



City of Alexandria

# Subcommittee to Review Standing Committees

**City Council Legislative Meeting**

March 27, 2025



# Agenda



1. Review and Approve Minutes from the Last Meeting
2. Define Structure and Standing Committee Components
3. Discuss Staff Recommendations
4. Next Steps



# Summary

**Review Definitions**

**Learning Agenda**

**Outline the Committee and Governance Structure**



# Review and Recap

- **Standing Committee Definition**

**Background**



# Standing Committee Definition

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.

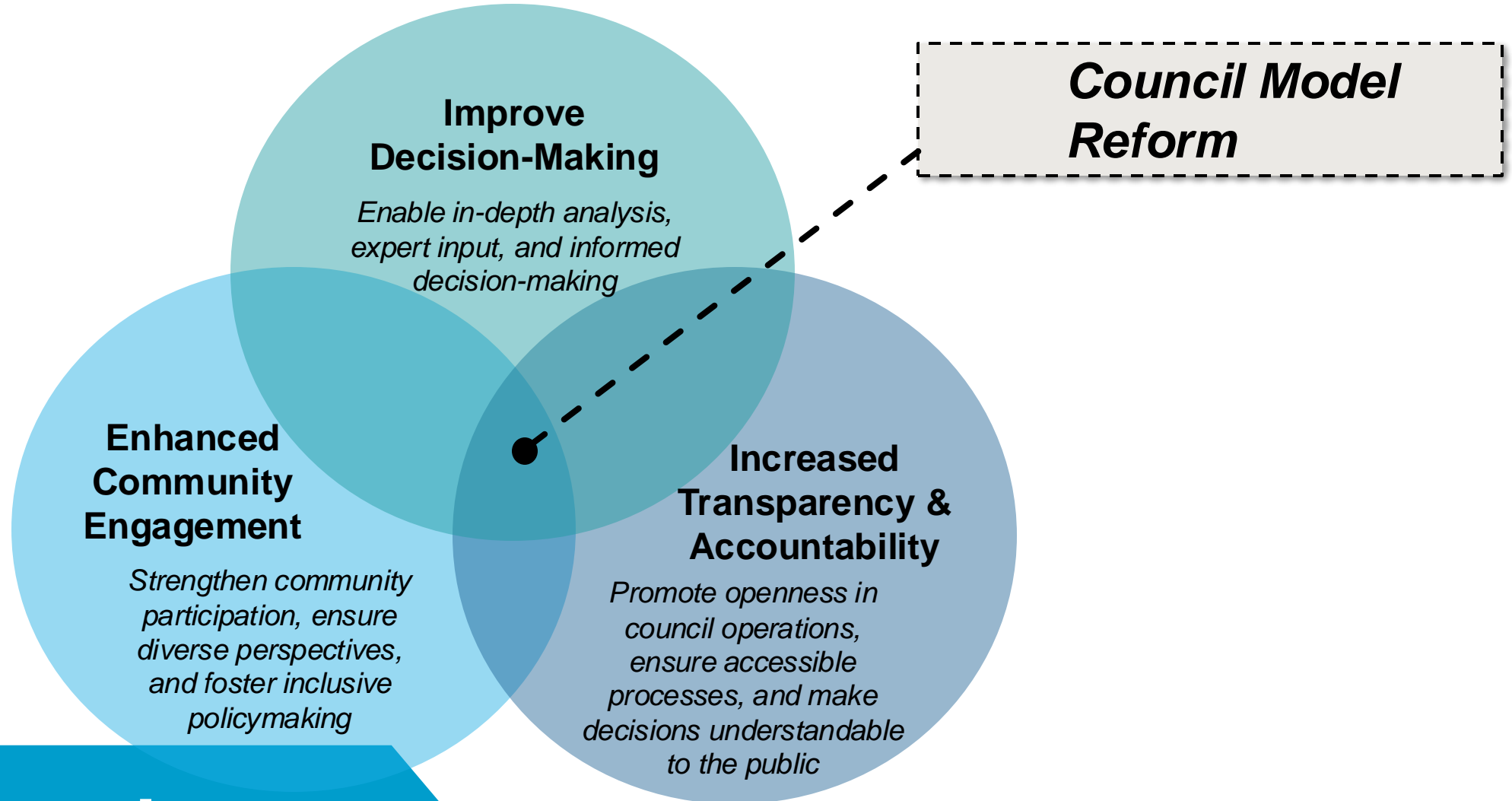


# Review and Recap

- Defined Standing Committee
- **Discussed Goals and Objectives**



# Goals and Objectives



## Background



# Building on Past Success

- Defined Standing Committee
- Discussed Goals and Objectives
- **Reviewed History of Standing Committees in Alexandria**





# History of Council Committees

- **Alexandria currently has at least one city council standing committee - The City Council Naming Committee.**

## **Standing committees traditionally:**

- ▶ Legislative gatekeeping
- ▶ Conduct Legislative Review
- ▶ Call Public Hearings and Testimony
- ▶ Make Policy Recommendations

- **Alexandria Subcommittees**

- ▶ Ad Hoc Nature
- ▶ Limited Scope
- ▶ *Temporary*
- ▶ No Legislative Gatekeeping



# Components of a Standing Committee



**Council  
Composition**



**Public Participation**



**Committee Member  
& Chair Selection**



**Size & Proportion**



**Authority &  
Responsibilities**



**Meeting Cadence**



**Required  
Documents**



# Framework for Evaluation

<b>Transparency</b>	<b>Community Engagement</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Specialization</b>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<b>Inclusivity</b>	<b>Adaptability</b>	<b>Pressure Tested</b>



# Committee Composition Options

Composition Option	City Council Members	City Staff	Boards & Commissions	Community Members	External Partners
<b>Option 1:</b> City Council Only	✓				
<b>Option 2:</b> City Council + City Staff	✓	✓			
<b>Option 3:</b> City Council + Boards and Commissions	✓		✓		
<b>Option 4:</b> City Council + City Staff + Boards and Commissions	✓	✓	✓		
<b>Option 5:</b> City Council + City Staff + Boards/Commissions + Community Members	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>Option 6:</b> City Council + City Staff + Boards& Commissions + Community Members + External Partners	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



# Committee Composition Recommendation

## Option 1: City Council Only

- Maintains clear accountability to voters by reserving decision-making authority for elected officials.
- Simplifies coordination and reduces logistical complexity for initial pilot.
- Allows council members to directly prioritize issues without external influence.



# Public Participation Options

## Option 1

Every standing committee convening is open to the public and is held in a venue that is easily accessible to members of the public without exception.

## Option 2

Most standing committee convenings are open to the public to attend and view except for rare, non-regularly occurring closed door sessions in special cases to accommodate sensitive matters.



# Public Participation Recommendation

## Option 2: Majority Public Meetings

- Allows flexibility to discuss sensitive matters such as performance reviews or legal matters.



# Committee Selection Options

## Option 1

### Council Election

*Chairs are elected by a majority vote of the full City Council*

## Option 2

### Mayoral Appointment

*Mayor appoints chairs, sometimes with approval from Council*

## Option 3

### Vice Mayor Appointment

*The council president selects chairs, often based on members' expertise or seniority*

## Option 4

### Mayor Chairperson

*The mayor serves as chairperson of the committee(s)*

## Option 5

### Council Consensus

*Council members collectively agree on who will serve as chair, often informally*

# Membership





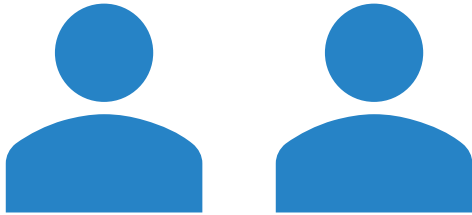
# Committee Selection Recommendation

## Option 2: Mayoral Appointment with Council Approval

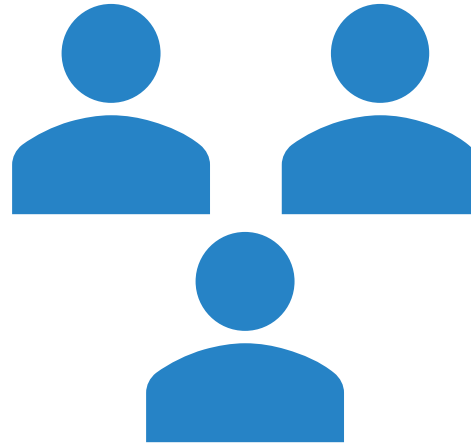
- Streamlines the appointment process, ensuring that committees are formed quickly and efficiently.
- The Mayor can leverage their knowledge of council members' strengths.
- Allows for consistency in leadership and decision-making.



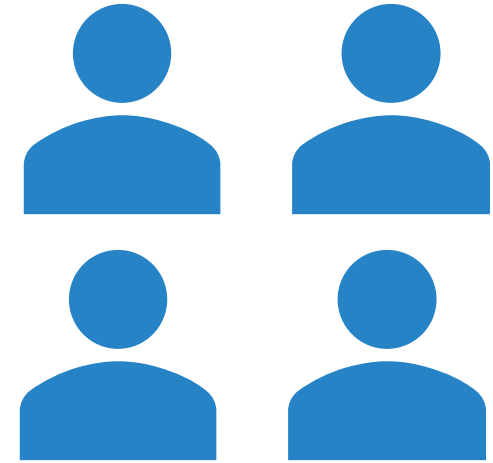
# Committee Size Options



**2** councilmembers  
per standing  
committee



**3** councilmembers  
per standing  
committee



**4** councilmembers  
per standing  
committee

## Membership



# Committee Size Recommendation

## Option 2: 3 Council Members per Committee

- Balances efficiency with a broader range of viewpoints.
- Makes it easier to achieve a quorum compared to smaller committees.
- Distributes the workload more evenly among members.



# Authority & Responsibilities Options

## Option 1

### Legislative Gatekeeping

*Proposed legislation must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate standing committee*

## Option 2

### Conduct Legislative Review

*Committees can review and draft legislation for council vote*

## Option 3

### Call Public Hearings

*Members of the public can be called to comment on and provide their expertise on issues*

## Option 4

### Initiate Investigations

*Committees can conduct investigations into city officials, departments, and other matters*

## Option 5

### Make Policy Recommendations

*Can advise the rest of council on key legislative matters*

## Option 6

### Conduct Financial Oversight

*Oversee the financial management of city departments and programs*



# Authority & Responsibilities Recommendation

**Option 1: Legislative Gatekeeping**

**Option 2: Conduct Legislative Review**

**Option 3: Call Public Hearings**

**Option 5: Make Policy Recommendations**

- Maximizes legislative specialization and efficiency.



# Meeting Cadence Options

Option 1



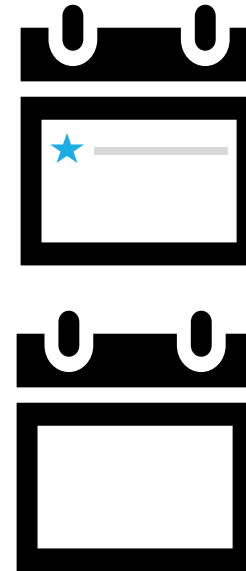
Weekly

Option 2



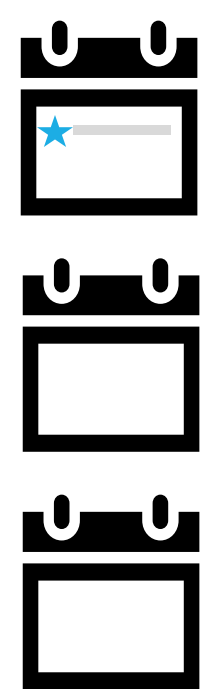
Monthly

Option 3



Every Other  
Month

Option 4



Quarterly



# Meeting Cadence Recommendation

## Option 3: Every Other Month

- Reduces frequency, allowing members more time for other duties.
- Provides ample time for implementation of decisions and preparation for meetings.
- Decreases the likelihood of meeting fatigue.



# Required Governing Documents

- Under our city code, standing committees must be established by **ordinance**. (Sec. 2-4-8a)
- Any proposed standing committees require **a report** from the city manager with **comments and recommendations, including:** (Sec. 2-4-8c)
  - ▶ (1) the need for the committee and possible duplications or conflicts with other committees;
  - ▶ (2) the appropriateness of a committee format to deal with the issues involved; and
  - ▶ (3) the impact that creation of the committee will have on city staff resources
- Once formed, standing committees are required to prepare **by-laws** to govern basic rules of operation.





# Staff Structure Recommendation

Component	Recommendation
Committee Composition	City Council Only
Public Participation	Majority Public Meetings
Committee Selection	Mayoral Appointment with Council Approval
Committee Size	Three (3) Councilmembers per standing committee
Authority & Responsibilities	Legislative Gatekeeping, Conduct Legislative Review, Call Public Hearings, Make Policy Recommendations
Meeting Cadence	Every Other Month
Required Documents	Ordinance, CMO Report, Bylaws



# Timeline

## February

Overview &  
Objectives  
Discussion

## April

Topics Discussion;  
Finalize Recommendations  
& Communications Plan

## June

Present  
Recommendation  
to City Council

## March

Structure  
Discussion

## May

CMO Report  
Development

*Draft Needed  
Updates to City  
Code*



# April Learning Agenda

- What topics should a Standing Committee cover?
- How long should a Standing Committee convene?
- What documentation should be required (minutes, public notice, etc.)?
- What is the recommendation to City Council?



# Potential Topics

## Health and Public Safety

Topics include:

- Public Safety
- Health
- Social Services

## Finance & Organizational Development

Topics include:

- City Budget
- Grant Funding
- Performance Management of Council Appointees

## Economic Development

Topics include:

- Business Attraction
- Workforce Development
- Tourism
- Economic Mobility

## Land Use & Housing

Topics include:

- Land Use Planning
- Environmental Issues
- Housing
- Transportation



# Discussion and Questions?



# Jurisdictional Comparators

City	Population	Government System	# of Council Members	Standing Committees?	# of SCs	Is council full or part-time?	SC Member & Chair Selection
Philadelphia	1,533,828	Strong Mayor	17	Yes	25	Full-time	City Council President Appointment
DC	678,972	Council-Mayor	13	Yes	11	Full-time	Council chairperson nominates
Baltimore	565,239	Strong Mayor	15	Yes	8	Full-time	City Council President Appointment
Pittsburgh	303,255	Strong Mayor	9	Yes	9	NA	Council President Appointment
Chesapeake, VA	253,886	Council-Manager	8	No	NA	Part-time	NA
Norfolk, VA	238,005	Council-Manager	7	No	NA	Part-time	NA
Arlington	234,162	County-Manager	5	No	NA	Part-time	NA
Norfolk	230,930	Council-Manager	7	NA	NA	NA	NA
Richmond	229,247	Strong Mayor	9	Yes	6		Council selection
Newport News	183,118	Council-Manager	7	No	NA	Part-time	NA
Alexandria, VA	159,467	Council-Manager	7	No	NA	Part-time	NA
Hampton	137,098	Council-Manager	6	No	NA	Part-time	NA
Roanoke, VA	100,011	Council-Manager	3	No	NA	Part-time	NA
Portsmouth, VA	97,915	Council-Manager	6	No	NA	Part-time	NA
Suffolk, VA	94,324	Council-Manager	7	Yes	3	Part-time	Appointed by Mayor and Council



# Harvard Fellow's Criteria for Evaluation

Criteria	Superior (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
<b>Transparency</b>	<i>Open meetings with accessible minutes, agendas, and public feedback mechanisms.</i>	<i>Mostly transparent but with some gaps in accessibility or public communication.</i>	<i>Limited transparency; only partial access to agendas or meeting outcomes.</i>	<i>Opaque process with minimal public access or feedback mechanisms.</i>
<b>Community Engagement</b>	<i>Actively incorporates diverse public input through structured feedback processes.</i>	<i>Engages community members but may not consistently incorporate feedback.</i>	<i>Limited public input with minimal integration into decision-making.</i>	<i>No meaningful public engagement or feedback mechanisms.</i>
<b>Accountability</b>	<i>Clear metrics and regular reporting to evaluate performance and outcomes.</i>	<i>Metrics exist but are inconsistently applied or tracked.</i>	<i>Limited accountability mechanisms or unclear performance measures.</i>	<i>No accountability mechanisms in place.</i>
<b>Specialization</b>	<i>Committees specialize in specific areas, allowing detailed discussions. Expert testimony informs decisions.</i>	<i>Committees focus on areas but occasionally lack the necessary expertise or depth.</i>	<i>Committees address broad issues with limited expertise in key areas.</i>	<i>Committees have no clear focus or specialization, leading to shallow deliberations.</i>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<i>Streamlined processes ensuring timely and informed decisions with minimal delays.</i>	<i>Generally efficient with occasional delays or inefficiencies.</i>	<i>Decision-making is frequently delayed or burdensome.</i>	<i>Highly inefficient with significant delays and limited outcomes.</i>
<b>Inclusivity</b>	<i>Committees include members from various backgrounds, ensuring diverse perspectives. Efforts to engage all community segments.</i>	<i>Committees engage diverse stakeholders but with occasional gaps in representation.</i>	<i>Representation is limited, with some voices excluded from the process.</i>	<i>Committees lack diversity and fail to engage marginalized or underrepresented groups.</i>
<b>Adaptability</b>	<i>Allows for continuous improvement through community feedback and evolving needs.</i>	<i>Adaptable but with occasional difficulty in adjusting to new challenges.</i>	<i>Limited ability to adapt to new needs or respond to feedback effectively.</i>	<i>Rigid structure with no flexibility for improvement or adjustments.</i>
<b>Pressured Tested</b>	<i>Proven successful in other municipalities or comparable governance models.</i>	<i>Some success observed in peer municipalities but with limited evidence.</i>	<i>Minimal testing or implementation elsewhere, creating uncertainty.</i>	<i>No precedent for success, with high risk of failure or inefficiency.</i>



# Committee Composition Option Evaluations

Options	Success Criteria							
	Transparency	Efficiency	Adaptability	Specialization	Accountability	Inclusivity	Community Engagement	Pressure Tested
<b>Option 1:</b> City Council Only	Fair	Superior	Fair		Fair	Fair	Fair	Superior
<b>Option 2:</b> City Council + City Staff	Good	Superior	Good		Fair	Good	Fair	Good
<b>Option 3:</b> City Council + Boards and Commissions	Good	Good	Good		Good	Good	Good	Fair
<b>Option 4:</b> City Council + City Staff + Boards and Commissions	Good	Good	Good		Good	Good	Good	Fair
<b>Option 5:</b> City Council + City Staff + Boards/Commissions + Community Members	Superior	Fair	Good		Good	Superior	Superior	Fair
<b>Option 6:</b> City Council + City Staff + External Partners	Superior	Fair	Superior		Superior	Superior	Superior	Fair





# Public Participation Option Evaluations

Options	Success Criteria							
	Transparency	Efficiency	Adaptability	Specialization	Accountability	Inclusivity	Community Engagement	Pressure Tested
<b>Option 1:</b> All Public Meetings	Superior	Good			Superior	Superior	Superior	Good
<b>Option 2:</b> Majority Public Meetings	Good	Superior			Superior	Good	Good	Superior



# Committee Selection Option Evaluations

Options	Success Criteria							
	Transparency	Efficiency	Adaptability	Specialization	Accountability	Inclusivity	Community Engagement	Pressure Tested
<b>Option 1:</b> Council Election	Superior	Fair			Superior	Superior		Fair
<b>Option 2:</b> Mayoral Appointment	Good	Superior			Superior	Good		Superior
<b>Option 3:</b> Vice Mayor Appointment	Good	Superior			Good	Good		Superior
<b>Option 4:</b> Mayor Chairperson	Poor	Good			Poor	Poor		Poor
<b>Option 5:</b> Council Consensus	Good	Fair			Good	Superior		Fair

## Membership



# Committee Size Option Evaluations

Options	Success Criteria							
	Transparency	Efficiency	Adaptability	Specialization	Accountability	Inclusivity	Community Engagement	Pressure Tested
<b>Option 1:</b> 2 councilmembers per standing committee		Superior	Fair		Superior	Fair		Good
<b>Option 2:</b> 3 councilmembers per standing committee		Superior	Good		Good	Good		Superior
<b>Option 3:</b> 4 councilmembers per standing committee		Good	Superior		Good	Superior		Good

## Membership



# Roles & Responsibilities Option Evaluations

	Success Criteria							
Powers	Transparency	Efficiency	Adaptability	Specialization	Accountability	Inclusivity	Community Engagement	Pressure Tested
<b>Power 1:</b> Legislative Gatekeeping	Good	Good	Good	Superior	Good	Fair	Good	Superior
<b>Power 2:</b> Legislation Introduction	Good	Good	Good	Superior	Good	Good	Good	Superior
<b>Power 3:</b> Call Public Hearings	Superior	Good	Superior	Superior	Superior	Superior	Superior	Superior
<b>Power 4:</b> Initiate Investigations	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Superior
<b>Power 5:</b> Make Policy Recommendations	Good	Good	Good	Superior	Good	Good	Good	Superior
<b>Power 6:</b> Conduct Financial Oversight	Superior	Good	Good	Good	Superior	Good	Good	Good



# Meeting Cadence Option Evaluations

Options	Success Criteria							
	Transparency	Efficiency	Adaptability	Specialization	Accountability	Inclusivity	Community Engagement	Pressure Tested
<b>Option 1:</b> Weekly	Superior	Fair	Superior	Superior	Superior	Superior	Superior	Fair
<b>Option 2:</b> Monthly	Good	Superior	Good	Superior	Superior	Good	Good	Superior
<b>Option 3:</b> Every other month	Good	Good	Good	Fair	Fair	Fair	Fair	Superior
<b>Option 4:</b> Quarterly	Fair	Fair	Fair	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor	Poor

## Meeting Cadence



# Example Committee Topics

- Arts, Culture, and Community Engagement: Cultural programming, public events, and creative initiatives.
- Budget and Finance: Financial planning, budgeting, and resource allocation.
- Education and Workforce Development: Schools, workforce training, and economic resilience.
- Environment and Sustainability: Climate action, green initiatives, and environmental preservation.
- Health and Human Services: Public health, social services, and community wellness.
- Housing and Homelessness: Affordable housing and homelessness prevention.
- Planning and Development: Land use, zoning, and sustainable city development.
- Public Safety and Justice: Policing, emergency preparedness, and justice initiatives.
- Transportation and Infrastructure: Public transit, roadways, and infrastructure planning.