



Title: Evaluation of 2020 Citizen Advisory Committee

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Purpose:

At the September 2, 2020 Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meeting, staff will update committee members on recent efforts to synthesize CAC discussions regarding:

- How to enhance CAC operations in response to COVID-19 disruptions
- The focus of the CAC agendas for the remainder of 2020
- The strategic alignment and focus of the CAC in 2021

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.

Discussion Themes:

Themes that emerged from these discussions include:

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.
3. Focus on strategic edge content is most rewarding and potentially offers MCWD the most value
The CAC describes its value as providing non-binding advice and critique early in the ideation phase of strategic initiatives (e.g. permitting and rule revision scoping, outreach program alignment). It was acknowledged that a balance must be struck between informational briefings, providing advice on discrete initiatives, and work on larger and longer-range topics. Members expressed a desire to remain involved in this capacity without creating non value-added overhead to the organization. The group discussed how the availability of strategic edge content had an ebb and flow tied to the overall rhythm of the organization. It was noted that the MCWD must define the strategic value of the CAC, and then structure, schedule and operationalize meetings accordingly. It was also requested that a proposed agenda plan for the remainder of 2020 be produced.

Action Steps:

Based on the emergent themes, the following areas of action should be considered. These action steps, and the CAC generated suggestions which they encompass, will be further evaluated and refined by District staff before being brought back to the CAC Executive Team and full CAC for additional discussion as needed.

1. Develop operational guidelines to enhance meeting discussion This may include crafting guidelines for remote meeting discussion (e.g. use of chat versus raising hands or speaking up), developing clear objectives and facilitation plans for each meeting, use of digital breakout rooms for certain topics that will benefit from small team discussion, and exploring the utility of offline workgroups.
2. Develop a written framework for maintaining the flow of information to the CAC This may include ensuring CAC members receive the Board packet, programming concise staff briefings (written or verbal) and updates routinely into the CAC agenda, providing routine feedback on the status of strategic initiatives, exploring opportunities for CAC members to interact with District work in the field, funneling key external communications to the CAC regularly through the email distribution list, and using the CAC dropbox as an organized library of educational resources.
3. Develop an agenda plan for the remainder of 2020 for distribution to the CAC
Based on organizational priorities and CAC focus to date, a preliminary draft agenda plan for 2020 may include:

September – Website Content Strategy

October – Climate Conversation #3

November – Responsive Model and Permitting Status, and Public Process

December – Climate Conversation #4

This agenda plan may need to be refined or amended as content is further developed.

4. Conduct a strategic evaluation of the CAC to inform agenda objectives and operations for 2021 and beyond
While operational improvements are mapped out and begin to be implemented around the remaining agenda topics for 2020, it is recommended that staff develop a process to strategically evaluate the CAC, its evolution over time, its current purpose, and how it may best deliver value to the organization in the future. Future operational considerations such as agenda focus, meeting structure, frequency and other logistics, should flow from a clearly refined strategic picture. Staff will explore this concept further for discussion with the CAC Executive Committee and Board of Managers, before developing and implementing a process.

Conclusions and Next Steps:

The first two action steps are near term tweaks in operations to improve the fluidity of meetings and improve the flow of information to the CAC. A brief written outline of guidelines for each will be developed and serve as a foundation from which future improvements can be made. Operational guidelines will be developed and brought forward for CAC discussion as it is developed by staff. While the written guidelines are in development, operational improvements will be tested in the near term.

At the September 2, 2020 CAC meeting, staff will review the 2020 agenda plan which was based on organizational priorities and CAC focus to date. The last action step will be a mid-term meta- discussion about the CAC, which focuses the same strategic evaluative approach applied to all of the District's programs on the CAC. Staff will develop a process to strategically evaluate the CAC, its evolution over time, its current purpose, and how it may best deliver value to the organization in the future. Future operational considerations such as agenda focus, meeting structure, frequency and other logistics, should flow from a clearly refined strategic picture. Staff will discuss the CAC strategic evaluation with the CAC executive team and the Board before developing any process or timeline around it.