



Council Vacancy

From Heidi <Heidy@cwo.com>

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To City Council <citycouncil@ci.capitola.ca.us>

Dear Capitola City Council,

Regarding your January 9, 2025 meeting, Agenda Item 8C (Process to Fill a Vacant Council Seat), and Agenda Item 8D (City Council Reorganization for 2025), I respectfully offer the following suggestions for a community-based approach to filling the City Council vacancy and leadership reorganization:

1. Community Choice is Always Best:

- While I recognize holding a special election is the most democratic way to fill the vacancy, I also understand cost and logistical challenges may make this option unfeasible.
- Considering this, I urge the council to pursue a transparent, equitable, and community-centered appointment process to ensure the public's trust and involvement in selecting the right candidate.

2. Prioritize Transparency and Community Engagement:

- The process should balance timeliness with careful consideration. A well-thought-out process builds trust, validates the individual chosen to serve, and ensures the best outcome for the community.
- The council should involve residents every step of the way, ensuring all voices are heard and considered.

3. Empower Residents with a Citizens' Commission:

- Establishing a temporary citizens' commission could provide an inclusive and impartial approach.
- This body would review applications, conduct interviews, and recommend the top candidates to the council for their decision.
- To ensure accountability and public trust, the commission's meetings should comply with the **Brown Act**, California's open meetings law, which ensures transparency and public participation in government decisions.
- One way to determine the commission's composition could be for each council member to appoint one member, with a final member selected by consensus of the current four-person council. A five-member commission ensures efficient decision-making and allows for an odd number to address potential disagreements.

- The commission should be supported by city staff to provide administrative and logistical assistance throughout the process.
- 4. Appointee Should Serve as a Steward, Not a Candidate:**
- The appointee should commit to being a steward for the remainder of the term and agree not to run in the next election.
 - This ensures the council does not inadvertently grant a political advantage to any individual through the appointment process, maintaining fairness and neutrality.
 - By focusing on stewardship, the appointee can dedicate their time to serving the community's immediate needs without the distraction of future political ambitions.
- 5. Postpone the Selection of Mayor and Vice Mayor:**
- Delaying the selection of the mayor and vice mayor until the council is fully seated with five members ensures fairness and inclusivity.
 - This allows the new councilmember to participate in selecting their presiding officer(s), promoting collaboration and shared responsibility.
 - The current vice mayor can fulfill mayoral duties temporarily, ensuring stability and continuity in leadership during the interim period.

All the best,
Heidy Kellison
Capitola, CA