



City of Emeryville

CALIFORNIA

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 16, 2017

TO: City Council and
Planning Commission

FROM: Carolyn Lehr, City Manager
Charles S. Bryant, Community Development Director

**SUBJECT: Joint Study Session Of City Council And Planning Commission To
Discuss Small Business**

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council and Planning Commission hold a joint study session to listen to members of the community and discuss small business needs.

BACKGROUND

At the September 24, 2015 Planning Commission meeting, then-Commissioner John Bauters moved to request a Joint Study Session with the City Council to discuss small business concerns and to develop strategies to help promote small businesses. This was related to amendments to the development bonus system that had been approved by the Commission earlier in the meeting, specifically the bonus for small business assistance. Commissioner Bauters expressed a need to better define what that assistance would be. The motion was passed unanimously and the request was forwarded to the City Council.

In January 2016, the City Council established Priorities, Goals and Strategies for Fiscal Years 2016-2018 including a Goal to “Support and adopt policies to support worker owned businesses and small businesses.” On March 7, 2017 the City Council reaffirmed this Goal. Since that time, staff has been developing programs, such as the *Business License and Fire Inspection Fee Rebate Program* and the initial framework for the *Façade Improvement Grant Program*. Prior to moving forward with additional programs, however, members of Council and the Commission have indicated they would like to hold the joint study session in order to ensure that the local business community has a chance to provide input on business-supportive strategies.

DISCUSSION

Both the City Council and the Planning Commission have expressed interest in the challenges new and existing small businesses face in starting up and continuing to perform in today’s economic climate. The joint study session will allow the Council and

Commission to reach out to small businesses and the community in general to hear their thoughts on how the City may help or otherwise facilitate connections to both City and outside agency resources.

Outreach

At the advice of the Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC), the meeting time was arranged to be held mid-day/mid-week in an effort to encourage small business owners to attend. In addition to issuing “Save the Date” postcards to a broad and inclusive list of businesses, staff provided regular public notice of the meeting, and made follow-up phone calls and emails encouraging stakeholders to attend.

Joint Session Meeting Format

The meeting format will be somewhat different than a standard Council or Commission meeting. The following meeting objectives provide a basic outline for the joint study session:

1. Introduction & Economic Profile of Emeryville
OBJECTIVE: understand the economic context
2. Overview of small business support programs
OBJECTIVE: understand the competitive environment and identify best practices
3. Overview of regional and state small business support programs
OBJECTIVE: avoid duplication of efforts and identify opportunities for leverage
4. Listening session
OBJECTIVE: determine business community needs and priorities
5. Conclusion/recap
OBJECTIVE: list action items

Following a “Networking Lunch”, the joint study session will begin with a brief overview of existing programs and those in development at this time. The majority of the meeting will be devoted to a “Listening Session” where business owners and members of the public will be invited to provide constructive comments regarding the challenges and opportunities they see in starting or doing business in Emeryville. The goal is to collect ideas that could help make businesses more successful, hear what challenges the community faces and ideas for overcoming those challenges.

Next Steps

At future Planning Commission and City Council meetings, staff will return with a distilled version of the items heard at the Joint Session. At that time, staff will seek confirmation and prioritization of topics; and direction for further study and action as appropriate by the EDAC, Planning Commission, City Council, and staff.

FISCAL IMPACT

The costs associated with implementation of suggested programs will be analyzed at the time the specific strategies are brought forward for consideration.

STAFF COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

None

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

PREPARED BY: Emi Thériault, Community and Economic Development Coordinator II

REVIEWED BY: Chadrick Smalley, Economic Development and Housing Manager

**APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO THE
CITY COUNCIL AND PLANNING COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF EMERYVILLE:**



Carolyn Lehr, City Manager