

CITY OF OLYMPIA
General Government Committee
Minutes
May 15, 2012

Present: Councilmember Jeannine Roe, Chair; Councilmembers Karen Rogers and Jim Cooper
Advisory Committee Members: Barb Day, Vice Chair Utility Advisory Committee; Clark Gilman, Co-Chair Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee; Spencer Daniels, Chair Design Review Board; Rob Ahlschwede, Chair Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, Sarah Segall, Co-Chair Arts Commission, Kelsey Smith, Co-Chair Arts Commission, Holly Davies, Chair Heritage Commission.

Chair Roe called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Minutes – April 17 and 30, 2012 Meetings

Moved by Councilmember Cooper, seconded by Councilmember Rogers to approve the Minutes of April 17 as submitted.

Moved by Councilmember Rogers, seconded by Councilmember Cooper to approve the Minutes of the April 30 meeting as submitted. The motions passed unanimously.

Chair Roe welcomed the committee members and staff liaisons to the meeting.

Discussion with Advisory Committee Representatives

Barb Day reviewed a list of topics identified by the Utility Advisory Committee. She said the committee supports:

- Councilmembers occasionally attending committee meetings
- Skills training, particularly for chair, e.g. setting ground rules, and orientation of new members
- Term limits, if staggered.
- Clarification about Council's expectations for committees and how committees are supposed to interact/communicate with Council.
- Youth participation on the committee would be welcomed.

The UAC suggests a Tree Committee as a possible new committee.

Councilmember Cooper asked the City Attorney if any law prohibited youth under 17 from being voting member. City Attorney Tom Morrill said he could not think of any prohibition. Cathie Butler, Communications Manager, said the challenges with youth members in the past have been how to recruit them and their availability for evening meetings.

Chair Roe also suggested having a designated position for a senior member. She is interested in diversity on the committees.

Kelsey Smith said that much of what was mentioned from the UAC was also discussed by Arts Commission.

Clark Gilman said that most of the BPAC work has been as a sounding board and working with staff. Less clear what their advisory role is to the Council. He said the committee appreciates Council clarifying how they would like to receive information from the committee throughout the year, and they would appreciate Council referring policy topics to them from time-to-time.

Spencer Daniels said the Design Review Board is a little different from other groups. The DRB reviews projects and make determinations, but does not usually take up any policy issues. He said it would be helpful for chairs to meet - interesting to learn what other committees are working on and discuss mutual roles and expertise. He noted that it takes some period of time to gain expertise in the work of the Board, so he would have concern about whether youth representatives would have the time and be around long enough to contribute.

Rob Ahlschwede said that in his opinion, term limits are good to do as they give the City Council and members some surety. He said he appreciated the General Government Committee asking everyone who wanted to reapply to go through the interview process. The Council liaison with PRAC has already attended one meeting, and the committee found that valuable. He said that once in a while having a question posed from Council would be appreciated. Training for chairs and committee members is a good idea. He said that PRAC meets with each new member. He mentioned that he was Parliamentarian of a state-wide organization in the past, and he offered his assistance with meeting management training..

Sarah Segall said the Arts Commission talked about whether the number of members should be capped at nine. The Commission felt that eleven members works well for them given the work of the group and the various disciplines they cover. The Commission constantly has new members coming on, and they have not felt the need for term limits. Council interviews and appointments can regulate term limits if needed. She expressed interest in having a meeting of chairs to share what each committee is working on.

Kelsey Smith said there was some discussion at Arts Commission about what "youth" means age-wise. Personally, she feels that age 17-22 would be good, but that view was not shared by all commission members. She said she would appreciate training about how to manage meetings and that training for new members about city government and procedures would be helpful. She suggested targeted outreach for recruitment, including ethnic and socially diverse populations.

Amy Tousley said that the Planning Commission is currently down to 9 members. She noted that the full Commission has not had an opportunity to discuss the issues raised by General Government Committee. She said that personally, she feels communication is very important. She said that in her role as Chair, it would be helpful to have rationale and guidance from Council when items are added and to know what the expectations are for timeline and work effort. She noted that the Planning Commission has set up a 4-member leadership team to work through procedural issues, not policy. She said that, in her opinion, Council's process for selecting committee members gets to the issue of turnover.

Holly Davies expressed frustration that the Heritage Commission meets every other month. She said that tonight's discussion is an example why. Since the commission did not meet last month, she has not had a chance to pose the General Government committee's questions to the commission. She said that involving the chairs in the interviews has been a good improvement to the appointment process. She said that she is personally opposed to term limits, especially for the Heritage Commission where long-term knowledge and expertise is critical. Given the work of the commission, 11 members seems to be the right number. She suggested that perhaps youth could work on specific projects in lieu of full committee/commission membership. She likes the idea of orientation and training, but only if it is focused and short. She personally likes the idea of a Tree Committee, especially since there are historic trees in Olympia that the Heritage Commission has no way to address.

Rob Ahlschwede suggested a Tree Committee as a possible subcommittee at PRAC. He also asked if there is a limit on number of committee/commission meetings. Chair Roe explained that the City cut back on staff time for committees a couple of years ago as part of the budget. She expressed her support for committees meeting as frequently as they need to get the work done. She commented that it is hard from a continuity perspective to meet every other month and expressed support for monthly meetings. City Manager Steve Hall suggested that the Council take up the topic of staffing as a 2013 budget issue. Rich Hoey, Director of Public Works, mentioned that the UAC meets monthly except for July and August.

Chair Roe asked for an indication of the number of members, 9 or 11, that would work for the group:

- UAC – did not make a recommendation, however meetings may be shorter with 9.
- PRAC – move toward 9
- Heritage – 11
- Design Review Board – currently 9
- Arts – 11
- BPAC – seldom have full attendance; reality is they usually have 9 or so present. Has not affected quorum.

Rob Ahlschwede observed that the difference between 9 and 11 at a meeting is about a half hour if everyone participates.

Councilmember Cooper said that he heard the following consistent recommendations from committees:

- training for committee chairs on meeting management
- annual orientation for new members, and a refresher at committees.
- Committee chairs meeting 2-3 times a year
- Interest in some sort of Tree Committee, possibly a subcommittee of PRAC.

Tom Morrill offered to come to committee/commission meetings to do a briefing.

Councilmember Cooper said he did not hear consensus on term limits and he is personally opposed to them. Councilmember Rogers commented that Council has the ability now to limit terms through the interview and appointment process. Chair Roe said that it would be helpful to have some sort of notation on the committee application that members serve at the will of the Council and that reappointments are not automatic.

Councilmember Cooper suggested setting up an ad hoc committee of General Government Committee and 2-3 committee chairs to take a look at youth membership and/or involvement with committee work. Barb Day and Rob Ahlschwede agreed to serve on such a group, as did Chair Roe and Councilmember Cooper.

Chair Roe raised the topic of televising committee meetings. Amy Tousley said the Planning Commission has already agreed to work with Cathie Butler to televise one or two meetings as a pilot project, perhaps their public hearings on the Comprehensive Plan and the Capital Facilities Plan. Chair Roe said she is interested in each committee having at least one meeting televised each year, but she didn't know if it would be possible to make that happen.

Councilmember Cooper said he is interested in hearing from committee chairs how to best recognize committee members for their work.

Councilmember Rogers suggested the possible need for an Economic Development Committee. She asked that staff research some other cities on how they approach citizen involvement in economic development.

Chair Roe thanked everyone for their attendance and great participation in the discussion.

Chair Roe adjourned the meeting at 6:55 p.m.