



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 2nd, 2023

TO: Independence Mayor and City Council

FROM: Zach Walker, City Manager

SUBJECT: Recommendations Regarding City Boards & Commissions Policies and Procedures

Section 1.2 of the Independence City Charter empowers the City Council to determine the policies of the City of Independence. On November 28th, 2022, the Independence City Council held a strategic planning session to identify the main areas of focus for the City Council over the next year. Following the strategic planning session, each member of the City Council completed a survey to confirm the primary issues identified by the Council at the strategic planning session.

On February 20th, 2023, the Independence City Council unanimously adopted Resolution No. 6902. This resolution formally approved the 2023-24 City of Independence Action Plan. The Action Plan affirms the priorities of the City Council and provides City staff with a roadmap for addressing and implementing the core focus of the City Council. The Action Plan Contains six purpose statements established by City Council and 105 strategies developed by City staff to act upon the broad vision set by the City Council. Among the six purpose statements is “1. *An Engaged Community. We foster a culture of engagement and civic leadership based on innovation and best practices involving community members of all backgrounds and perspectives*”. Section 1.2 of *An Engaged Community* states: Community Engagement – Broaden and deepen engagement of the community in city government, innovating methods for inviting input from the community and stakeholders.” Strategy 1.2.A directs staff to “Enhance City Committees and Advisory Boards. Restructure or combine City boards and committees to more effectively advise the City and engage the public”

As part of City staff’s work to implement this strategy, Resolution 6937 was unanimously adopted by the City Council on June 20th, 2023. This resolution directed the City Manager to pursue efforts to consolidate or restructure City boards and commissions to advise the City Council and engage the public more effectively.

Having thoroughly researched this topic, it is my recommendation that consolidation of City boards and commissions be pursued. The current arrangement is inefficient and, all too often, ineffective. At present, the City has 35 active boards and commissions comprised of 180 appointees and four alternates. The current dynamics require an inordinate amount of staff time to facilitate City Council appointments to boards and commissions, prepare agenda items for boards and commissions, attend board and commission meetings, and respond to inquiries from

board and commission members. Moreover, the scope of work for boards and commissions is duplicative with other boards and commissions at times, while at other times the efforts of one board and commission conflict with the efforts of a different board or commission.

A consolidated structure of the current City boards and commissions would keep all the functions of the current boards, align functions to the Action Plan, while also making boards more effective and efficient overall. The goals for this work includes streamlining board work, increasing transparency in the function and role of boards and commissions, improving collaboration between staff, board and commission members, and the City Council, making boards more equitable and inclusive to all community members, and modernizing the board and commission structure to a more sustainable model. This model also allows for future initiatives to be added to the scope of work of these consolidated boards, rather than creating an additional stand-alone board and requiring additional service from community volunteers.

To advance the goal of consolidation, staff propose utilizing four key pillars to bring the work of current boards and commissions together in a collaborative and unified process. The pillars are:

- *Community Health & Safety: Independence provides a safe and healthy place to live, work, learn, and play.*
- *Administrative & Fiscal Oversight: Independence creates long-term financial stability by using equitable and sustainable sources of funding for City services, and delivers them in a professional, lean, and efficient manner.*
- *Community Development: Independence consistently improves the community's quality of life as it grows and changes, honors sense of place and neighborhood feel, and plans for a livable, affordable, and more connected city.*
- *Cultural Services: Independence provides and expands access to diverse cultural and recreational amenities.*

My recommendation is to add this resolution for City Council consideration to the October 16th Regular Meeting. Consistent with the City Council Rules of Procedure, this item is being published on September 22nd, 2023 in advance of the October 2nd Regular meeting, giving citizens 24 days to review this proposal and provide feedback prior to a possible Council vote on October 16th. This would not be the conclusion of this process, but rather a transition to the next phase. Specifically, I recommend a collaborative process to gain additional input. Through an engagement process with all board and commission chairs, staff will work to collect input and have boards and commissions identify the pillar that represents the functions and work currently conducted by the existing board or commission. The goal is to ensure that the functions of the current boards and commissions are reflected in these four boards.

Staff recognizes that there is likely to be concern about how to address the status of members currently appointed to existing boards and commissions. Our research indicates this is an ideal time to pursue consolidation. Of the 180 board and commission appointments presently in existence, the status is as follows:

- 98 (54%) have terms that are unexpired through at least January 1st, 2024.
- 36 (20%) have terms that will expire by December 31st, 2023.
- 26 (14%) have terms that have expired but continue to serve.
- 20 (11%) are vacant.

With a nearly equal split (54% vs. 46%) of appointments that will continue beyond January 1st, 2024 and those that have expired or will expire by the end of 2023, it is an ideal time to pursue consolidation without an overly tumultuous turnover in appointees.

I look forward to working with the City Council on this initiative and further improving our performance and operations at the City of Independence. Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.

CC: Adam Norris, Deputy City Manager
Jeremy Cover, City Counselor
City Department Directors