



CITY OF ALEXANDRIA

Subcommittee to Review Standing Committees



Agenda



- | | |
|----------|---|
| 1 | Call to Order |
| 2 | Purpose and Scope |
| 3 | Methodology, Research, and Learning Agenda |
| 4 | Next Steps |

Memo to Council

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 4, 2024
TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL
THROUGH: JAMES F. PARAJON, CITY MANAGER
FROM: CHERAN CORDELL IVERY, CITY ATTORNEY
GLORIA SITTON, CITY CLERK
TITLE: CREATION OF TWO NEW SUBCOMMITTEES AND REACTIVATION OF THE BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS SUBCOMMITTEE.

ISSUE: Creation of three subcommittees that seek to improve efficiency, performance, and decision-making for City Council.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council create the following subcommittees:

- (1) Subcommittee for the Review of Standing Committees;
- (2) Subcommittee on Personnel; and
- (3) Subcommittee on Boards and Commissions.

BACKGROUND: At the November 12, 2024, Legislative meeting, Councilwoman Gaskins requested that the above referenced subcommittees be established prior to the appointment of councilmembers to boards, commissions, committees, subcommittees at the installation ceremony on January 2, 2025. City Council should approve the request so that the subcommittees would be established before the installation of the incoming Council on January 2, 2025.

Below is an overview of the proposed subcommittees and their scope of work:

- 1. Subcommittee for the Review of Standing Committees
 - This subcommittee will review the current standing committees and determine if Council should move to a different standing committee structure and what impact on staffing and current advisory committees a change may have.
- 2. Subcommittee on Personnel
 - City Council is responsible for the performance evaluation of the City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk and the Independent Police Review Auditor. This subcommittee would be responsible for establishing clear metrics for successful management and evaluation of these positions.
- 3. Subcommittee on Boards and Commissions
 - This would be a reactivation of a previous subcommittee established pre-pandemic. The new goal of this subcommittee would be to review the process of creating and structuring existing boards and commissions, while making recommendations on the viability and necessity of all active boards and commissions

The composition of each new subcommittee would include two to three council members and would be supported by key staff members to be determined by the City Manager. Each subcommittee would have a specified time to complete the work.

FISCAL IMPACT: No fiscal impact currently.

STAFF: James F. Parajon, City Manager
Cheran Cordell Ivery, City Attorney
Gloria Sitton, City Clerk



December 14, 2024
[City Council](#)
[established](#) the
Subcommittee for
the Review of
Standing
Committees.
January 2, 2025
[City Council](#)
[assigned](#) Council
Members to each of
the three
Subcommittees



Exploring Standing Committees in the City

- ▶ **Better understand the roles and responsibilities of committees**
 - *Strengthen decision-making*
 - *Enhance community engagement*
 - *Increase transparency and accountability*

- ▶ **Research and evaluate the use of standing committees**
 - *What are standing committees?*
 - *History of the standing committee structure?*

- ▶ **Determine if/how standing committees could strengthen City governance**
 - *Pros and cons of standing committees?*

- ▶ **Recommendation to Council**



Path of Exploration

- ▶ Review Existing Committees
- ▶ Jurisdictional Comparative Analysis
- ▶ Recommendations and Proposed Structure
- ▶ Community engagement and feedback
- ▶ Subcommittee Recommendation to Council

PROCESS



Subcommittee Learning Agenda

February

1. What is a Standing Committee?
2. What are our goals and objectives?
3. What is the history of Standing Committees in the City?
4. Do other Jurisdictions have Standing Committees?
5. Would Standing Committees improve our current state? (pros and cons)

March

1. What would be our Standing Committee Structure?
2. How would members of a Standing Committee be determined? How many members?
3. What would be within the authority and responsibility of a Standing Committee? Topics?
4. What governing documents would the standing Committee need?
5. How often would a Standing Committee meet?
6. What would be the role of the public and community members on a Standing Committee?

April

1. How long would a Standing Committee convene?
2. What documents would be required (minutes, public notice,...etc.)?
3. What is the recommendation to City Council?



Bodies Adjacent to City Council

CURRENT STATE





CURRENT STATE

City Council Subcommittee	# Council Members
Alexandria Workforce Development Center	2
ARHA Redevelopment Work Group	2
Audit & Finance Committee	2
City Council/School Board Sub-Committee	2 + 1 alternate
Eco-City Alexandria Environmental Action Plan Steering Committee	2
Gang Prevention Community Task Force	2
George Mason Superintendent's Advisory Team	1
Health & Safety Coordinating Committee	2
Inova Alexandria Hospital Task Force	2
Landmark Community Development Authority Board of Directors	5
Legislative Sub-Committee	2
Subcommittee for the Review of Standing Committees	2 + 1 alternate
Subcommittee on Personnel	2
Subcommittee on Boards and Commissions	2

Sub Committees

Unlike traditional, permanent City Council standing committees, Alexandria has a robust history of establishing temporary sub-committees that often address a specific issue and then sunset after a specified amount of time.



The **Standing Committee Model** is a governance structure where city councils have permanent standing committees established to address specific ongoing areas of responsibility or policy, ensuring consistent work and decision-making in those areas over time.



Definition of Standing Committees

- **Sec. 2-4-2 - Definitions.**

As used in this article, unless otherwise stated or the context otherwise requires:

...

(2) *Committee* means any board, committee, commission, authority or similar body established by the city council or established pursuant to, or required by, any provision of the laws or regulations of the Commonwealth of Virginia or the United States, which has one or more members appointed or designated by the city council, and which has (i) a fixed membership, including at least one person who is not a city employee, (ii) a defined purpose and (iii) regular or periodic meetings.

...

(6) *Standing committee* means any committee established pursuant to law whose functions are established on a permanent, ongoing basis for an indefinite period of time.

- **Sec. 2-4-4 - Composition, terms and duties of committees.**

...

(d) *Additional duties for standing committees.* In addition to any other function or duty that may be vested in a committee by its enabling legislation or otherwise, each standing committee shall:

- (1) hold at least one regular meeting each year and as many additional meetings as may be required by its enabling legislation or as the business of the committee may require.
 - (2) prepare and submit to the city council an annual report within 60 days after the close of the fiscal year or as shortly thereafter as possible. The report shall include, but not be limited to, a listing of the members of the committee, a description of the committee's principal activities during the reporting period and any recommendations of the committee for improving its functions and duties or making changes in other laws, procedures, policies or programs within the subject matter of its jurisdiction, including recommendations for additional federal or state legislation. These reports shall become available for public inspection and copying after submission to the city council.
 - (3) in addition to its annual report, any committee is authorized to make additional or special reports, oral or written, to the city manager of the city council at any other time that the committee determines that such reports may be needed, except that, no report requesting additional city funds or staff shall be submitted to the city council until it shall first have been submitted to the city manager for his comments and recommendations.
 - (4) prepare, in consultation with the city manager an annual budget, showing both the funding and staff directly assigned to the committee and estimated sums and staff time that may be used by the committee but are not directly assigned to it.
 - (5) prepare by-laws consistent with this code regulating procedures regarding the committee mission, membership, meetings, officers, committees, and amendments. Such by-laws should be filed with the office of the city clerk and reviewed by the committee annually.
- (Ord. No. 4595, 6/13/09, Sec. 1; Ord. No. 5169, 11/17/18, Sec. 1; Ord. No. 5346, 5/15/21, Sec. 1; [Ord. No. 5493](#), 5/13/23, Sec. 1)

- **Sec. 2-4-8 - Creation of new committees; term of temporary committees.**

(a) Any new standing committee shall be established by ordinance.



Naming Standing Committee

Key Elements:

- ☐ Composition: The Committee is currently comprised of two (3) members of the City Council and a Staff Liaison from the Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities.
- ☐ Meeting Frequency: The Committee convenes approximately every other month but also meets as needed, decided by the members of the Committee.

Responsibilities:

- ☐ Legislative gatekeeping
- ☐ Conduct Legislative Review & Introduce Ordinances
- ☐ Call Public Hearings and Testimony
- ☐ Make Policy Recommendations

Typical Agenda:

- ☐ Call to Order
- ☐ Renaming Item 1
- ☐ Renaming Item 2
- ☐ Next Meeting Date Determination
- ☐ Public Comment Period
- ☐ Adjournment



At the [June 17, 2023 legislative session](#), the City Council Naming Committee had a docket item pertaining to changing the name of the Braddock Interim Park to Judy Guse-Noritake Park. During the session, after the City Council had opened the docket item to public hearing, Council adopted the recommendation from the Naming Committee and the park was officially renamed.

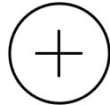


Jurisdictional Comparators

City/ Population	Prescribed Comparator?	Government System	# of Council Members	Standing Comm?	# of SCs	Is council full or part-time	SC Meeting Frequency	SC Member & Chair Selection
Philadelphia 1,533,828	No	Strong Mayor	17	Yes	25	Full-time	Monthly	City Council President Appointment
DC 678,972	No	Council-Mayor	13	Yes	11	Full-time	Monthly	Council chairman nominates City Council President Appointment
Baltimore 565,239	No	Strong Mayor	15	Yes	8	Full-time	Monthly; flexible	Council President Appointment
Pittsburgh 303,255	No	Strong Mayor	9	Yes	9	NA	Monthly	Council President Appointment
Chesapeake, VA 253,886	No	Council-Manager	8	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA
Norfolk, VA 238,005	No	Council-Manager	7	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA
Arlington 234,162	Yes	County-Manager	5	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA
Richmond 229,247	No	Strong Mayor	9	Yes	6		Monthly; flexible	Council selection
Newport News 183,118	No	Council-Manager	7	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA
Alexandria 159,467	No	Council-Manager	7	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA
Hampton 137,098	Yes	Council-Manager	6	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA
Roanoke 100,011	No	Council-Manager	3	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA
Portsmouth 97,915	No	Council-Manager	6	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA
Suffolk 94,324	No	Council-Manager	7	Yes	3	Part-time	Monthly	Appointed by Mayor and Council

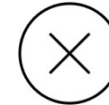


Standing Committees | Pros & Cons



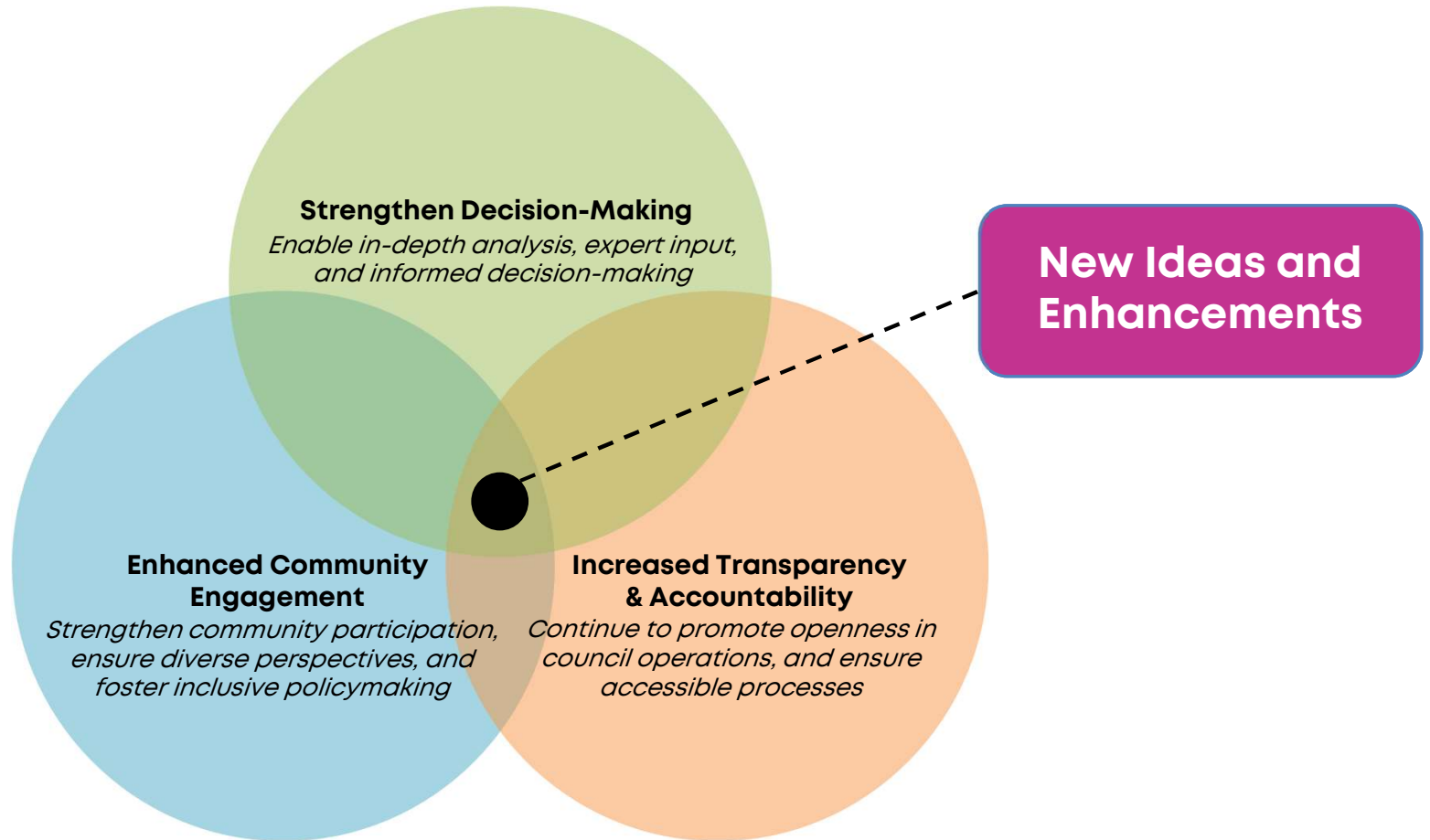
Pros

- **Specialization:** Members can focus on specific topics, gaining deeper expertise and improving decision-making.
- **Efficiency:** Allows for more in-depth discussions and streamlined processes before presenting to the full council.
- **Transparency:** Regular, public committee meetings can improve accountability and stakeholder engagement.
- **Continuity:** Ongoing committees ensure preparedness and consistent oversight, even as broader council priorities shift.



Cons

- **Fragmentation:** Specialized focus might create silos, making it harder to address cross-cutting issues.
- **Time Demands:** Council members may face increased workloads and challenges balancing committee and full council responsibilities.
- **Potential for Power Imbalances:** Some committees might gain outsized influence compared to others.
- **Resource Intensive:** Committees require additional staff support, scheduling, and administrative work.



Guiding Principles



Research Questions

- ▶ What information does City Council and the Community need most to determine if a standing committee structure is a useful governing model?
- ▶ Will standing committees improve transparency, accountability, and decision making?
- ▶ What issue areas could be addressed using the standing committee structure?

Discussion

Review and Recap

February

1. What is a Standing Committee? ✓
2. What are our goals and objectives? ✓
3. What is the history of Standing Committees in Alexandria? ✓
4. Do other Jurisdictions have Standing Committees? ✓
5. Would Standing Committees improve our current state? (pros and cons)? ✓

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6. What would be the role of the public and community members on a Standing Committee?

April

1. How long would a Standing Committee convene?
2. What documents would be required for public notice, etc.?
3. What is the recommendation to the Board?

Next Steps

Next Meeting



- | | |
|----------|---|
| 1 | Standing Committee Structure |
| 2 | Membership and Composition |
| 3 | Authority |
| 4 | Governance (documents, meeting cadence, public participation, ...etc.) |



Additional Discussion and Questions





APPENDIX

City/ Population	Prescribed Comparator?	Government System	# of Council Members	Standing Comm?	# of SCs	Is council full or part-time	Share of Council per SC	Share of SCs Members sit on?	SC Chair?	SC Bylaws	SC Meeting Frequency	SC Member & Chair Selection	SC Power 1	SC Power 2	SC Power 3	SC Power 4	SC Power 5	SC Power 6
Philadelphia 1,533,828	No	Strong Mayor	17	Yes	25	Full-time	29%	60%	Yes	bylaws	Monthly	City Council President Appointment	Bills must pass through committee first before being considered	Call hearings on bills				
DC 678,972	No	Council-Mayor	13	Yes	11	Full-time	38%	45%	Yes	bylaws	Monthly	Council chairman nominates	Committees write their own rules and Procedures	Debate, comment on, and write measures	Legislation must be referred to a committee when introduced	Appoint folks to boards and commissions	Call hearings, subpoena, and invite members of the public to speak	Propose budget for agencies within its purview
Baltimore 565,239	No	Strong Mayor	15	Yes	8	Full-time	33%	38%	Yes	Standing Committee Bylaws	Monthly; flexible	City Council President Appointment	Committees review and develop legislation, hold hearings, gather testimony, and make recommendations to the full council. jurisdiction.	Committees review proposed legislation, hold hearings, gather input from experts, stakeholders, and make recommendations to the full council.	Committees hold public hearings to gather input from experts, stakeholders, and the general public.	Committees report their findings and recommendations to the full council for consideration and voting		
Pittsburgh 303,255	No	Strong Mayor	9	Yes	9	NA	33%	33%	Yes	bylaws	Monthly	Council President Appointment	Legislation must go through appropriate committee before vote	Power to conduct investigations	Hold public hearings			
Chesapeake, VA 253,886	No	Council-Manager	8	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Norfolk, VA 238,005	No	Council-Manager	7	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Arlington 234,162	Yes	County-Manager	5	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Richmond 229,247	No	Strong Mayor	9	Yes	6		44%	67%	Yes	bylaws	Monthly; flexible	Council selection	All bills/ordinances must pass through the standing committee first	Investigations of departments, boards, commissions, offices, and employees	Make recommendations to council on bills			
Newport News 183,118	No	Council-Manager	7	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Alexandria 159,467	No	Council-Manager	7	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hampton 137,098	Yes	Council-Manager	6	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Roanoke 100,011	No	Council-Manager	3	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Portsmouth 97,915	No	Council-Manager	6	No	NA	Part-time	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Suffolk 94,324	No	Council-Manager	7	Yes	3	Part-time	29%	NA	Yes	Bylaws	Monthly	Appointed by Mayor and Council	channel of communication regarding school board issues	review the financial affairs of the city generally	develop strategies to improve the safety of the city's communities and neighborhoods.			

Boards & Commissions

The City of Alexandria has numerous boards and commissions that facilitate citizen participation in local governance. These bodies allow residents to advise the City Council on various issues affecting the community.

1. Alexandria Archaeological Commission
2. Alexandria Beautification Commission
3. Alexandria Budget and Fiscal Affairs Advisory Committee
4. Alexandria Building Code Board of Appeals
5. Alexandria-Caen Sister City Committee
6. Alexandria Citizen Corps Council
7. Alexandria Commission for the Arts
8. Alexandria Commission for Women
9. Alexandria Commission on Aging
10. Alexandria Commission on Employment
11. Alexandria Commission on HIV/AIDS
12. Alexandria Commission on Information Technology
13. Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities
14. Alexandria Commission on the Prevention of Human Trafficking
15. Alexandria Community Criminal Justice Board
16. Alexandria Community Services Board
17. Alexandria Consumer Affairs Commission
18. Alexandria Convention and Visitors Association Board of Governors
19. Alexandria Economic Opportunities Commission
20. Alexandria Environmental Policy Commission
21. Alexandria Fair Housing Testing Program Advisory Committee
22. Alexandria Gang Prevention Community Task Force
23. Alexandria George Washington Birthday Celebration Committee
24. Alexandria Historical Restoration and Preservation Commission
25. Alexandria Human Rights Commission
26. Alexandria Industrial Development Authority
27. Alexandria Landlord-Tenant Relations Board
28. Alexandria Library Board
29. Alexandria Local Emergency Planning Committee
30. Alexandria Marketing Fund Committee
31. Alexandria Park and Recreation Commission
32. Alexandria Planning Commission
33. Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority Board of Commissioners
34. Alexandria Social Services Advisory Board
35. Alexandria Transportation Commission
36. Alexandria Urban Design Advisory Committee
37. Alexandria Waterfront Commission
38. Board of Architectural Review – Old & Historic District
39. Board of Architectural Review – Parker-Gray District
40. Board of Zoning Appeals
41. Children, Youth, and Families Collaborative Commission
42. City of Alexandria Public Records Advisory Commission
43. City of Alexandria Scholarship Fund of Alexandria Board
44. City of Alexandria Sister Cities Committee
45. City of Alexandria Workforce Development Center Board
46. Commission on Aging
47. Commission on Children and Youth
48. Commission on Immigrant Affairs
49. Commission on the Arts
50. Community Policing Review Board
51. Emergency Medical Services Council
52. Environmental Policy Commission
53. Historic Alexandria Resources Commission
54. Housing Affordability Advisory Committee
55. Land Use and Zoning Commission
56. Local Emergency Planning Committee
57. Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Center Commission
58. Northern Virginia Regional Commission
59. Northern Virginia Transportation Commission
60. Potomac Yard Metrorail Implementation Work Group
61. Public Health Advisory Commission
62. Public Housing Authority Residents Advisory Board
63. Schools and Libraries Advisory Board
64. Stormwater Utility Advisory Group
65. Traffic and Parking Board
66. Urban Forestry Commission
67. Visit Alexandria Board of Directors



CURRENT STATE