

## MEMO

**DATE:** July 10, 2018  
**TO:** City Council  
**FROM:** Brett Lee, Incoming Mayor  
**SUBJECT:** Meeting Protocols

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### **Recommendation**

Discuss various meeting processes and provide feedback as to how the City Council will conduct its meetings. Specifically, protocol recommendations include the following:

- Individual public comment limited to 2.5 minutes
- General public comment duration limited to 45 minutes at the beginning of the meeting with additional public comment at the end of the meeting for anyone who was not able to speak earlier.
- A mid-meeting break included in the agenda, to help keep meeting items closer to the scheduled times listed on the agenda.
- Use of a timer clearly visible to the audience
- Modifications to staff reports to ease review by Council and the public
- Direct staff to return with a proposed schedule of joint discussions with commissions.

### **Fiscal Impact**

Most of the issues deal with meeting management, and do not have a fiscal impact. Some actions make require additional time or assistance, although the assumed fiscal impacts would be negligible, if any.

### **Background and Analysis**

On June 19, the City Council held a discussion about meeting process for future Council meetings; outgoing councilmembers Davis and Swanson, as well as continuing councilmembers Arnold and Frerichs, provided their input and feedback on how best to manage City Council meetings to maximize effectiveness for the Council and the public. The July 10 discussion will allow the 2018-2020 City Council to determine the protocols under which it will operate.

*Individual Public Comment.* Individual public comments are currently limited to 3 minutes per individual and 5 minutes for a person speaking on behalf of at least 5 people (who must stand at the dais with the speaker). The 5-minute policy has also been extended to individuals speaking on behalf of a recognized organization, such as Downtown Davis. The recommendation is to shorten this time period to 2.5 minutes – still ample time to share a message but a shortened period allowing for more people to speak during a public comment session. Members of the public are always able to provide written comments to the Council, via a handout or an email.

*Duration of Overall General Public Comment.* Every Council meeting must include a section for general public comment, for items not on the agenda or for individuals who cannot stay for an item on the agenda. The City Council has the ability to determine a reasonable length of time for the public comment period and to determine where on the agenda to place the public comment period.

Davis has historically placed public comment early in the agenda, before regular items and the consent calendar. On occasion, the length of public comment has unexpectedly prevented the Council from addressing the agenda items on the regular and/or consent calendar. In order to better manage the meeting and ensure the Council is able to complete its agenda items, the recommendation is to limit the general public comment period at the beginning of the meeting to no more than 45 minutes. Anyone not able to comment during this time can speak at the end of the meeting in an additional public comment period, if needed. The same individual time parameters will apply. The intent is not to prevent individuals from speaking but to make sure that there is ample time to address items on the agenda.

*Timer.* A new timer has been installed in the Chambers so that members of the audience can clearly see the duration of public comments. This should make it easier for the speaker to manage his/her own time while addressing the Council.

*Speaker Cards.* The Council discussed on June 19 whether to implement speaker cards, as some public bodies have. The upside to speaker cards is that the Council has a better idea how many people want to speak and can work to manage the time. On the downside, speaker cards for general public comment and every regular item require a level of administrative coordination during the meeting that may be difficult to achieve. Some people feel that speaker cards make it easier for people unfamiliar with the process to speak; others feel that it complicates the process and is confusing for members of the public new to comment periods. As there was no consensus on this during the previous Council meeting, there is no recommendation here to change the status quo, which does not require speaker cards.

*Times on Agenda and Mid-Meeting Break.* Staff makes estimates on the time a specific item should take, assuming that no part of the meeting is delayed. This means that as the meeting unfolds, the actual schedule is often out of sync with the published times on the agenda. Because it is difficult to predict exactly how long each item will take, a more reasonable approach to allowing for some flexibility is to build in a mid-meeting break. If the Council is on or ahead of schedule, they can take the break. If the Council is behind schedule, they can shorten the break or delete it entirely.

*Staff Report Modifications.* After discussion at the June 19 Council meeting, staff will attempt two general modifications to staff reports to assist Council and the public in reviews of the reports. First, staff will try to include “extra” or background information as attachments or links in an effort to streamline the body of the staff report. Second, staff will minimize links to critical information within reports and endeavor to include such information as an attachment or within the body of the staff report, rather than requiring the reader to go to a different site. This will better enable readers to get the information they need, even when offline.

*Joint Meetings with Commissions.* The City Council currently has 13 advisory commissions, 1 new commission yet to be appointed (police advisory), 2 committees (unitrans and downtown plan), and 1 task force (broadband). The recommendation is to set up a schedule to meet with each group briefly, averaging one group per month. The meetings would take place at the beginning of a Council meeting and would be time limited, with specific direction given to each group to share with Council the following information:

- Introduction of commission members
- Accomplishments
- Current activities/work
- Future work
- Clarification on what the Council would like the commission to work on