

May 9, 2019

Honorable Mayor and Members of the Long Beach City Council
333 W. Ocean Blvd., 14th Floor
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: Item Number 17 on the May 14, 2019 City Council Agenda - Streamlining City Council Meetings

Dear Mayor Garcia and Members of the Long Beach City Council,

We want to acknowledge and thank City Staff and the City Council for your consideration of this important agenda item. Conversations like these are critical to making local government more accessible and transparent for Long Beach residents.

While we agree with many of Staff's recommendations, we want to share our feedback, which we hope will inform a robust conversation on this important topic on Tuesday May 14, 2019. We ask that you consider our comments as you prepare to discuss Item 17. Our comments, below, are aligned with the numbering in the Staff Report.

OUR FEEDBACK ON PROPOSED IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

3. Formalize a policy for public comment when large crowds are present: Although we agree in concept, we strongly recommend that the Council establish agreed upon criteria so as not to allow public comment to be reduced on an ad hoc/discretionary/item-to-item basis.

6. Adhere to posted agenda order as much as possible: If a time certain is set, it should be adhered to, especially for important items with many members of the public present. Moreover, the City Council should utilize time curtains more frequently.

8. Increase use of City Council Committees to hear public comment for large and controversial items: We do not agree with this recommendation, as accessibility would be largely dependent on the timing of the committee meetings and how much time is allotted for the committee meeting itself. Moreover, an active Committee structure is difficult with a part-time City Council. An active Committee structure would make more sense with a full-time City Council.

10. Continue Closed Session at the end of City Council meetings: We support this, as it would help ensure that Council meetings start on time.

OUR FEEDBACK ON PROPOSED FUTURE IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

1. Hold Robert's Rules of Order refresher and consider alternative streamlined rules: We think this is a good recommendation but feel that this type of refresher would not be a good use

of time during a Council meeting unless the intent is to have a larger public component with broader benefit.

2. Use of technology in the new Civic Center, such as speaker sign up and alternative ways to show support for community presentations: We agree with this recommendation and hope that the Council will explore the use of technology to engage community members who are at home - not just those in the audience. We also recommend the Council look into the use of clicker technology during meetings, especially in light of any alternative that might be dependent on mobile smart phones, something that not all community members have.

3. Electronic board to announce the City Council meeting agenda order: We want to lend the Council's attention to language access with the use of any electronic board that posts city-related agenda items. The Council should be mindful of what languages and what content in particular would be placed on the board. Postings should be in English, Spanish, Khmer and Tagalog, to be inclusive and aligned with the City's Language Access Policy.

OUR FEEDBACK ON OPTIONS NOT CONSIDERED, BUT RECOMMENDED BY US

Consider An Earlier Start Time: The Council should consider beginning meetings earlier, before 5pm, or holding hearings and/or presentations before the 5 pm meeting start time.

Limit the Number of Significant Items per Agenda: The Council should consider limiting the number of significant items per agenda (e.g., major policy changes, items with high community engagement). Such items should also be placed early on the agenda with a time certain.

Additional Meetings: Adjusting the content and timing of meetings and agenda items will not solve the issue of the overall shortness in available time needed to adequately address the items the Council must consider and discuss. We firmly believe that this Council must explore adding meetings to its docket so that important and controversial items receive the adequate time they deserve. It is not in anyone's best interest – the Council, the community or City Staff, for the Council to deliberate important items late into the evening and early morning hours.

Publish Agendas with Staff Reports At Least Two Weeks in Advance: The City should post agendas, staff reports, and presentations at least two weeks in advance of Council meetings, to allow adequate notice and time for community members to review and engage on the items. The City should also share the Council matrix with the public, so that we have advance notice of when important items are likely to be heard by the Council. One week's notice is simply not enough.

Full-Time City Council: We encourage the City to explore the idea of moving to a full-time City Council structure. Long Beach is a metropolitan city of nearly half a million residents and it is increasingly clear that our current government structure does not support sufficient community engagement and transparency.

We look forward to our recommendations being included in your discussion.

Respectfully,

Amy Cabrera Rasmussen, California State University Long Beach*

Christine Petit, Long Beach Forward*

Gary Hytrek, Long Beach Coalition for Good Jobs and a Healthy Community*

Steve Gerhardt, Walk Long Beach*

Susanne Browne, Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles*

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* for identification purposes