



City of Emeryville

CALIFORNIA

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 2, 2025

TO: LaTanya Bellow, City Manager

FROM: Chad Smalley, Community Development Director
April Foran, City Clerk

SUBJECT: **Study Session – Advisory Body Composition And Appointment Process**

RECOMMENDATION

This item offers the City Council the opportunity to discuss and provide direction to staff on changes to advisory body composition, community engagement methods, and the appointment process

BACKGROUND

On April 16, 2024, the City Council directed the Budget and Governance Committee to review the composition of the Community Grants Subcommittee to enhance community representation on that committee. In June 2024 the Council then directed the Budget and Governance Committee to consider adding demographic questions to the advisory committee and commission application. These directives are in line with Program EE of the Housing Element, which aims to improve resident engagement. Specifically, Program EE states:

“The City will evaluate its current committees and commission membership to determine if the membership is reflective of the socio-economic and racial mix of Emeryville or if there are any missing voices. If it is determined, there are missing voices, the City will enhance its outreach efforts to encourage residents from all socio-economic groups and racial backgrounds to serve on committees and commissions when position become available. The City will investigate the restructuring of the Housing Committee to ensure that the committee has at least one member that resides in a Below Market Rate (BMR) unit, at least one member that is a tenant, and at least one member that is a homeowner.”

Collection of Demographic Data

As the City had not been collecting demographic information as part of its application process, in September 2024 existing committee and commission members were surveyed to provide baseline information. The results of that survey are illustrated in Attachment A.

Staff shared these baseline results with all the advisory committees/commissions in early 2025 and there was a consensus amongst the advisory committees/commissions to add the voluntary demographic questions to the recruitment application. In Spring 2025, staff added voluntary demographic questions to the upcoming recruitment application. Twenty-eight applications were submitted by the Spring 2025 recruitment

application deadline to fill 28 advisory committee/commission vacant seats. An analysis of the demographic data collected was not shared with City Council during the selection process but is illustrated in attachment B.

Committee Composition & Community Outreach

While sharing the baseline demographic results with the advisory committees/commission in early 2025, staff also asked for recommendations on how advisory committee/commissions should be composed and how to improve community outreach in the recruitment process of the advisory committees/commissions. Below is a summary of general comments regarding ways to improve the advisory committees/commissions, recommendations on how to improve community outreach and engagement, as well as specific recommendations on individual advisory committees/commissions composition:

General Comments on Advisory Committee/Commission

- There is concern about the lack of participation and representation of disabled community members. It was noted that the return to in-person only meetings (as opposed to remote and hybrid meetings used earlier in the COVID pandemic) makes it harder for people to participate and engage in City meetings, especially for those with physical disabilities. This may be addressed if SB 707 is signed into law.
- Increasing youth participation came up as a priority for multiple committees/commissions. Suggestions were made to add seats designated for youth community members to committees and commissions, wherever feasible, and to develop better ties and improve coordination between the Emery Unified School District and the City.
- To the extent that the budget will allow – provide childcare, light snacks and refreshments during committee and commission meetings.

Community Outreach and Engagement

- Ask former and existing committee and commission members to assist in recruitment by volunteering at a City recruitment table at community events (like the Harvest Festival) and be active in engaging community members.
- Add flyers to community bulletin boards throughout the city (at businesses, bus stops, the Senior Center, ECCL, community gardens, etc.). Flyers need to be where people already are.
- There need to be bulletin boards at all City parks for City events (note: adding signage to parks is in the CIP).
- Have a recruitment day, where committee and commission members table and community members can come and learn about the various ways to participate in the City. People need to be introduced to the idea of public service and what that can look like. This idea was expanded on to be a Civics Day, which could also involve City departments and programs.
- That Council Members need to actively promote committee and commission openings and encourage community member engagement.

- Make sure to validate lived experience seen as an expertise. Lived experience is a gift. People need to feel that they are coming in on strong footing, not as a novice.
- Mentorship is needed for new members and to help people feel confident in applying.
- Utilize Emeryville Commerce Connection to encourage business to apply and improve representation.
- Utilize the BIPOC Small Business needs assessment to provide new channels for communication with business community

Recommendations on Specific Advisory Committee/Commission Composition

- Budget Advisory Committee (BAC): Remove one of the designated business seats and replace it with a seat for a Youth/Student attending Emery High School or an Emeryville resident enrolled in a college or university.
- Housing Advisory Committee (HAC): Designate three of the community member seats to represent a renter, homeowner, and BMR recipient.
- Public Art Advisory Committee (PAC): Designate one or more of the business/resident seats for what the PAC identified as missing viewpoints (Pixar, Compound Gallery, schools and Ceramists), and allow multiple people to share a designated seat.

The PAC made these additional recommendations specific to their committee:

1. Attendance requirements should be less stringent.
2. Consider not prohibiting purchases of PAC or PAC spouses' artwork.
3. Create incentives or benefits to compensate PAC members (like sending calls from other cities to PAC members).

Budget and Governance Committee Comments

The Budget and Governance Committee reviewed the advisory committees/commissions comments and recommendations during their May 27, 2025, meeting. The Budget and Governance Committee made the following comments and recommendations:

- Add one to two seats for Emery High Students to committees, with one being assigned to the Park & Recreation Advisory (PRAC).
- Consider removing prohibition of the City purchasing PAC member or PAC member spouses' artwork.
- Consider automatically dropping August and December meetings for those committees and commissions with monthly meetings, as applicable.
- Consider designating seats to help better represent a diversity of community perspectives, as applicable, including:
 - Designate seats on HAC for BMR/community member, renter/community member, and homeowner/community member.

- Designate seats on Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) for driver/community member, pedestrian/community member, bicyclist/community member.
- Designate seats on PAC for ceramists/community members.

DISCUSSION

Committee Composition

To provide flexibility and maintain the ability to have quorum, all designated seats are to include “/community member” in their description. The seat designation signifies committee intent and priority.

In reviewing seat recommendations provided by the BAC, HAC, and PAC, staff recommends:

- Move forward with BAC’s recommendation: Remove one of the designated business seats and replace it with a seat for a Youth/Student attending Emery High School or an Emeryville resident enrolled in a college or university.
- Move forward with HAC’s recommendation: Designate three of the community member seats to represent a renter, homeowner, and BMR recipient.
- Move forward with PAC’s recommendations by designating one seat for a Youth/Student attending Emery High School or an Emeryville resident enrolled in a college or university and designating one seat for large art institution, with over 50 affiliated artists.

In reviewing other recommendations provided by the PAC, staff recommends:

- Allow seats held by businesses/organizations to designate an alternative representative from the business/organization to participate on Advisory Committee/Commissions when the primary representative is unable to attend a meeting
- Create incentives or benefits to compensate PAC members (like sending calls from other cities to PAC members).

In reviewing the recommendations provided by the Budget and Governance Committee, staff recommends:

- Designating one seat on the PRAC for a Youth/Student attending Emery High School or an Emeryville resident enrolled in a college or university.
- Due to conflict of interest, staff does not recommend removing the prohibition of the City purchasing PAC member or PAC member spouses’ artwork.
- Except for Planning Commission, advisory committee/commission meetings scheduled between December 15 and January 15 should be cancelled, and the cancelation of advisory committee/commission meeting in August should be left up to the advisory committees/commissions.

Community Outreach and Engagement

In reviewing the recommendations provided by the advisory committees/commissions, staff recommends:

- Ask former and existing committee and commission members to assist in recruitment by volunteering at a City recruitment table at community events (like the Harvest Festival) and be active in engaging community members.
- Add flyers to community bulletin boards throughout the city (at businesses, bus stops, the Senior Center, ECCL, community gardens, etc.).
- Add community bulletin boards to all City parks for City events (note: adding signage to parks is in the CIP).
- Schedule a Civics Day, where community members can come and learn about various departments, city programs and various ways to participate in the City. Ask existing or former advisory committee/commission members to be available to answer questions about their experience serving on an advisory committee/commission.
- Encourage Council Members to actively promote advisory committee/commission openings and encourage community engagement.
- Ensure that lived experience is seen as an expertise and validated in the application and interview process. Lived experience is a gift. People need to feel that they are coming in on strong footing, not as a novice.
- Identify opportunities for long term advisory committee/commission members to mentor new members and to help people feel confident in applying.
- Utilize Emeryville Commerce Connection to encourage business to apply and improve representation.
- Utilize the BIPOC Small Business needs assessment to provide new channels for communication with business community

Advisory Body Appointment Process

At the same time, staff were also reviewing the current advisory body appointment process and looking for ways to increase efficiency. The City Council currently makes appointments several times each year to vacant advisory body positions. The City of Emeryville has extraordinarily high numbers of positions on boards, commissions, and committees for a city of its size and there are constant vacancies due to a variety of reasons. For comparison, Emeryville has a population of approximately 12,900 and has eight advisory bodies with 60 members plus four City Council committees. The neighboring city of Albany, with a population of approximately 20,000, has six advisory bodies and 39 members.

Ideally, there would be one annual recruitment per year when terms are set to expire on June 30. Unfortunately, because of the high number of advisory bodies and the large number of members on each, recruitment is open on average three times per year. A full recruitment cycle takes about 70 days. Unexpected vacancies occur when members move out of the area, resign for any reason, or the previous recruitment cycle does not

yield enough applicants. Additionally, in the last few recruitment cycles, the City Council has generally not appointed applicants who do not attend the appointment meeting, leaving vacancies open.

The City Council Rules of Procedure (ROP) states:

8.2 Appointments to Boards, Commissions, and Committees

The City Council shall appoint, from among eligible applicants, members to serve on all committees and commissions without prior review or recommendation from the members of the committee or commission to which the appointment is to be made. A majority of the City Council must confirm all appointments at a City Council meeting.

The recruitment and appointment process is a large workload for both staff and the City Council. Staff is recommending changes that will increase efficiency, reduce the time spent on appointments at City Council meetings, and make the process less cumbersome for applicants.

Appointment Process Changes

Staff recommends that the advisory body appointment process be accomplished at the Council Committee level. Staff are not recommending any changes to the Planning Commission and those members would still undergo an interview with the full Council. Staff also recommends that the Budget Advisory Committee be sunset and changed to an ad hoc committee during budget preparation years. The table below outlines the proposed appointing bodies and changes:

Advisory Body	# of Members	Proposed Appointing Body	Other notes
BPAC	9	Transportation & Sustainability Committee	
Budget Advisory	5		Sunset in 2026. Change to Ad Hoc Committee during budget season
Commission on Aging	7	Community Services	
EDAC	9	Budget & Governance	
Housing Committee	7	Budget & Governance	
Parks & Recreation	7	Community Services	
Public Art	9	Budget & Governance	Set by Ordinance
Planning Commission & Others	various		No changes recommended – full Council appointments

Application and Appointment Process

For the annual recruitment (appointments that expire June 30 of each year), the application would be open for 30 days (45 is the current practice). Applications would be received and forwarded to Council Committee secretaries for inclusion in agenda packets for May/early June meetings. Council Committee members would review

applications and make recommendations for appointment to the full Council. Committee secretaries then forward recommendations to the City Clerk who drafts a consent agenda staff report for the second Council meeting in June.

The appointment process for unscheduled vacancies would be handled as outlined above. When unscheduled vacancies occur, a 15-day application process would open and any applications on file, along with new applications, would be forwarded to the Council Committee secretary for inclusion as an action item on the next available agenda. The Committee recommendation would appear on the next City Council meeting as a consent item.

These changes would be effective in spring of 2026, in time for the annual recruitment to open in April.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no direct fiscal impact related to this item.

STAFF COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC

Community Composition was discussed at the following public meetings:

- EDAC on January 15, 2025
- HAC on February 5, 2025
- PAC on February 13, 2025
- PC on February 27, 2025
- BPAC on March 3, 2025
- COA on March 12, 2025
- PRAC on March 19, 2025
- BAC on May 8, 2025
- Budget and Governance Committee on May 27, 2025

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

CONCLUSION - SUMMARY OF STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends that the City Council review the presented changes to the advisory body composition and appointment process and provide feedback on new procedures to implement. At a future Council meeting, staff will present the appropriate resolutions/ordinances to implement the changes and an updated Rules of Procedure.

1. PRAC: Use this committee to pilot a program to designate one existing seat for a Youth/Student attending Emery High School or an Emeryville resident enrolled in a college or university with the annual recruitment opening in 2026.

2. HAC: Designate three of the existing community member seats, one to represent a renter, one to represent homeowners, and one to represent BMR recipients.
3. PAC: If the pilot program on the PRAC is successful, designate one seat for a Youth/Student attending Emery High School or an Emeryville resident enrolled in a college or university; and designating one seat for large art institution.
4. Except for the Planning Commission, cancel all advisory committee/commission December 15 - January 15 meetings.
5. Use City Clerk budget for Community Public meetings to provide refreshments.
6. Open a continuous advisory body recruitment and make annual and unscheduled appointments at the Council Committee level as outlined in the table above; and sunset the Budget Advisory Committee in 2026 and change to an ad hoc committee during budget season.

Alternative A - All changes in staff recommendation #6 but leave the Housing Committee appointment process at the City Council.

Alternative B - Make no changes to the advisory body appointment process.

PREPARED BY

April Foran, City Clerk

Valerie Bernardo, Economic Development and Housing Manager

Navarre Oaks, Senior Planner

**APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO THE
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EMERYVILLE:**



LaTanya Bellow, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

- A. September 2024 Existing Advisory Committee/Commission Demographic Survey Results)
- B. Spring 2025 Advisory Committee/Commission Recruitment Demographic Application Data Results