



TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

Liaison Memo

TO: Mayor and Members of the Town Council

FROM: Craig Taylor and Sarah Wernikoff

DATE: Wednesday, May 24th 2023

RE: Committee Operations Sub-Committee Update

OVERVIEW:

In 2022 the Council identified a review of Town committee operations as part of 2022-2023 Council Priority 3e: “Operational and Service Delivery Enhancements”; the specific direction was to “explore options to better serve and utilize Town committees and their operations” including a thorough review of the Town’s Commission & Committee Handbook. The goal of the initiative is to improve overall operational efficiency for both volunteers and staff – and to update, refine and clarify key elements of the Handbook.

At the February 8th meeting, the Council appointed council members Taylor and Wernikoff as the subcommittee of the Council to work on this priority with a goal of completion by June 2023.

In February, Councilmembers Taylor and Wernikoff met several times to discuss and review, and also met separately with the Town Manager, Town Clerk and Town Attorney to brainstorm challenges and possible options for improvement. The outcome of those meetings was to establish 2 possible structure alternatives in addition to the existing “Brown Act Committee”: a “Non-Brown Act Committee” and a “Group.”

On March 15, 2023, the subcommittee held a meeting with committee Chairs to solicit feedback about the process and proposed alternatives. As follow up from that meeting, the subcommittee requested each Chair share and solicit feedback about the proposed alternatives as described in the attached “Committee Structure Update” document with their respective committee members.

On May 31st the subcommittee is schedule to meet with the Chairs to review input and preferences from each committee. In the interim, the subcommittee has heard feedback that Parks and Recreation and Sustainability prefer the “Non-Brown Act Committee” structure. We have not heard feedback from other committees yet.

The subcommittee will bring this project back to Council for a comprehensive update, discussion, and approval of alternative structures in the coming months. Once any changes are approved, the

final steps will include incorporating the changes into the Town's Commission & Committee Handbook, as well as making other updates as needed.

DRAFT: Proposal For Simplifying and Clarifying Committee Operations

Goal

The goal of this initiative is to strengthen our volunteer community and improve overall operational efficiency for both volunteers and staff. Brown-Act rules, that generally assume more political governing bodies, can be cumbersome for our volunteer committee members and staff. Below are ideas for alternative committee structures that allow more flexible committee organization. This initiative is part of the 2022-2023 Council Priorities.

Process

Review the current operating procedures for committees (eg, Brown Act requirements, in-person vs remote participation) by the Committee of Committees (committee chairs or their representative, and the council subcommittee (Sarah and Craig)). The committee representatives would collect feedback from their respective committees to be incorporated into a working draft to be reviewed by the Committee of Committees and submitted to the Council.

Alternative Committee Structures For Discussion

How do we continue to support and enhance our volunteer culture of involvement and inclusiveness? Use both the volunteer and staff resources wisely? Possible committee structures are listed below for discussion and refinement. A Council subcommittee is called out in the table. This subcommittee is different from the Council Liaison. The purpose of the subcommittee is to ensure that there is coordination across all committees with respect to charter and membership without violating the Brown Act. For Brown Act Committees this role is fulfilled by the entire Council.

CRITERIA	Brown Act Committee	Non-Brown Act Committee	Group
Description	Current structure.	Closer to the original PV committee intent.	Supports key Town events, projects and initiatives.
Member Appointment	By Council	By Council subcommittee	Open membership
Meeting Requirement for Members	In person	In person or hybrid	In person or hybrid
Public Participation	In person or hybrid	In person or hybrid	In person or hybrid
Charter	Formal defined by the Council	Defined by the Non-Brown Act Committee, approved by Council subcommittee	
Noticing	Yes, per Brown (72 hrs)	Yes, TBD on exact timing	Yes, in Town calendar
Agenda Setting	Yes, per Brown Act, with review by Council liaison and Town Manager	Yes, with review by Council liaison (possibly self-serve in the future).	TBD

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Minutes	Yes, per Brown Act	Yes, non-Brown Act*	TBD
Council Access	Direct	Direct	Direct
Council liaison	Assigned	Assigned	Assigned
Staff member	Assigned	As needed	As needed
Issue resolution	As needed, Chair to Council liaison to Town Manager (to Council if needed)	As needed, Chair to Council liaison to Town Manager (to Council if needed)	As needed, Chair to Council liaison to Town Manager (to Council if needed)
PROS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximum oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flexibility for committee members*• Hybrid meetings• Lower impact on staff/resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximum flexibility for group members*• Hybrid meetings• Lowest impact on staffing/resources

* To be determined: Examples: simplify agenda setting and meeting noticing, provide flexibility on in-person requirements, determine quorum requirement, video recording, action vs detailed minutes, etc.

Questions for Committees to Consider:

1. Does the “Alternative Committee Structures” above seem like a step in the right direction?
2. Is your committee open to changing to an alternative non-Brown Act body? If so, is Alt 1 or Alt 2 appealing, or is there another alternative that would work better for your committee?
3. How should we handle hybrid meeting (zoom) participation for committee members and residents under the different alternative structures? Examples: full remote participation, limited participation, viewing only, no remote. Should it be uniform by committee type or at the discretion of each committee?
4. Type of minutes: action, summary or verbatim minutes?
5. Thoughts on reducing required staff time given we have 17 committees?
6. Do you have ideas for increasing volunteer participation?
7. How can we make it easier to volunteer?

Current Committee List (for reference)

Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Traffic Safety
Cable and Utilities Undergrounding
Conservation
Cultural Arts
Emergency Preparedness
Finance and Audit
Geologic Safety
Historic Resources
Nature and Science
Open Space
Parks and Recreation
Public Works
Race and Equity
Sustainability
Trails and Paths
Wildfire Preparedness
Woodside Highlands Road Maintenance

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Minutes From Committee of Committee Meeting 3/14/2023

Committee: Proposal for simplifying and clarifying committee operations

Tuesday, March 14, 2023

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** 4:40 PM
2. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** None

Attending:

Town Council: Craig Taylor, Sarah Wernikoff

Judith Murphy (Moderator)

Bicycle Pedestrian and Traffic Safety: Ed Holland

Conservation: Catherine MaGill (Zoom)

Emergency Preparedness: Dale Pfau (Zoom), Jerry Shefren

Finance and Audit: George Savage

Geologic Safety: Nan Shostak, Gary Ernst, Chet and Bob Wrucke

Historic Resources: Nancy Lund

Open Space: Betsy Morgenthaler

Parks and Recreation: Patty Dewes

Public Works: Alex Doherty

Sustainability: Scott Elrod, Rebecca Flynn

Trails and Paths: Gary Hanning

Wildfire Preparedness: Jennifer Hammer

Public: Anne Kopf-Sill, Dave Cardinal, Rita Comes, Kristi Corley

3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Discuss “Proposal For Simplifying and Clarifying Committee Operations” Craig opened the meeting by welcoming and thanking all who were attending, particularly given the weather conditions. The purpose of the meeting was to convene the Towns’ Committee Chairs to get their input on a framework for improving the overall operational efficiency for both volunteers and staff. This initiative originated as part of the Town Council’s 2022-23 Council Priorities. He stressed that this was NOT a decision-making meeting, but an introduction and invitation for discussion.

The meeting outcomes were to:

- Review the DRAFT of the alternative committee structures
- Gather initial POV, concerns, questions, etc.
- Incorporate the input and update the DRAFT
- Ask the Chairs to take the DRAFT to their Committees for discussion
- Reconvene, at some future date, to reiterate the proposal

The goal would be to take the proposal to the Town Council for approval, hopefully by the end of the fiscal year and then incorporate the changes in an overall update of the Committee Handbook.

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Sarah provided some background – we have about 400 volunteers in a town w/ ~3600 adults for a participation rate of 11%. This is great but there is feedback from the Committees and staff that:

- It is becoming increasingly challenging to accommodate and comply w/ Brown Act requirements
- There are opportunities to improve alignment between Town Council and Committee priorities
- Not all committee policies and procedures are being implemented consistently
- Aspects of the Committee Handbook are ambiguous and outdated
- All or some of these factors “may” affect our ability to attract more volunteers

Comments regarding the framework:

Point of Clarification: ANY committee appointed by the full Town Council (permanent or ad hoc) is subject to the Brown Act.

Point of Clarification: ALL our Committees are “advisory.” This means they might not have been subject to Brown Act requirements given that all decisions need to be reviewed by the Town Council before implementation. Only the Planning Commission and the ASCC can make decisions which can then be appealed to the Town Council, if needed.

Overall:

- Can the framework ID the committees that are “required” by the General Plan (Conservation, Trails, BPTS) and why? This would “help” the other committees have some clarification about what is squarely in column #1.
- Can the framework ID what actions committees in columns #2 and #3 can engage in. . . What types of decisions can they make, documents they can review?
- Charter – very important and must be defined clearly for all 3 columns
- Description – supportive of strong volunteer participation is true for all 3 columns
- Member appointment: Town Council subcommittee to approve member appointments is all they do; the committee’s primary relationship is still w/ their Council liaisons for all other business.
- Agenda setting: Would like clarity on this for Columns 2 & 3, sometimes staff input is helpful and/or needed.
- Council Liaison: A goal of this structure would be to strengthen the relationship between the Council liaison and the committees
- Issue resolution, does not need to go through all levels unless necessary
- Transparency is STILL very important; we will get judged on how well this is handled. Somewhere in the process, the public must have transparency, through budget review, Town Council review, some other method. . . ?

Overall comments:

- There is general support for the approach, outline, opening the discussion
- There is general agreement that committees would LOVE to have some flexibility and/or be released from Brown Act requirements.
- There is concern about transparency and communication, especially if it involves issues critical to our residents, i.e. safety

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- Concerned about enforcement. This will potentially put more work on the council liaisons to be gatekeepers
- Residents still want to participate; how do we ensure this will happen?
- Elephant in the room, do we have too many committees that spread our limited volunteerism too thin?
- Chairs should bring back examples from their committee discussions.
- Chairs should be **more specific about what is meant by transparency.** . .

Actions:

- Dewes to provide notes to Craig/Sarah
- DRAFT to be updated and distributed to all Chairs
- Chairs take DRAFT to Committees for review and discussion
- Chairs to provide feedback to Craig/Sarah (Dewes to consolidate)
- Next meeting TBD

3b. Council priorities rollout - Deferred

4. **ADJOURNMENT:** 6:20 PM