



Item No. 5 Town of Atherton

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – STUDY SESSION

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: GEORGE RODERICKS, CITY MANAGER

DATE: JANUARY 13, 2021

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION REGARDING THE START TIME FOR CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council discuss and provide direction regarding the start times for City Council meetings.

BACKGROUND | ANALYSIS

At the December 16 Regular City Council meeting, the Council asked that staff return at the January 13, 2021 City Council meeting with an item for consideration by the Council as to a change in City Council meeting start times. Chapter 2.04 of the Atherton Municipal Code (AMC) provides that the City Council shall hold a regular meeting at least once a month at a time and day specified by resolution.

The current policy direction with respect to meetings is:

- Study Sessions are held on the 1st Wednesday of each month from 4 pm to 6 pm. Study Sessions should be, to the extent possible, limited to discussion items only. Action items should not be placed on a Study Session Agenda unless necessary due to timing or direction. Study Sessions should be cancelled if there are no items to discuss.
- Regular meetings of the City Council are held on the 3rd Wednesday of each month beginning at 7 pm. Closed Sessions may be scheduled in advance or at the end of a Regular Meeting, as needed. There is no prescribed end time for a Regular Meeting.
- The City Council is typically DARK during the month of August.
- Special meetings are to be limited in occurrence.
- Meetings may be adjusted if impacted due to holidays.

The Council's last discussion of this issue was in January 2017 at which time the Council specifically discussed the start time for Study Sessions as well as regular meetings and dates. During that meeting, the Council clarified the desire to establish Study Session meeting start times at 4 pm (as opposed to the existing 3 pm) and to try to maintain the 2-hour time limit for such meetings. During the discussion, Councilmembers expressed concerns and conflicts related to

other Town Committee(s) or external Boards on which members of the City Council participate. The City Council opted *not to establish* Study Session meetings as regularly scheduled by Resolution in order to maintain their flexibility for rescheduling or cancelling as needed. As a result, Study Sessions are considered Special Meetings under the Brown Act.

During the January 2017 meeting, the Council also discussed the desire to *fix* its regular meeting schedule for the benefit of Council planning (vacations, work trips, etc.) as well as the public and eliminate ad hoc or special meetings to the extent possible. The Council has generally opined that a 7 pm start time allowed members of the Council and community to return from work, get dinner, and then attend the meeting at 7 pm. Earlier start times, to include Closed Sessions, could create conflicts for some members of the Council in relation to their ability to return home in time to attend. Some of these issues are moot under the Shelter in Place Order as it eliminates the travel time issue; but, upon a return to normal operations, the issues will arise again.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

POLICY FOCUS

Start times and dates of City Council meetings are within the policy purview of the City Council. Any changes will be returned to the City Council for adoption by Resolution.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town's electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,200 subscribers to the Town's electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents as well as stakeholders – to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL

This item ___ has or X has not been before a Town Committee or Commission.

- ___ Audit/Finance Committee (meets every other month)
- ___ Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee (meets as needed)
- ___ Environmental Programs Committee (meets every other month)
- ___ Park and Recreation Committee (meets each month)
- ___ Planning Commission (meets each month)
- ___ Rail Committee (meets every other month)
- ___ Transportation Committee (meets every other month)

ATTACHMENTS

None