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TO: TOWN COUNCIL

FROM: TOWN MANAGER

RE: COUNCIL AGENDA PREPARATION AND MEETING POLICIES

ISSUE

Vice Mayor Liss asks that Council consider policies on agenda preparation and meeting protocols.

RECOMMENDATION

Decide whether to make policy changes to agenda setting / preparation, and meeting protocols associated with handout distribution, meeting times, timer use, minutes of outside committees, and considering consent agenda items.

CEQA

There are no CEQA issues because it is self evident that agenda preparation and meeting protocols will not impact the environment.

MONEY

Increased costs may occur due to additional staff time and paper that would need to be circulated to answer questions between the time that an agenda is prepared and the Council meeting date. What the expense would be is difficult to estimate. It would be prudent to track expenses and determine whether in 6 months, the added cost is worth it. It is unlikely that there would be additional expenses with the meeting protocol policies.

DISCUSSION

Vice Mayor Liss asks that the Council develop policies having to do with agenda setting / preparation and various meeting protocols.

AGENDA SETTING / PREPARATION: proposed that agendas be completed 10 days before the regular Council meeting. Agendas would be ready the second rather than the first Friday before the Council meeting. The purpose is so that Council Members can ask questions of staff ahead of time and have the questions answered, compiled and shared with the rest of the Council and the public before the meeting. What that involves is the preparation of another report for the particular Council meeting, though it is not expected that every agenda item would get this degree of vetting. With do regard to Brown Act requirements it is expected that questions would be received and compiled, and then the question / answer document would not be circulated until a day or two before the meeting so that deliberation does not occur through the question / answer document.

Other issues that may arise involve scheduling when people submit items for inclusion on

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a Council agenda. That is likely not a big issue but rather a matter of getting used to things happening on other dates. Right now people are used to the week before. It will take a few meetings to get used to agenda deadlines being a two weeks before the actual meeting. Over a few months the dates of preparation, postings and notifications are expected to take on the same automatic processing that the present schedule receives.

At the June 23 Council meeting Vice Mayor Liss also asked that Council re-consider the current method of how Council Members put things on the agenda. The official method is contained in the Municipal Code section 2.08.070

“The mayor shall meet with the town manager to review and finalize all agendas for meeting of the town council.”

The informal method involves balancing ongoing business, time sensitive items, requests by citizens and others, and desires of individual Council Members. At the start of 2008 Council decided that if Members had an item that they would like to consider then they would bring it up at one meeting and, if Council agreed, put the item on the next available agenda. There are many ways to construct agendas. That said there doesn't appear to be a need to change the official method contained in the Muni Code. Council may however wish to have an informal method that works during the term of this Council. From year to year or election to election the method could be changed to respond to evolving needs.

The following emails were received when this item came up on previous Council agendas.

From: Fettke, Kim [<mailto:Kim.Fettke@aecom.com>]
Sent: Thursday, June 04, 2009 4:11 PM

Perry, I'm writing to express my support of the idea of getting the Council agenda out earlier.
Thanks-
Kim

From: Irene Smith [<mailto:n8rlvr2009@gmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, July 13, 2009 10:52 AM

Hello Perry,
We want to support Gary Liss's proposal to provide Council packets with more advance time for review, if practicable, in order for them to more fully review and consume the information prior to making important decisions.

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MEETING HANDOUTS: proposed that handouts provided at Council meetings by anyone should be posted on the Town's website once the website is upgraded, or otherwise made available to the public, after Council meetings. Documents of more than 3 pages should be submitted to Town staff electronically.

The timing of this method seems odd. For instance, if something is handed out at a meeting then what purpose would be served to post it on the website, especially if a decision has already been made by the Council? If documents of more than 3 pages, or of any number of pages, are submitted to the staff electronically ahead of the agenda then the document would be part of the agenda and could be posted on the web site when that becomes a reality. If submitted at the meeting then there would not be a need to get the document electronically, though it could be helpful, because staff can scan the material in for the record of the meeting. This needs more discussion to understand what this policy seeks to accomplish.

In a 9/8/09 email the Vice Mayor clarified that: "The purpose of the meeting handout proposal is so that people who want to understand what Council did, and why, could see the input they received for their deliberations. It's a companion to the maintenance of records actions taken earlier this year to make it clearer after the fact of what was the basis for Council action."

Additional staff comment: It should be noted that the depth of staff in Loomis does not allow for a position focused on web site updating.

MEETING START TIME: proposed that Council meetings start at 6:00 or 6:30PM and adjourn earlier.

Current meetings run 7 to 10PM with a closed session time between 7 and 7:30PM. The public meeting typically starts at 7:30PM and runs to 10:00PM or to such time as Council agrees. A meeting time running 6:30PM to 9:30PM, with a half hour (6:30 to 7:00PM) of the time for closed session if needed could work. A 6:30PM start time typically allows a person to commute from work and get dinner, even if the dinner would be rushed. A change in regular meeting times requires an ordinance change in Municipal Code section 2.04.030.

MEETING TIMER: proposed that all speakers, including official presentations from invited guests, be held to 5 minutes so as to maintain consistency.

Typically this is handled with the timing lights though invited people or people giving a presentation on their project are given additional time. The Mayor, and Council if it wishes, can act to limit or expand speaking time. It would seem that this flexibility would be helpful in conducting meetings. If perchance the timing light doesn't get activated then the Manager

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will typically start timing using a watch. This can result in one speaker being held to a strict 5 minutes while another gets a minute extra. It hasn't been a problem because the tendency has been to err on the side of giving an extra ½ or 1 minute. This needs more discussion to understand what this policy seeks to accomplish.

In a 9/8/09 email the Vice Mayor clarified that: "The issue with the meeting timer proposal is that I've noticed a significant inconsistency in how and when we time public presentations. This could come across to attendees as singling them out when the timer is instituted, when it wasn't done for other agenda items before theirs. In addition, we've recently had a number of officially invited presentations that went on way longer than needed. My intent is to try to keep official presentations to 5 minutes UNLESS there is a specific need for longer than that."

MINUTES OF OUTSIDE COMMITTEE MEETINGS: proposed that minutes of outside Committee meetings be put in the Council agenda back up documents so that Council Members can know what is going on and how Loomis representatives are commenting.

This can be accommodated though the minutes may be a little dated depending on when the approved minutes of a committee become available, could be several months in the case of Flood Control for instance. Minutes copying for agendas will increase the cost of preparing Council agendas because of the added paper.

PULLING CONSENT ITEMS: proposed that items pulled from the Consent agenda should be done by Council only if they want public comment AND want to make a recommendation for a different action than staff recommended. All questions about Consent items should be asked BEFORE the Council meeting.

By law the public must be allowed to comment on consent items whether or not the item is pulled by a Council Member or anyone else.