



Title: Citizen Advisory Committee Operations Improvements

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Purpose:

To update Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) members on changes in committee operations to improve the fluidity of meetings and the flow of information to the CAC.

Background Context:

Following a Q3 CAC Executive Team Meeting, the CAC met on August 5, 2020 to discuss disruptions in CAC workflow due to COVID-19, and potential solutions. The CAC Executive Committee Team met with staff to identify key themes of the discussion and to develop an action plan.

Two themes that emerged from these discussions which relate to CAC operations were:

1. Remote meetings impede rich and vibrant discussion

While the CAC is generally pleased with adjustments made since March, there is consensus that remote meetings have stifled rich dialog. Preference for remote meeting platforms vary, but everyone agreed that there are tradeoffs with every platform, and that meetings would generally get better with intention and practice. Ideas for improving remote discussions included extra emphasis on meeting facilitation to stimulate and manage the dialog; use of digital breakout rooms to manage for group size; use of offline workgroups where practical and useful.

2. A consistent flow of organizational information maintains CAC connection to MCWD priorities

To remain informed, effective and aligned with District priorities, CAC members need a steady flow of organizationally relevant information. Members expressed a desire to understand the flow of information and action items to the Board of Managers; remain aware of key communications with external partners; receive ongoing educational information relevant to the field of watershed management and the MCWD mission; engage in the physical space of the watershed by touring projects; be provided routine updates on the status of initiatives that the CAC has previously advised on.

Operational Improvements:

Based on the above identified themes, the following operational improvements were developed by District staff and discussed with members at the October 7th, 2020 CAC Executive Committee meeting.

1. Operational guidelines to enhance meeting discussions

The effectiveness of the CAC is enhanced when all CAC members have an opportunity to participate in meeting discussions. A number of barriers exist, such as meeting structure and virtual platform limitations, which can impede robust committee discussions. The following guidelines were developed to help overcome these barriers.

- a) Incorporate facilitated discussions into meeting agendas
- b) Keep staff presentations and updates concise
- c) Increase opportunities for committee member participation by breaking into small groups

- d) Provide staff facilitation for small group break-out sessions
- e) Explore and test additional engagement tools

2. Framework for maintaining the flow of information to the CAC

To remain informed, effective and aligned with District priorities, CAC members need a steady flow of organizationally relevant information. Some of the information flow should be systematized so there is consistent communication on items before the MCWD board and routine feedback on the status of strategic initiatives previously before the CAC.

Other information should be assessed as to its relevance to the CAC. The below framework will serve as a lens in which to assess whether information should be routed to the CAC:

- Key external communications regarding significant District policy or initiatives which pose some risk to the organization
- Media coverage of significance
- Changes in board members or staffing leadership
- Major District initiatives not being routed through regular CAC meetings
- Updates on initiatives previously before the CAC
- Information, such as news articles or reports, on topics of note which are also within the District's sphere of work
- Agenda items before the Board of relevance to the CAC
- To ensure ease of access, CAC packet materials and other information of relevance to the CAC will be stored in one location in Drop Box.

Next Steps:

The below action steps will be taken to implement the identified improvements.

1. Meeting discussion enhancements:
 - a. The virtual meeting platform will be changed to allow small group break-outs
 - b. Small group facilitation will be provided by the CAC liaison and one District staff member during break-out sessions
 - c. The committee liaison will communicate the enhanced meeting facilitation structure to staff and assist staff with meeting preparation and facilitation
 - d. Staff will rely on committee members reading CAC packet materials in advance of meetings and limit the amount of time reviewing this material in meetings
 - e. Real time meeting surveys and other relevant tools will be tested and assessed
2. Flow of information improvements:
 - a. Board packet materials will be regularly provided to CAC members
 - b. Feedback loops on District initiatives will be incorporated into the CAC agenda planning process and communicated to District staff
 - c. The CAC staff liaison will identify and share via email information which meets the above listed framework criteria
 - d. CAC packets and other information of relevance will be routinely posted in Dropbox

Operations improvements will be reviewed and discussed at the October 14, 2020 CAC prior to full implementation.