members of each Group would meet to further discuss the scope of work and responsibilities of the ad-hoc Group and report back to the City Council for input.

**ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:**

Do not create any Working Groups or reduce/increase the number of proposed Groups.

**FISCAL REVIEW:**

The Working Groups would be ad-hoc and advisory only with informal meetings limited to two members of the City Council and thus would not fall under the requirements of the Brown Act. Staff time would be conserved because the posting of agendas and development of minutes would be produced only rarely and on an as-needed basis. It is anticipated that staff time would be required to effectively support these Groups but it is unknown at this time how many meetings of each Group could be anticipated and how much staff time would be required to support the workload of each Group. No additional resources are required at this time.

**LEGAL REVIEW:**

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed and approved this report.

**CONCLUSION:**

The City Council has expressed an interest and need to divide up its heavy workload and will consider the creation of a number of Working Groups to efficiently focus its work.

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