

MEMO

To: Jason R. Rogers, City Manager
From: Dylan A. Gibson, City Clerk
Subject: City Council Meeting Data
Date: February 13, 2024

Jason,

Over the past twelve months, the City Clerk's Office, in collaboration with the management Analysts, has been collecting data on City Council meeting trends for regular meetings and study sessions. We have also collected historical data on meeting times going back to 2012 to compare average meeting times year-over-year. Below is a summary of the data we've gathered and proposed alternatives to the order of business on regular meetings that the Policy & Governance Committee may want to consider.

DATA SUMMARY

Unsurprisingly, City Council agendas have had an increasing number of items per agenda as well as an increase in the average meeting time as the City continues to grow in population and the organization continues to add staff, services, and partnership opportunities to accommodate the population growth.

In 2020, the City Council meetings continued to get longer and longer, and in response the City Council amended the Commerce City Revised Municipal Code to place a limit of 4 hours and 30 minutes per meeting. The ordinance did allow City Council an option to vote to extend the meeting as necessary past the 4 hours and 30 minutes to continue to accomplish items on the agenda on an as-needed basis. The ordinance was later amended to change the 4 hour and 30 minute limit with a hard stop at 10:30 PM in 2022.

As a note, I only find two instances since the meeting time limit was adopted where a motion to extend failed. Once on March 15, 2021 when the motion to extend failed due to a lack of a second (two motions to extend were already approved earlier in the meeting). The second



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instance occurred on July 17, 2023. All other motions to extend the meetings have been approved, essentially rendering the meeting length limit moot.

In 2013, the average meeting time for a regular City Council meeting was **2 hours and 47 minutes**. In 2023, the average meeting time was **4 hours and 8 minutes**, an increase of **1 hour and 21 minutes**, on average, per meeting over the last decade. In the short term, the average number of items per regular meeting agenda in 2021 was **19 items**. In 2023 the average number of items per regular meeting was **23 items**, an increase of 4 additional items per regular meeting in just two years. While we are still early in the year, so far for 2024 we have an average meeting time of **5 hours and 9 minutes** with an average of **25 items** per regular meeting.

I would like to also call out some discrepancies in how we currently budget for items for our routine agenda categories. For example, over the past year we are averaging **20 minutes** for Public Comment but we are currently budgeting **30 minutes** for this category. Keep in mind, there are three instance in the last year where Public Comment lasted between 45 minutes and an hour and 31 minutes. So while we are averaging less time than budgeted, there are times when we also exceed the time budgeted by a considerable amount.

Consent Agenda is budgeted for **5 minutes** per agenda, but the average over the past year has been **16 minutes**. Administrative Council Business is budgeted for **10 minutes** per agenda, but the average over the past year has been **25 minutes**. Finally, reports are budgeted for **10 minutes** per agenda, but are averaging **22 minutes** per agenda (both regular meetings and study sessions). As you can see, we are currently underbudgeting time on the agenda for our routine categories by approximately **28 minutes** (38 minutes over budget minus the 10 minute budget savings of Public Comment). For context, in 2023 when a City Council meeting did run over the estimated adjournment time, it did so by approximately **45 minutes**.

Lastly, I would like to draw your attention to how staff is currently budgeting time for presentations versus how much time presentations and City Council questions and debate



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lasted during study sessions. In 2023 on average the time estimated for a presentation and council discussion ran over by **20 minutes**. Often, these were presentations on topics such as the American Rescue Plan Act funds or homelessness initiatives, traffic/parking/code enforcement, and environmental issues such as the EPA and Suncor. I would suggest when staff is budgeting for presentations on any of these topics, they budget at least **1 hour** to allow for adequate time for City Council questions and debate.

AGENDA ALTERNATIVES

The City Clerk's Office are offering the following agenda alternatives for consideration by Policy & Governance Committee for review and recommendation for full City Council for amending Council Policy #CP-16.

Option 1:

- *“Public-Involved Business”*
 1. Roll Call/Call to Order
 2. Pledge of Allegiance
 3. Approval of Agenda
 4. Public Comment
 5. Proclamations & Recognitions
 6. Administrative Council Business (*combines noticed council + administrative business*)
 7. Public Hearings
- *“Legislative Business”*
 9. Consent Agenda (includes ordinances on 1st reading that are non-controversial)
 10. Ordinances on 1st Reading requiring discussion
 11. Ordinance on 2nd and Final Reading not approved unanimously on 1st reading
 12. Resolutions requiring discussion
 13. Reports
 14. Executive Sessions
 15. Adjourn



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- Pros
 - Accomplishes all business involving the public and comment/testimony at the front
 - Shifts all presentations to study sessions
 - Functions more like a “business” meeting rather than a “regular” meeting
- Cons
 - Risks legislative business being heard when council and staff are tired later in the evening, appearance of “Council passing legislation while residents are sleeping,” or items being continued if earlier items run long or motions to extend fail

Option 2:

- “*Legislative Business*”
 1. Roll Call/Call to Order
 2. Pledge of Allegiance
 3. Approval of Agenda
 4. Public Comment
 5. Consent Agenda (includes ordinances on 1st reading that are non-controversial)
 6. Resolutions requiring discussion
 7. Ordinances on 1st Reading requiring discussion
 8. Ordinance on 2nd and Final Reading not approved unanimously on 1st reading
- “*Public-Involved Business*”
 9. Proclamations & Recognitions
 10. Administrative Council Business (combines noticed council + administrative business)
 11. Public Hearings
 12. Reports
 13. Executive Sessions
 14. Adjourn
- Pros
 - Accomplishes legislative items at the beginning of the meeting when the public may be attending to watch Council’s action on controversial legislation.
- Cons
 - Makes the public wait longer to do things like proclamations, public hearings, etc.

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ATTACHMENT

City Council Meeting Data.xlsx