

May 7, 2026 Advisory Body Chairs Meeting Notes



Advisory Body Chairs Meeting Notes

On May 7, 2026, Stacey Ray, Margo Morales, and Genevieve Canceko Chan hosted a special meeting with current advisory body chairs, vice chairs, and staff liaisons to discuss the proposed recommendations regarding Council appointed advisory bodies that were first shared with CLPS in February. The advisory body chairs and vice chairs rotated through four stations. One station covered operational changes to the current advisory body structure (e.g., recruitment timeline shift, work plan development alignment, flexible meeting schedules, audit and criteria tests for advisory bodies). The three other stations covered new community engagement tools: community academies; community collaborators and connectors; and multidisciplinary advisory bodies. For each station, the current advisory body members were asked to consider the following:

- How does this recommendation create opportunity for community members to provide meaningful input to guide policy and decision making?
- How does this recommendation support community members having an impactful and meaningful experience?

Below is a summary of the chairs' and vice chairs' remarks. (Note: Comments shared by multiple people are in boldface.)

Table #1 - Changes to the Current Advisory Body Structure

- **Like aligning Council and Advisory Body work plans.**
 - This takes into account master plans.
 - Helps council to be more coordinated with advisory bodies, vice versa.
 - Makes the advisory body work more exciting, pertinent.
- **Shifting the recruitment timeline makes sense**
 - Helps to better align with work plan development.
- Like having a vetted bench (i.e., applicants who were interviewed, approved by CLPS, not appointed) for open seats.
- **In-person, standardized and consolidated onboarding is a great idea.**
 - Like consistency between boards for everyone.
 - Creates a sense of a cohort during orientation.
 - Can orient new members to Council work plans.
 - Allows for onboarding on a separate day from regular advisory body meetings.
 - Should hold when convenient to members.
 - Inventory what information people need to best participate.
 - Might still have a smaller advisory body specific orientation for new members.

- As City Council or staff audit existing boards:
 - Consider that different advisory body functions might skew them to look more or less productive (e.g., fewer, but bigger projects).
 - Be clear about which law is requiring an advisory body
 - Should audit advisory bodies every 5-10 years, consider best practices
 - Clarify the role of advisory bodies, i.e., what is outside of their scope/purview
- Advisory bodies need access (transparent systems) to background information for complex topics (e.g., how to balance number of info sessions during advisory body meetings).
 - Often longer-term members keep this knowledge in their heads.
 - It can be helpful to have institutional knowledge on advisory bodies.
- **Still need a way for Council to close the loop with advisory bodies after they give recommendations to Council – Don't 'ghost' the advisory bodies.**
- Advisory bodies can give valuable/meaningful input to staff and staff can bring topics to advisory bodies before fully baked.
 - Is there a better mechanism for advisory bodies to communicate with Council on emerging issues?
 - Help/guidance for people who want to give public comment effectively; can staff direct commenters to better venue(s) for comments?

Table #2 - Community Academies

- Good jumping off point.
 - Lower bar of commitment.
 - Broader vs. deeper engagement.
 - Good for networking, building community.
- Can build understanding of complex governance.
 - Demystifies procedure.
 - Helpful for information dissemination.
 - Could be an opportunity for project post mortem – why some feedback was/wasn't used.
 - Potential to catch the “interested” over the “driven”.
 - Good outlet for engaged but in-expert, or not yet ready, community members.
- Pipeline, opportunity to express interest; creates a “bench” for future civic participation.
 - Can temper expectations (e.g., “so you wanna be on a commission”).
 - Relieves some pressure on staff (i.e., to educate/communicate/prepare community members/volunteers on projects).
- Lacey and Yelm have great examples.
- **Can the curriculum be mobile? Or only at City Hall?**
 - **Should meet people where they are.** Could use connectors to host satellite workshops outside of City Hall.
 - Childcare: coordinate with the library; build some safety around childcare.
 - Can this be done in other languages?
 - Student level programming could have great potential.
- How to ensure broad participation?
 - Needs broad PR support to ensure diversity.
 - Available through Arts/Parks catalogue.

- Question: is it People > City or City > People?
 - What are the guiding documents? When/how can it create impact?
 - How will topics be decided? Will they align with the comp plan for example?
 - If the framework doesn't match community interests, it could diminish community engagement.
 - The more concrete the topic (less vague) the more productive.
 - Build in opportunities for impact for participants – ensure attendees know how they can have impact.
 - Maybe the City could iterate and improve over time.
- Rethink “academies” as the term might turn people off.

Table #3 - Community connectors and collaborators

- Connectors and collaborators can identify/provide input on topics of interest, relevance for deeper community education (like the community academy).
- Having both collaborators and connectors may help to “hedge your bets” or open a different approach when one doesn't serve very well or goes sideways.
- **Provides potential to retain subject matter experts after they leave advisory bodies.**
 - **Past advisory body members as community collaborators who can share institutional knowledge** (e.g., SJEC members connecting City staff with Muslim community).
- Connectors (i.e., liaisons or bridges to different constituent groups):
 - May serve better to reach those who don't or can't typically engage with City government.
 - Can go to people where they are at.
 - However, may skew toward already well organized and established communities.
- Collaborators (i.e., ad hoc advisors):
 - Can be subject matter experts who have info on a topic and may differ from advisory members, who offer perspective on impact, often as “end users”.
 - Have deep but limited expertise in single subject or perspective.
- Does the City have criteria for finding/selecting community connectors/collaborators?
 - How does one become a collaborator/connector? Would have to do a lot of outreach to open these orgs to collaborators.
 - How does the City fully identify and utilize subject matter experts?
 - How are different constituencies identified?
- Must have clarity about how collaborators/connector input will be used, and how it will make an impact.
 - Does the input from collaborators/connectors go to an advisory body? Or straight to council? Folks need to know up front.
 - When considering their input, be mindful that connectors/collaborators may not be comprehensive in representation.
- Community collaborators/connectors require ONGOING relationships.
 - Trust building requires consistent participation of/engagement with City elected and staff.
 - Participation even when the City doesn't “need” something from that community or group.

Table #4 - Multidisciplinary Advisory Bodies

- Provides opportunities for feedback across multiple disciplines/departments.
- Addresses lack of trust due to too many committees: current system has too many decision points, participation fatigue.

- This model could be scaled up to involve more people, e.g., create ad hoc committees.
- **Opportunity for work across/between disciplines (parks, trails, transportation).**
- Connecting and expanding connections that you might not normally connect with. It's proactive.
- Interdisciplinary approach tied to clear outcomes: people understand how their input is used, where input has clear impact; people understand at the beginning not just the end.
- Current committees can be siloed – a new structure could help address issues holistically.

- Could create different silos and risk losing important intersectionality/context relationship between groups?
- How can we carry forward systems and institutional knowledge? Some areas require deep expertise with a steep learning curve.
- **Collapsing committees could result in loss of depth of expertise?**
- Could work well for some areas/advisory committees but not all?