



MEETING DATE: 9/7/04

ITEM NO. 15

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: August 26, 2004
TO: MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL
FROM: DEBRA J. FIGONE, TOWN MANAGER (with signature)
SUBJECT: APPROVE RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO INTERVIEW AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS FOR TOWN BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND COMMISSIONS

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve recommendations related to interview and appointment process for Town Boards, Committees, and Commissions:

- 1. Form a Council subcommittee for the screening of written applications for vacancies on Town Boards, Committees, and Commissions, when the number of applications exceeds 30. When the number of applications is 30 or less, each Council member will review all applications individually.
2. Conduct oral interviews of applicants at a special meeting of the Town Council, with appointments to be made at the next regular meeting.

BACKGROUND:

At its June 21 meeting, the Town Council voted to standardize the expiration of Town Board, Committee, and Commission (referred to collectively as "commissions") terms of office so that all terms of office will expire on December 31. At the same meeting, Council approved changes to the recruitment, interview, and appointment process for commissioners. These changes included considering the use of a subcommittee to screen applications and narrow the number of applicants interviewed by Council, and holding a special Council meeting in order to interview applicants. The purpose of this report is to provide Council with specific recommendations for implementation of these changes to the application and appointment process.

PREPARED BY: Regina A. Falkner, Community Services Director
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Reviewed by: PSS Assistant Town Manager, Town Attorney, Clerk, Finance, Community Development
Revised: 8/26/04 10:11 am

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DISCUSSION:

As will be discussed below, staff has begun to make improvements to the commissioner recruitment and appointment process, following Council direction at its June 21 meeting. This report focuses on the proposed process for paper screening of applicants, and the oral interview process. For Council reference, following is a chart of the process options, with staff's recommendation highlighted:

Paper Screening Options	Oral Interview Options
A. Each Council member reviews every application. (Recommended if 30 or fewer applications received.)	1. Council conducts interviews at a special meeting; appointment is made by Council at its next regular meeting. (Recommended in all instances.)
B. A Council subcommittee reviews applications; a selected number is brought to Council. (Recommended if more than 30 applications received.)	2. A Council subcommittee conducts interviews at a special meeting; appointment is made by Council at its next regular meeting.
C. Staff reviews applications; a selected number is brought to Council.	

The current Council Policy (Attachment 1) states that Council will review all applications, and interview all applicants. Pending the decisions made by Council at this meeting, this policy will be revised in the future to reflect the updated process.

Recruitment Process

Following Council direction, staff has made a series of improvements to the commissioner recruitment process. A "Town of Los Gatos Boards and Commissions" brochure has been produced, which gives prospective applicants general information about commissions, and directs them to sources for more information. A companion series of brochure inserts, each with information specific to one commission, has also been prepared. The "Boards and Commissions" page of the Town's website has been completely revamped; with clear, easy-to-navigate information about each commission, current vacancies, the application and appointment process, and printable versions of each commission's application.

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In the June 21 report to Council, staff raised the possibility of holding a "Boards and Commissions Information Night" each September, at which the role of Town commissions would be discussed, and information about specific commissions would be made available. Staff recommends that this event not be held this year, but that it be part of the recruitment planning discussion in 2005. Sunnyvale is the only city in Santa Clara County that currently holds an information night; none of the other cities have identified a need for an information night. A considerable effort was made, in the revised materials produced for the Town's recruitment process, to answer any questions applicants might have. If, during this year's process a need for an information night is identified, it could be incorporated into next year's process.

Screening Process

To complement the revised recruitment process, staff is now focused on changes to the screening and interview processes. Improved application forms and accompanying supplemental questionnaires have been created for each commission. These new forms are designed to elicit the thorough, commission-specific information that will be most helpful to Council in its review of applicants. Once applications are received, staff performs a preliminary review, to check that an applicant fulfills eligibility requirements. The next step would be a full paper screening of applications.

Staff conducted a survey of Santa Clara County jurisdictions, regarding their recruitment, application, and screening processes. Attachment 2 is a summary of the survey findings. As shown in the survey findings, jurisdictions conduct paper screenings of applicants in a variety of ways, including through a Council subcommittee, through the entire Council, and by a non-Council committee.

Staff recommends that a two-step approach would best fit the needs of Los Gatos. The goal of the paper screening, as discussed at the June 21 meeting, is to limit the number of applicants to those that may reasonably be interviewed in one evening. Therefore, staff suggests that if the number of applications were 30 or less, each Council member would review every application, which would be provided as part of the meeting agenda packet. If the number of applications were greater than 30, a Council subcommittee would be formed to review the applications, and reduce the number to be reviewed by the full Council as part of its meeting agenda packet.

The number of 30 applications was chosen in order to limit the number of applicants to those that could be interviewed comfortably in one evening. Given an average interview time of 5 minutes, 30 applicants could be interviewed in 2.5 hours. Once time for opening and closing the meeting, general comments, and periodic breaks is added, a meeting might easily be 3 hours long. Staff suggests that this is a good meeting length; planning a meeting of 4 or more hours would not be beneficial to the applicants or to Council.

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Interview Process

Council's current policy is to interview all applicants at a public meeting. There are several ways this might be accomplished, including a public meeting of staff, a public meeting of a Council subcommittee, or a Council meeting. Staff recommends that interviews be held at a special meeting of the full Council, with appointments to be made at the next following regular meeting. The special meeting would not be televised, which staff believes would contribute to the comfort of applicants, who are not necessarily accustomed to public speaking. It would promote a more relaxed, cooperative atmosphere for Council and applicants to interact. The appointments would be made at a regular, televised, Council meeting, so that all Town residents could view the vote and any discussion, if they chose. This year, the special meeting for applicant interviews would be held October 25, and appointments would be made at the regular meeting November 1. The new commissioners' terms will begin January 1.

Alternatively, interviews could be conducted by a Council subcommittee, as shown in the table of options on page 2 of this report.

Vacancy Process

The commissioner recruitment and appointment process as outlined in this report will provide a standard, streamlined way of filling the regular vacancies that will occur at the end of each year. It will also be important to have a process for filling unplanned vacancies that occur throughout the year.

The Maddy Act requires that vacancies be advertised no less than 20 days after they occur, and that vacancies be filled no sooner than 10 days after advertisement. Therefore, we cannot plan regular advertisement of vacancies throughout the year; advertisements will happen as vacancies occur. However, to the degree possible, staff suggests that the interviews of applicants for vacancies be bundled together, and brought to Council two or three times per year. This would reduce the amount of Council meeting time spent on interviewing applicants, as well as reducing the attendant staff work required. In the case that a vacancy needed to be filled immediately, of course, an interview would be scheduled as soon as possible.

Notice of vacancies would be sent to all who applied during the regular recruitment period; newspaper advertisements and related media would also be used.

CONCLUSION:

Staff requests that Council approve its recommendations related to the interview and appointment process for Town Boards, Committees, and Commissions; specifically:

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2. Conduct oral interviews of applicants at a special meeting of the Town Council, with appointments to be made at the next regular meeting.
3. The Clerk's Office will continue to handle all aspects of the recruitment and appointment process.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

The recommended actions are not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The recommended actions will not have any additional fiscal impact to the Town. Commissioner recruitment, selection, and appointment costs are included in the approved FY 2004/05 Operating Budget.

Attachments:

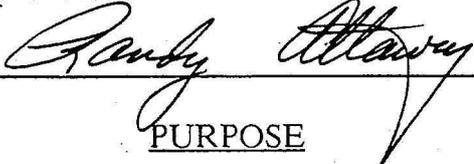
1. Town Council Policy, Commission Appointments
2. Board and Commission Procedures, Santa Clara County Jurisdictions

Distribution:

Susan Buxton, Volunteer Services Coordinator

TOWN COUNCIL POLICY
TOWN OF LOS GATOS

Subject: Commission Appointments	Page: 1 of 3	Section Number:
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Approved: 	Effective Date: 2/28/90	Revised Date: 6/13/94
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PURPOSE

To establish a policy to encourage participation by the Town's residents on Town Boards, Commissions and Committees. Residents will be encouraged to participate on Town Boards, Commissions and Committees by advertising vacancies to Boards, Commissions and Committees for at least 30 days, preparing attractive, easily understood applications, maintaining clear descriptions of the role of each Commission/Board and Committee and Commissioners/Committee and Board Members, and conducting public interviews of all Commission/Board and Committee applicants.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all applicants to a Town Board, Commission and Committee.

POLICY

The Town Council encourages public participation in all decision making. To be successful in achieving public participation, residents must be assured that the participation is meaningful and that their input will be valued. The widest representation from the community can only be achieved if vacancies are well advertised so that anyone interested will have the opportunity to apply. Public interviewing of the applicants by the Town Council demonstrates that the Council values these appointments and that everyone has an equal opportunity to be appointed.

To ensure the greatest possible participation by the public, it is the Town's policy that no person be appointed to two or more Town Boards, Commission or Committees except in those cases where they are ex-officio members of other Boards, Commissions and Committees. This policy does not apply to Boards, Commission and Committee members serving as representatives of their Boards, Commissions and Committees on joint committees such as the Conceptual Review Committee and the General Plan Committee.

(2) If an applicant is requesting reappointment to a Town Board, Commission or Committee, applicant will be reinterviewed, or submit a letter for distribution to the Council prior to the interviews, describing the reason why applicant cannot be present for an interview.

- d. Accept applications and distribute copies of the applications to the Town Council with the Council packet prior to the interviews for appointment.
- e. Notify the applicant by letter as to the date and time of the interview.
- f. After the interviews are completed, notify all applicants of the Council's action, and explain Town policy of keeping application active for two years with notification of subsequent openings on that commission to the interested applicants.

2. APPLICANT

- a. Complete and submit to the Town Clerk the application for appointment to a Town Commission, Board or Committee.
- b. Attend Council meeting to be interviewed for appointment to the Commission, Board or Committee.
- c. If a Commission, Board or Committee member is requesting reappointment to a Town Commission, Board or Committee and cannot be present for the interview, submit a letter to the Town Clerk by Friday prior to the interview, describing why applicant cannot be present for the interview.
- d. If appointed, prior to attending next Commission, Board or Committee meeting, see Town Clerk to take "Oath of Office" and file any documents required by the Fair Political Practices Commission.

**Board and Commission Procedures
Santa Clara County Jurisdictions**

Jurisdiction	Recruitment and Application	Screening Type	Screening Process	Term Expiration	Info night?
Campbell	Advertisement online, in office; vacancy notice in newspaper.	Paper application, oral interview.	Council subcommittee screens applicants. Council interviews selected applicants.	August, October, or December, by commission.	No
Cupertino	Advertisement online, in office. Annual vacancy notices sent.	Paper application, oral interview.	Council interviews and appoints applicants.	December 31	No
Gilroy	Advertisement online and in office.	Paper application, oral interview.	Council interviews and appoints applicants.	December 31	No
Milpitas	Online application.	Paper application, oral interview.	Mayor screens applicants. Council interviews selected applicants.	Throughout year	No
Morgan Hill	Advertisement online and in office.	Paper application, oral interview.	Council interviews applicants; selection determined on a point system rated by Council.	Throughout year	No
Mountain View	Online application.	Paper application, oral interview.	Council subcommittee screens applicants. Council interviews selected applicants.	September	No
Monte Sereno	Advertisement in City newsletter.	Write a letter and include 2 recommendations	Council reviews letters and interviews chosen applicants.	December 31	No
Los Altos	Advertisement online and in office.	Paper application, oral interview.	Council subcommittee selects and interviews applicants; Council appoints.	July	No
Palo Alto	Applications online and in office; advertisement in newspaper.	Paper application, oral interview.	Council selects applicants for interviews and appoints by voting.	June, July, September, and December	No
Santa Clara	Advertisement online and in office.	Paper application, oral interview.	Council interviews and appoints applicants.	Throughout year, most in July (end of fiscal year)	No
San Jose	Advertisement online and in newspaper; flyers twice a year.	Paper application, oral interview.	Applications reviewed by project diversity committee, then Rules Committee, then recommendation to Council for vote.	June 30 and December 31	No
Saratoga	Advertisement online, television, newspaper, council reports.	Paper application, oral interview.	Council interviews and appoints applicants. Mayor advises applicants of outcome.	April and October	No
Sunnyvale	Advertisement online and in newspaper.	Paper application, oral interview.	Clerk schedules interviews for Council to screen and select.	Most in July	Yes; spring