
TO: PLANNING COMMISSION

FROM: BRUCE BUCKINGHAM, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION OF PLANNING COMMISSION SIZE, TERM AND APPOINTMENT PROCESS

BACKGROUND

The Grover Beach Municipal Code establishes that the Council appoints a seven member Planning Commission who each serve a four year term. The terms are staggered so they don't expire at the same time. The current selection process to fill a vacant or expired term starts with requests for applications, which are posted at City Hall bulletin boards and on the City's website. When the application filing period ends, the prospective Commissioners are interview by a Council appointed screening committee. The screening committee is comprised of the Mayor, a Councilmember, and the Planning Commission Chair. Following the interviews, the screening committee makes a recommendation to the full Council. The Council then votes on whether to appoint the recommendation of the screening committee.

Periodically, there has been difficulty in finding residents to fill vacancies, resulting in difficulties in obtaining a quorum for Commission meetings. A seven member Commission requires four members be present to have a quorum and hold a meeting. Whereas, a five member Commission would require three members be present to have a quorum.

The Planning Commission currently has five members as a result of recent resignations as shown below.

Commissioner	Term Expires
Greg Alex	May 31, 2013
Vacant	May 31, 2013
John Laferriere	May 31, 2014
Karl Blum	May 31, 2014
Vacant	May 31, 2014
Chris Long	May 31, 2015
Ron Rodman	May 31, 2016

Chair Laferriere has requested that the Planning Commission discuss whether this would be an appropriate time to consider making a recommendation to the City Council on the size of the Commission, selection process and/or term length.

Please Review for the Possibility of a Potential Conflict of Interest:

- None Identified by Staff
- Laferriere
- Blum
- Alex
- Rodman
- Long

DISCUSSION

Staff contacted all jurisdictions in San Luis Obispo County and the City of Santa Maria to determine the number of Planning Commissioners, the term length, and the selection process (reference Attachment 1). The number of Commissioners is either five or seven with five jurisdictions having five Commissioners and four jurisdictions having seven Commissioners. The Commission may want to discuss the pros and cons which range from having more input from a larger Commission to periodically having difficulties of finding enough candidates to fill seven positions.

In regards to the length of terms, the majority of jurisdictions have a four-year term, while a few have either a three or two-year term. The Commission may want consider a different term length. If the Commissioner term length were to be tied to the Councilmember terms, then there would be four four-year terms and one two-year term to reflect the two-year mayoral term.

There are several approaches to the Commissioner selection process that are different from Grover Beach ranging from a Councilmember directly appointing a Commissioner, nomination by a Councilmember subject to Council approval, and the full Council interviewing all applicants and making a selection at a public meeting.

Therefore, the Commission may want to consider the following options on the Commissioner selection process:

Option 1 – Retain the Current Process

Option 2 – City Council Selection Process

This process would be similar to the current process, except all candidates would be interviewed by the full Council at a public meeting and a vote taken at the meeting.

Option 3 - Direct Nomination by Each Councilmember.

This process would have each Councilmember, when elected, nominate a Planning Commissioner. The Councilmember could solicit applications or outright nominate someone. The full Council would vote to appoint the nominated Commissioner. The Commissioner's term would end when the Councilmember's term ended. In this scenario, if the current Commission was to remain in place, there would need to be a one-time alignment with a Commissioner assigned to each Councilmember. Each Councilmember could also select their own Commissioner which might result in changes to the Commission.

Option 4 - Direct Appointment by Each Councilmember

This process would have each Councilmember, when elected, select a Planning Commissioner. The Councilmember could solicit applications or outright select someone. There would be no input or review process by the full Council. The Commissioner's term would end when the Councilmember's term ended. As in Option 3, there would need to be one-time alignment of Commissioner and Councilmember terms.

Option 5 – Some Variation of the Above Options

ALTERNATIVES

The Planning Commission has the following alternatives to consider:

1. Discuss the size of the Commission, the length of term, and/or the selection process. If the Commission determines that changes could be beneficial, forward the recommendation to the City Council;
2. Provide direction to staff.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission discuss the size of the Commission, the length of term, and/or the selection process. If the Commission determines that changes could be beneficial, forward the recommendation to the City Council.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

The agenda was posted in accordance with the Brown Act.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Planning Commission Comparison Table

Planning Commission Comparison Table

Jurisdiction	Number	Term (Years)	Selection Process
Grover Beach	Seven	Four	Accept applications, screening committee interviews and makes a recommendation to the Council, which appoints the nominee by majority vote.
San Luis Obispo	Seven	Four	
Arroyo Grande	Five	Four	Accept applications and the new Councilmember nominates an individual from the applications received. The Council appoints the nominee by majority vote. Terms coincide with councilmember terms.
Santa Maria	Five	Four	
San Luis Obispo County	Five	Four	
Morro Bay	Five	Four	Accept applications and the Council interviews each candidate and votes to appoint at a public meeting.
Paso Robles	Seven	Three	
Pismo Beach	Five ⁽¹⁾	Two	
Atascadero	Seven	Four ⁽²⁾	Five of the seven members are directly appointed by a Councilmember and terms coincide with councilmember terms. The remaining two are selected by accepting applications and the Council interviews each candidate and votes to appoint at a public meeting.

(1) Have an alternate Commissioner who fills in when a member will be absent.

(2) Considering reducing to a two-year term.