



## AGENDA REPORT SUMMARY

**Meeting Date:** March 28, 2023

**Subject:** Los Altos Commissions

**Prepared by:** Anthony Carnesecca, Assistant to the City Manager

**Reviewed by:** Jon Maginot, Assistant City Manager

**Approved by:** Gabriel Engeland, City Manager

**Attachment(s):**

1. City Council Retreat Agenda Report 2/21/23: Discussion on Los Altos Commissions
2. Commission Spreadsheet
3. Commission Powers and Duties

**Initiated by:**

City Council

**Previous Council Consideration:**

February 21, 2023

**Fiscal Impact:**

None

**Environmental Review:**

Not applicable

**Policy Question(s) for Council Consideration:**

- Does the City Council wish to make changes to the City of Los Altos commissions? Change may include powers and duties, meeting frequency, member composition, or number of commissions, or any other changes as desired.

**Summary:**

- City Council directed city staff to come back with an analysis of the commissions based upon feedback from commission chairs and liaisons. Feedback included meeting frequency, commissioner composition, and powers and duties or workplan information. City staff has incorporated feedback from the City Council retreat and conversations with individual commissions in this report and presentation.

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City Manager

GE

Reviewed By:

City Attorney

JH

Finance Director

JD

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**Subject:** Los Altos Commissions

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### **Purpose**

Receive feedback from City Council on potential changes to Los Altos Commissions.

### **Background**

The City of Los Altos has guidelines for the commissions regarding their powers and duties, number of commissioners, and frequency of commission meetings within Los Altos Municipal Code Section 2.08.

During the City Council retreat on February 21, 2023, the Council received a presentation from staff highlighting that Los Altos, when compared to other Cities in the County, have more commissions, with more members, that meet more frequently than is average. Additionally, commissions in other Cities have membership and meeting frequency based on the workplan or powers and duties of the commission, as opposed to a common standard for meetings and membership, as is applied in Los Altos. The agenda report and spreadsheet from the Council retreat have been included as Attachments #1 and #2 to this agenda report and provide more information on how Los Altos compares with Cities in the County.

The primary focus area for potential changes to commissions is in the establishment of Powers and Duties in the municipal Code and the creation of workplans that align with Council priorities, budget, and available resources. Currently, many Los Altos commissions have powers and duties that lack definition and workplans that are not aligned as described above. Los Altos Municipal Code Section 2.08 establishes 11 commissions. It defines specific powers and duties for 3 of these commissions, provides some additional direction to an additional 3 commissions, and no direction beyond advisory powers for 5 commissions. The commissions without defined powers in the Municipal Code rely on the annual work plan to determine deliverables for the year. Workplan creation for commissions without defined powers and duties does not always take Council priorities, budget, or resources into account prior to approval by the commission.

Commissions with powers and duties defined in the Municipal Code have an easier time creating a schedule of meetings and composition of membership that is based on deliverables or the commission workplan. During the meetings with commission chairs it became apparent that commissions with powers and duties that are defined in the Code or are aligned with Council goals had an easier time discussing the role of the commission and commenting on potential changes to meeting frequency and membership composition. These same commission also had less confusion with the role of the commission as compared with the role of the City Council and/or City staff.



**Subject:** Los Altos Commissions

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### **Discussion/Analysis**

At the direction of City Council, staff met with individual commission chairs and liaisons to discuss the role of the commission, the workplan, the meeting frequency, and member composition. These meetings were intended to receive direct feedback on areas that have worked well, areas that could be improved, and potential changes that could be incorporated to improve the effectiveness of the commissions and how they were supported by City staff.

After these meetings, it became evident that the commissions who had the most well-defined roles, either through workplans or powers and duties in the Municipal Code, were positioned the best to continue their roles, even when changes were applied, without decreasing effectiveness.

As an example, the Historical Commission has powers and duties that are well defined. The Chair agrees that the mission can be met by reducing the meeting frequency from monthly to quarterly and the composition from 7 members to 5 members. The Financial Commission, who also has a well-defined scope, agrees the meeting frequency can be reduced without impairing the deliverables as expected by the City Council.

At the conclusion of the meetings, and in preparation for this study session, staff tried to determine which commissions were completing their deliverables in line with Council expectations and budget, were appropriately resourced, and currently had the correct composition and meeting frequency to be successful. Staff believes three commissions, the Planning Commission, Senior Commission, and Youth Commission are all operating in line with these objectives, and can continue to be successful with no or limited changes proposed.

Additionally, there was one commission that agreed changes were necessary and the mission could be completed with fewer members and meeting frequency. As discussed above, the Historical Commission Chair, during the meeting with staff, believed that quarterly meetings with five members would be better suited to meet the expectations of the City Council.

In order for staff to provide recommendations on potential changes to the remaining commissions, Council direction is required. As evidenced by the Los Altos Municipal Code section 2.08 and these conversations, there are a number of commissions that do not have their powers and duties clearly defined, and/or have workplans that are not in line with Council goals, budget/resources, or there has been role confusion between the commissions and staff.

City staff requests direction from City Council to provide additional definition to the expectations from the remaining commissions, listed below, prior to staff making a recommendation on frequency of meetings, membership composition, or potential consolidation.



**Subject:** Los Altos Commissions

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The commissions where staff requests direction are:

- Complete Streets Commission
- Environmental Commission
- Financial Commission
- Library Commission
- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Public Arts Commission

Further role definition and clear expectations will allow staff to identify where there could be potential changes to the membership, meeting frequency, or consolidation based upon an analysis into their specific powers and duties or workplan and deliverables.

The following commissions staff believes can operate without additional changes:

- Planning Commission
- Senior Commission
- Youth Commission

If Council agrees with the proposed changes to the Historical Commission, reducing meeting frequency from monthly to quarterly and reducing member composition from seven to five, staff could return with the appropriate changes to the Municipal Code.