



Title: Citizens Advisory Committee Assessment: Phase 1

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Purpose: As part of its multi-year effort to strategically align each of its program areas around its core mission, MCWD is in the process of defining the strategic role of the CAC within MCWD's work. In this second of three CAC discussions on defining the strategic role of the CAC in MCWD's work, staff will summarize and seek the committee's reflection on the first phase of work: findings and insights drawn from discovery research and conversations with CAC, staff, and outside experts. This will help form the basis of the next round of discussions with OPC, CAC, and staff, focused on evaluating options and operational considerations.

The attached document summarizes those findings and insights. The goal of the process is to build on the inherent strengths of the CAC in order to maximize its value – to the organization and to members. It is not a value judgement of the contributions of the committee to date, but an opportunity to clearly define how the CAC supports the District's mission and how its operations can optimize that value.

Background:

In February 2017, the MCWD Board of Managers approved Resolution #17-007, setting a comprehensive strategic direction for the organization as outlined in the 2017 Strategic Alignment Report. Since then, MCWD has systematically evaluated and realigned each of its programs to best support the organization's goals laid out in the plan. The result of this wholesale shift in MCWD's work has been a more focused, aligned, and successful suite of programs working toward the vision outlined in MCWD's In Pursuit of a Balanced Urban Ecology policy.

The CAC is the only program within the organization that has not yet undergone this reassessment since 2016. As a result, the Executive Team has expressed a desire to clarify the role of the committee to ensure it is providing maximal value for the District and for its members. At the Q3 CAC Executive Team meeting, the committee noted that MCWD must define the strategic value of the CAC and adjust the structure, schedule, and meeting formats accordingly.

At the December 17, 2020 Board meeting the MCWD Board of Managers approved Resolution #20-094, authorizing District staff to assess the CAC with the same evaluative process used to assess all District programs. This multi-step assessment process, which is based off Bardach's Path for Policy Analysis, is further outlined in the attached document.

Assessment Goals:

To ensure the strategic alignment and focus of the CAC in 2021 and beyond, the District is undertaking an assessment process with the following goals:

1. The CAC is focused on work which provides value to the organization and its value is proportional to its organizational cost. MCWD is currently at a strategic juncture where it is moving from planning various strategic and change management initiatives to implementing those initiatives. During this process, the CAC has played the role of strategic advisor by vetting ideas, providing insight and flagging considerations. This work has been supported by a District staff liaison, Board liaisons and additional staff as needed. Now that the focus of the District has changed, the focus and role of the CAC will need to change accordingly. As the District's focus for 2021 and beyond is clarified, it is important to clarify how the CAC supports the District's future work and the level of organizational support needed to do so.

2. The committee's structure and operations are determined by the needs of the CAC's new scope of work. The committee's structure and operations have been determined by historic past practices rather than being driven by the needs of the committee's work. Future operational considerations such as agenda focus, meeting structure, frequency and other logistics, will need to flow from a clearly refined strategic picture.

3. The work of the CAC is satisfying to committee members. Advisory committees are most effective when they feel they are providing value to the organization they advise and the work is satisfying to its members. This dynamic increases member engagement in the work of the committee by drawing on the skills, experiences and knowledge of its members.

Next Steps:

Staff will synthesize the discussion with the CAC and a previous discussion with the OPCs into recommendations on the strategic orientation of the CAC, committee structure and operations.

These recommendations will be reviewed and discussed by District staff, OPC, and CAC throughout April.

After this phase of discussions, staff will refine the recommendations into a draft final report and seek Board approval in May.

Supporting documents (list attachments):

- Citizen Advisory Committee Assessment: Phase 1