

Study Issue Process

Planning and Management Prioritization Tool for Council and Staff

Overview

Since the late 1970s, the City's study issues process has provided both City Council and City staff with a valuable planning and management tool. Through this process, Council sets priorities for studying policy issues. The process also allows staff to balance the work required to thoroughly "study" an issue with the work required to deliver ongoing City services.

What is a Study Issue?

A study issue is a topic of concern that may result in a new or revised City policy. Potential study issue topics can include proposed ordinances, new programs, amendments to the General Plan and the examination of potential new policies or revisions to existing policies that have been established by City Council.

The primary purpose of the study issues process is to provide a method for identifying, prioritizing and analyzing policy issues in an efficient and effective way. It provides a structured approach for addressing the large number of policy issues that are raised each year. With exceptions as noted below (e.g. emergency issues, safety issues, etc.) Council reviews all study issues once a year at the Study/Budget Issues Workshop. The process allows Council to rank the issues, separating those issues that may have seemed important when they were first raised from the truly critical issues. It also allows the City Manager and department directors to set and schedule the examination of issues so the workload does not interfere with the day to day delivery of City services at levels set by Council.

Can I Propose a Study Issue?

As noted below in Study Issues Process Summary Timeline, the study issues process is ongoing. Study Issue topics can be proposed by members of the public, councilmembers, boards/commissions, or the City Manager. Ideas proposed by the public must, however, be sponsored by Council, the City Manager, or a majority of a board and commission to advance.

Roles in the Study Issues Process

The study issues process includes participation by Councilmembers, City staff, board and commission members, and the public. A brief explanation of each of their roles follows:

Council - Council's role is to set policy. Regarding the study issues process, policy-related responsibilities include generating (or sponsoring) study issue topics; taking public input; prioritizing or "ranking" issues at the Council Study Issues Workshop; and approving target completion dates for each study.

City Staff - City staff manage the annual study issues administrative process; generate study issue topics; prepare the study issue papers; following Council ranking of issues, determine how many issues available operating resources will support (issues are begun, and studied, in priority order); and propose target completion dates for studies able to be completed.

Boards and Commissions - In their advisory capacity to Council, boards and commissions generate study issue papers for Council's consideration, and provide a recommended ranking of the issues relevant to their areas of authority. Boards and commissions also provide a forum for public input and, with majority support, can sponsor issues brought to them by members of the public.

Members of the Public - Members of the public may suggest study issue topics to staff, boards and commissions, or directly to Council. In order for a study issue topic to get to the Council Study Issues Workshop it must be “sponsored” by staff, Council or a board or commission. Members of the public also provide input to Council on the relative importance or priorities of individual studies at the annual Study Issues Public Hearing, which is held a week or two prior to Council’s Study Issues Workshop.

Study Issues Process Summary Timeline

- Staff publishes all City Manager approved study issues papers and additional workshop materials to the City website.
- Boards and commissions rank any proposed study issue that falls under their purview for next calendar year.
- Council holds a public hearing on study issues proposed for current calendar year where members of the public comment on proposed study issues.
- Council holds Study/Budget Issues Workshop where Council assigns priority ranking to proposed study issues.
- Council holds a public hearing to approve study issue presentation dates for studies recommended for study.

Although study issue topics can be submitted at any time, for an issue to potentially receive consideration during the next workshop, it should be submitted before October to allow time for staff to prepare materials ahead of the upcoming annual prioritizing process

Step-By-Step, Internal Study Issues Process

1. Idea generated.
2. Issue sponsorship:
 - Board/Commission
 - Must be part of a noticed meeting
 - Must receive majority vote to refer to City Manager/Council
 - City Manager
 - Councilmembers (2 minimum)
3. Study Issue Paper (SIP) developed by staff, including the following data:
 - Number
 - Title
 - Lead Department
 - Support Departments
 - Sponsor(s)
 - History
 - Scope of the Study
 - What Precipitated this Study?
 - What Are the Key Elements of The Study?
 - Estimated Years to Complete Study
 - Fiscal Impact
 - Level of Staff Effort Required (Opportunity Cost)
 - Funding Required for Non-Budgeted Costs
 - Funding Source
 - Cost to Implement Study Results
 - Expected City Council, Board or Commission Participation
 - Council-Approved Work Plan

- Council Study Session
 - Reviewed by Boards/Commissions
 - Staff Recommendation
- 4. SIP routed in Legistar.
- 5. City Manager reviews/approves paper.
- 6. Copy of approved paper is posted online.
- 7. All SIPs generated by a B/C or by staff are due to the City Manager by December 3, 2018.
- 8. [Boards/Commissions rank](#) proposed SIPs that are under their purview.
- 9. B/C rank data due to the City Manager by January 31, 2019.
- 10. Materials for Public Hearing posted on web page (which includes signed study issue papers, department worksheets [noting all pending study issues and dept. recommendations]).
- 11. Public Hearing held in January.
- 12. New ideas from the public hearing that are sponsored go through steps 3 through 6.
- 13. Three weeks in advance of the workshop is the last day for Council sponsored SIPs.
- 14. A workshop packet is prepared for Council, including department rankings, B/C rankings, and a memo from the City Manager that describes the process for the workshop. This is also posted to the web.
- 15. Study/Budget Issue Workshop held.
 - Council reviews the SIPs by department; initial Council action can include:
 - Motion to DROP (issue must be sponsored to come back for consideration the following year)
 - Motion to DEFER (issue will automatically be brought back the following year for consideration).
 - Motion to COMBINE (multiple SIPs often cover similar topics and can be combined to maximize resources in completing the study).
 - Issues remaining are then priority ranked by Council; two ranking processes are utilized:
 - For ten or fewer issues, the Council prioritizes ALL issues starting with 1 for their highest priority.
 - For items with eleven or more issues, the number left to rank is divided by three and rounded up, totaling the number of votes each councilmember receives towards those remaining issues.
 - Staff calculates the final ranking and distributes a results sheet for each department by the end of the workshop.
 - Two-way ties are broken by a hand vote; three-way (or more) ties are broken using additional ranking sheets provided to Council.
- 16. Departments review the priority list and *draw-the-line* to distinguish items that can and cannot be completed given current resources. Items to be completed are identified as *above-the-line*; items which cannot be completed are identified as *below-the-line* and will automatically return for Council consideration at the next year's workshop.
- 17. Departments identify a study start date, workplan review date, study session date, final presentation date to Council and a staff contact for each *above-the-line* issue.
 - Workplans and/or Study Sessions are only requested by Council for complex studies and assist staff in keeping Council apprised of the study progress and potential results.
 - Council approves the proposed dates at the same time they approve the Council Meeting calendar for the year.
- 18. Studies which would require a one-time appropriation to conduct/complete the study are presented to Council for action. The council can either:
 - Adopt a budget modification for the amount necessary; or

- Defer the study to be considered as part of the City's next budget. The study is not started until it is funded; if the Council does not fund the study, it is treated as a *deferred* study and brought back for Council consideration at the following year's workshop.
19. The studies are started in the priority order established by Council, however, as some studies take less time to conduct, may be completed in a different order.
 20. The results of the study are presented to Council via a Report to Council (RTC) at a publicly noticed Council meeting.
 21. At the following year's workshop, status updates are provided to Council on studies which were ranked and *above-the-line* the previous year and any studies which are not completed by the time of the workshop.

Resources

[Key Dates](#)

[2019 Study Issue Staff Instructions](#)

[Drafting Study Issues Using Legistar](#)

[Board/Commission Process for Ranking Study Issues](#)

[Signed Study Issue Papers for 2019 Workshop](#)

Council Policies

[7.2.19 Boards and Commissions](#)

[7.3.26 Study Issues Process](#)

Administrative Policy

[Chapter 1, Article 15 Boards and Commissions.](#)

2019 COUNCIL STUDY ISSUE

NUMBER

..Title

[Enter Dept. Abbreviation Year of Sponsorship - Number (ex. OCM 19-01)]

TITLE [Enter the name of the study issue; make sure it accurately and concisely describes the study issue. It is recommended that key words appear early in the title. In developing a title, it's important to try to strike the right balance between brevity and clarity.]

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BACKGROUND

Lead Department: [Insert Department using full names, no acronyms]

Support Departments: Office of the City Manager

Office of the City Attorney

[add any other support departments; full names, no acronyms]

Sponsor(s): [Insert one of the three options below]

Councilmembers: [last names only]

City Manager [Includes issues drafted by staff]

[full name of Board/Commission, no acronyms]

History: 1 year ago: [insert Dropped/Deferred/Ranked Below the Line/N/A]

2 years ago: [insert Dropped/Deferred/Ranked Below the Line/N/A]

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

What precipitated this study?

[What caused the issue to be raised in the first place?]

What are the key elements of the study?

[Briefly describe the study issue, explaining the key policy questions or concerns that were discussed when the study issue was raised. This description should include what will and what won't be included in the study issue. Refrain from including any statements that would lead readers to believe staff has predetermined the outcome of the study (e.g., "the lack of a policy requiring local hiring places an unfair burden on this community's economically disadvantaged").]

Estimated years to complete study: ☒ years

FISCAL IMPACT

Cost to Conduct Study

Level of staff effort required (opportunity cost):

[Select One Major/ /Minor]

Moderate [default]

Minor [known to be low effort]

Major [huge undertaking evident]

Funding Required for Non-Budgeted Costs:

\$ [Enter \$0 if none]

Funding Source:

[select one]

Will seek budget supplement

Will seek grant funding

[Briefly explain any cost of study, such as consultants or outreach costs, and any Minor or Major level of effort. Note – the workload and service level responsibilities will be considered by the City Manager when advising Council of staff's capacity for completing ranked issues.]

Cost to Implement Study Results

[Select one of these three (No Cost/Unknown/Some Cost)]

Minimal or no cost expected to implement.

Unknown. Study would include assessment of potential costs, including capital and operating, as well as revenue/savings.

Known costs to implement. [Insert brief explanation of known costs of implementing study results (capital and/or operating).]

EXPECTED CITY COUNCIL, BOARD OR COMMISSION PARTICIPATION

Council-Approved Work Plan: [Insert Yes/No]

Council Study Session: [Insert Yes/No]

Reviewed by Boards/Commissions: [identify the B/Cs, full name, no acronyms]

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Select one of these 4 options (Support/ Defer/Drop/ None)]

Support. This policy issue merits discussion at the 2019 Study Issues Workshop.

Defer. This policy issue merits discussion at a future Study Issues Workshop.

Drop. This policy issue does not merit discussion at a Study Issues Workshop.

None. Staff make no recommendation.

[Briefly explain the staff recommendation. Include information about relevant policies or work efforts. If quoting more than 1 paragraph of policy, include as an attachment to Study Issue paper. Include recommendation to merge with other Study Issues (may be for Support or Defer recommendations). Defer may be due to in progress or planned work efforts and/or policies at the local, state or federal level. Drop may be due to existing policy or planned policy updates, or previously studied issues.]

Prepared by: [Name], Director, [Department] *This is the Lead Department Director*

Reviewed by: Teri Silva, Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Kent Steffens, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

Add attachments or delete section header.

Board/Commission Process for Ranking Study Issues

The Study Issues process is designed to assist City Council with setting policy study priorities for the coming calendar year. Board and commission members have two roles in this process:

- To advise Council regarding the identification of policy issues to study (i.e., the generation of study issue ideas for Council's consideration); and
- To advise Council on those issues Council has decided to study.

All procedures must comply with Council Policies [7.2.19 Boards and Commissions](#), [7.3.26 Study Issues Process](#), and Administrative Policy [Chapter 1, Article 15 Boards and Commissions](#). All board and commission members shall adhere to those operational practices and procedures as contained in the *Board and Commission Handbook* prepared by the Office of the City Clerk.

To ensure consistency in approach and practice, all boards/commissions shall use the same ranking process as Council for all proposed Study Issues (described below and captured in Council Policy [7.3.26 Study Issues Process](#)).

Ranking Process

Step 1: Review issues

Staff provides a brief summary of each proposed Study Issue. Any Study Issue ranked by a Board/Commission, must be signed/approved by the City Manager prior to ranking. Boards and commissions shall review and take action on only those issues under their purview, as determined by the City Manager. Items not under the specific purview of a board or commission may be presented to them for "information only".

Step 2: Questions of Staff

Staff will address questions Commissioners may have regarding each study issue.

Step 3: Public Hearing

Chairperson opens Public Hearing for public input on any of the issues under consideration. (Note: the Commission may not take action on, or rank any new issue raised by the public for which there is not already a study issue paper developed. Those seeking to raise new issues at this point in the process should be informed that their options are to seek Council sponsorship of their issue or submit it to the Board/Commission for the following year's process.) Chairperson will close the Public Hearing.

Step 4: Determine which issues, if any, will be dropped

Commissioners may make motions to drop issues from consideration. After the motion is seconded, discussion on each item may ensue. If the motion passes by a simple majority of those present, the Board/Commission will drop the issue. Such action suggests that there is no need to study the issue.

If the Board/Commission votes to drop an issue that was initiated by the Commission that same year, the issue will not be forwarded to City Council for the Council's consideration. If, however, the Commission votes to drop an issue that was not initiated by the Commission - meaning that it was initiated by staff, Council or another Commission - or that had been deferred or fell below the line in the previous year, the issue would be forwarded to Council with a notation that the Commission recommended it be dropped from consideration.

Step 5: Determine which issues, if any, will be deferred

Commissioners may make motions to defer issues from consideration to a later year. After the motion is seconded, discussion on each item may ensue. If the motion passes by a simple majority of those present, the Commission will not rank the issue. Such action suggests only that the issue is not currently a priority and/or it is not the appropriate time to study the issue.

If the Commission votes to defer an issue that was initiated by the Commission that year, the issue will not be forwarded to City Council for the Council's consideration. If the Commission votes to defer an issue that was not initiated by the Commission - meaning that it was initiated by staff, Council or another Commission - or that had been deferred or fell below the line in the previous year, the issue would be forwarded to Council with a notation that the Commission recommended it be deferred from consideration.

Step 6: Commission discussion on issues to be ranked

Commissioners have the opportunity to speak to the remaining issues to be ranked and to discuss merits and priorities before ranking the remaining issues. No motion is required.

Step 7: Commissioners rank issues individually

Depending on the number of issues left to rank, the Board/Commission shall utilize one of the following ranking methods:

Simple Majority/Borda Count (for ranking ten or fewer issues) – Commissioners individually and simultaneously rank each of the remaining issues. Rankings are from 1 to the total number of issues, with “1” representing the issue with the highest priority for study. Each number can be used only once (no ties) and each issue must receive a ranking.

Choice Ranking (for ranking eleven or more issues) – the number of items to be ranked is divided by three and each Commissioner is given that many votes. Each Commissioner allocates his or her votes, one each, to different issues. Some issues will receive votes, others may not, depending on the total number of issues and the number targeted for selection. A tally is made for each issue selected. Two-way ties between issues are resolved by quick votes of the group. Multiple ties are resolved in the same manner as before: dividing by three (if four items are tied, for example, each member gets one vote to assign to one of those issues). The issues that receive the most votes are thereby prioritized. If necessary and desired, the process is repeated for the remaining issues (the ones that didn't get votes the first time).

Regardless of ranking method, all individual Commissioner ranking votes and final Board/Commission rank recommendations will become a part of the official record and shall be made available to the public.

Step 8: Combined ranking determined

A combined Commission ranking is determined when staff totals the individual ranking from all Commissioners for each issue.

Simple Majority/Borda Count The issue with the lowest total becomes the Commission's Priority 1 issue; the next lowest total is Priority 2, etc.

Choice Ranking The issues that receive the most votes becomes the Commission's Priority 1 issue; the next lowest total is Priority 2, etc.

Step 9: Tie Breaks

Two-way ties should be resolved by quick hand votes of the Board/Commission.

Three-way (or more) ties should be resolved using a tie break ranking sheet. The sheet lists all tied issues and the Board/Commission ranks in order, first to last choice. The issues receiving the most votes get the higher priority. This step is repeated if there are multiple ties.

Step 10: Acceptance of rankings

A motion is then made to accept, reject or modify the overall Commission rankings for issues. After the motion is seconded, discussion may ensue. Simple majority is required for passage.

After the Commission Ranking

B/C liaisons are responsible for inputting the commission's rankings in the B/C Ranking Spreadsheet provided by OCM. The completed sheet is due to OCM in early December.

Council will hold a Public Hearing on Study Issues in early January. The Chair or his/her appointee is encouraged to speak before Council and share the Board/Commission's recommended rankings.

Issues Sponsored AFTER Commission Ranking

If a study issue is sponsored after the Commission has held its ranking meeting, the issue will identify the paper as "too late to rank" for the B/C. In this instance, Commissioners are able to attend the January Public Hearing, identify themselves as Commissioners, and testify on how they would have voted (as an individual) had this item gone before the Commission (I would have voted to [drop, defer, rank] this item).

Key Dates for each year are available on Sunspot at <http://ocm/pams/default.aspx>

Note: There is no proxy ranking: Commissioners must be present to rank study issues.