

June 6, 2022

Honorable Mayor Kate Colin and City Council members
City of San Rafael
1400 Fifth Ave. Room 203
San Rafael, CA 94901

RE: Agenda item #8.a. Board and Commission Updates

Honorable Mayor Kate Colin and City Council members:

I have the following comments:

1. *Identification of “staff”.*

The report for agenda item #8.a. was prepared by Lindsay Lara, the City Clerk, but refers to “staff” as doing the analysis and recommendations. Why isn’t the “staff” recommending these changes identified in the report? And why isn’t the “staff” identified as the author of the report? Aren’t “staff” the employees that report to the City Manager. The City Clerk is elected and does not report to the City Manager. Is there a reason to keep the identification of “staff” hidden from the public?

2. *Notification.*

The boards and commissions addressed in this report are of major importance to the residents of San Rafael. For example, decisions made by the Planning Commission affect our neighborhoods for many years, even decades. Why wasn’t notification sent out to the various neighborhoods, neighborhood leaders and interested residents, such as George Hilman who submitted comments back in 2014, for Resolution No. 13681 that is referenced in the report prepared for tonight’s meeting. The City Council needs to notify all interested residents of San Rafael to provide an opportunity to comment on these proposed changes and that hasn’t been done.

3. *Planning Commission qualifications.*

I think a thorough review of Planning Commission qualifications would be beneficial before adopting the proposed changes in the current report. For example:

1). Currently, only the address given on the application is verified. The address is verified to be within the City limits and I assume the address will be used to verify location within a specific district. As I understand from conversations with the City Clerk, there is no verification of the applicant actually residing at that address. Other jurisdictions use voter registration records to confirm the applicant resides at the address given on the application and I think San Rafael should adopt this practice.

2). There should be a minimum length of residency required. For example, an applicant should be a resident of San Rafael for a minimum of 1 year.

3). The City may consider shorter terms or different terms depending on certain criteria, such as experience. For example, new members could be appointed for 2 years and reappointments could be for 4 years.

Terms vary among jurisdictions with Corte Madera and Novato having 2 year terms, Sausalito and Mill Valley with 3 year terms, and Larkspur having 4 year terms. The County has 4 year terms for each Planning Commissioner representing a district and 2 year terms for the at-large commissioners. More thought needs to be given about how to best structure the terms of our Planning Commissioners, and, perhaps, other boards, as well.

4). There needs to be clear instructions/provisions of the commissioner being disqualified if moving out of the district or city limits.

I encourage you, as our representatives, to involve the public and solicit feedback from the various communities that you represent before adopting the proposed changes tonight.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Victoria DeWitt

cc: Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods
Responsible Growth Marin
Terra Linda Homeowners Association
West End Neighborhood Association