



CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: April 17, 2012

To: Honorable Mayor & City Council

From: Jonathan Lait, AICP, City Planner

Subject: Discussion Regarding Evening and Televised Planning
Commission Meetings

INTRODUCTION

Vice Mayor Mirisch requested the subject item be placed on the City Council agenda to discuss possible policy changes with respect to the timing and broadcasting of Planning Commission meetings.

BACKGROUND

The Planning Commission meets twice a month in City Hall Meeting Room 280A. These meetings start in the afternoon at 1:30 p.m. and typically conclude by 6:00 p.m. On rare occasions over the past several years, the Planning Commission has requested that hearings on some projects begin at 7:00 p.m. Planning Commission meetings are not televised, but are recorded via the Granicus system, which is available for online public viewing within two business days after the meeting.

Before budget reductions were implemented several years ago, the Planning Commission had a study session meeting that began in the afternoon, adjourned for a dinner break, and then considered public hearing items in the evening portion of the agenda. To reduce commission support costs, bus tours of projects on the Planning Commission's agenda (required up to two hours of time in the afternoon), and dinner breaks were eliminated. Further cost reductions were achieved by having public hearings take place in the afternoon. Specifically, staff costs related to overtime for some planners and facility costs (park ranger and general service staff).

DISCUSSION

There are two policy considerations for the City Council to discuss: televising Planning Commission meetings and changing the start time of those meetings.

Broadcasting Planning Commission Meetings

The only meetings that are televised and aired live online and on the local cable television station are the City Council meetings. Many local jurisdictions, including Los Angeles, Santa Monica, West Hollywood, and Culver City, also televise Planning Commission meetings.

The City Council Chamber is the only room that is readily equipped to routinely televise meetings. Accordingly, a request to televise Planning Commission meetings would likely require moving Commission meetings from Room 280A to the City Council Chamber. Alternatively, the City Council could consider infrastructure improvements to Room 280A to allow live broadcasting from that room.

Evening Planning Commission Meetings

The relatively recent shift to afternoon meetings was in response to reduced City revenue and a need to reduce Commission-related expenses. The Planning Commission has the authority/ability to conduct evening meetings and on rare occasions has elected to do so. All other City commissions begin in the morning or afternoon, some as late as 4:00 p.m.

Generally, evening meetings have the benefit of not conflicting with work schedules for members of the public who may wish to attend the meeting. However, meetings that run late into the evening may also preclude some members of the public from attending through the duration of the meeting.

As with City Council meetings, the public may provide written comments prior the meeting if unable to attend, whether the meeting occurs in the afternoon or evening. It is further anticipated that staff will begin exploring public noticing alternatives in the upcoming fiscal year to expand public awareness and participation at City meetings. Any new notice procedures would apply regardless of whether Commission meetings occur in the evening or afternoon.

FISCAL IMPACT

A preliminary evaluation of fiscal impacts for evening and televised Planning Commission meetings includes the following approximate annual costs (not including staff benefits and overhead costs):

Televised Meetings:	\$16,800 (staff costs)
Planning Staff Costs:	\$1,000 (limited because most staff is salaried; this reflects overtime costs for hourly employees)
Park Ranger Staff Costs:	\$7,000
General Services Staff Costs:	\$1,350
Commission Dinner (if provided):	\$5,000
Approximate Total Costs:	\$30,300 (not including benefits and overhead)

Upgrading meeting Room 280A to televise meetings was not evaluated for this report; however, prior estimates considered several years ago estimated costs exceeding two

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hundred thousand dollars. If there is direction to explore upgrading this meeting room, staff would need to return with a more accurate estimate.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council discuss and provide direction.

Susan Healy Keene, Director of
Community Development


Approved By