

MEMORANDUM

To: Yakima City Council
From: Communications & Public Affairs Director Randy Beehler
Subject: Committee Structure Historical Summary
Date: Thursday, August 29th, 2019

Council members,

At the August 20th Council regular meeting, a motion to add discussion of the current committee structure utilized by the Council to the Council's September 3rd regular meeting agenda was approved. As reference for that discussion, this memorandum provides a summary background of the historical utilization of committees by the Yakima City Council.

Throughout its history, the Council has generally utilized two types of committees to aid it in developing policy – committees consisting of three Council members (Council committees), and advisory committees consisting of community members appointed by the Council (advisory committees).

Over the years, the numbers and functions of committees utilized by the Council have varied. Council committees have included a Rules & Procedures Committee, a Labor Management Committee, a Hearing Examiner Review Committee, a Litter Committee, and several others. Advisory committees have included the Yakima Planning Commission, the Community Review Board, the Arts Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, and several others.

Before about 15 years ago, the Council used Council committees sparingly. Instead of assigning most significant issues to Council committees, the Council held study sessions attended by all Council members. Holding study sessions reduced the need for Council committees.

In about 2005-2006, the number of Council committees began to increase. That trend continued for several years, with the Council creating additional Council committees. At one point, as many as 15 Council committees were active. Consequently, the use of study sessions to discuss and decide significant issues decreased.

About seven years ago, the Council reorganized its Council committee structure, reducing the total number of Council committees to just four while also consolidating the responsibilities of previous Council committees and reassigning them to the four newly-created committees. At that time, the four Council committees were the Public Safety Committee, the Economic Development Committee, the Built Environment Committee, and the Partnership Committee.

Even though the number of Council committees had been reduced, the use of study sessions to discuss and decide significant issues did not increase. Instead, many significant issues that could have been study session subjects were assigned to Council committees before being addressed by the full Council.

In 2016, the Council again adjusted its Council committee structure. At that time, five committees consisting of Council members were active – the Public Safety Committee, the Economic Development Committee, the Neighborhood & Community Building Committee, the Partnership Committee, and the Inter-County Committee.

In 2017, the Inter-County Committee was disbanded and its responsibilities were reassigned to the Partnership Committee. In 2018, the Neighborhood & Community Building Committee was renamed the Healthy Communities & Neighborhood Building Community.

Currently, there are four Council committees – the Public Safety Committee, the Economic Development Committee, the Partnership Committee, and the Healthy Communities & Neighborhood Building Committee.

Over the past decade, the number of advisory committees has also increased. Additional advisory committees created in that time include the Historic Preservation Committee, the Arts Commission, and the Community Integration Committee. The Bike-Ped Committee, which was active several years ago but eventually was disbanded, was reconstituted by the Council a few years ago.

Currently, seven advisory committees are active – the Parks & Recreation Commission, the Yakima Planning Commission, the Historic Preservation Commission, the Arts Commission, the Henry Beauchamp Community Center Advisory Committee, the Bike-Ped Committee, and the Community Integration Committee.

A Council member is currently assigned to serve as liaison to each advisory committee. Liaison responsibilities include attending advisory committee meetings and reporting back to the full Council on issues being processed by advisory committees. Most advisory committees meet at least monthly, while two meet less frequently.

Council members also currently serve as liaisons to or members of a number of boards, committees, and commissions of other organizations and agencies (outside committees). The number of outside committees Council members serve as liaisons to or members of has also increased in recent years.

Today, Council members serve as liaisons to or members of a total of 39 outside committees.

Council representation on a few outside committees is required by state statute, the City of Yakima Municipal Code, or other applicable rule or regulation. However, Council representation on most of the outside committees Council members now serve as liaisons to or members of is not required by any rule or regulation. Rather, Council representation on those outside committees is at the discretion of the Council.

Please let me know if you have questions or need more information about this committee structure historical summary memorandum or other related issues prior to the Council's September 3rd regular meeting.