

From: [Kate Haug](#)
To: [Kari Svanstrom](#); [Fernandez, Evert](#); [Mary Gourley](#)
Subject: Item 6 Public Comment for 2_2_2021 City Council Meeting
Date: Saturday, January 30, 2021 6:14:10 PM

Dear Council Members,

In regards to Item #6, composition of the Planning Commission, I have a few thoughts after reading the staff report on the item.

I am currently an alternate on the Planning Commission.

From my time on the Commission, I would note that expanding the number of Commissioners would most likely increase meeting times in order to allow for all Commissioners to completely express their ideas.

The staff report indicates that people responding to Co-Mission's survey noted "1) a desire by some respondents both inside and outside of city limits to engage in city meetings, and 2) a desire by Council to increase engagement in city activities by renters/tenants."

I do not think the expansion of the Planning Commission will achieve either of these two goals.

I do think that posting public meeting agendas a week prior to the meetings would help the public read the agendas and respond to meetings prior to the meeting date.

Currently, agendas for the Planning Commission and the City Council are sent out on Thursdays with meetings held on Tuesdays. If it were possible to have agendas posted and available online on the Tuesday prior to the Tuesday meeting, it would give the public more time to review and respond.

More robust engagement with social media outlets like Twitter and with local papers would also support community engagement. For instance, does the City have Facebooks and Twitter accounts? If so, can you post when agendas are available?

The City could engage local papers to run a community calendar which lists City meeting times and contact information to help the general public track when meetings are held.

From my time on the Commission, I have noticed that Commissioners listen very carefully and give sincere consideration of all public comments we receive. In my experience, the Commission truly values public input and is open to new information and often integrates new information into its discussion and experience.

I do not see that it is necessary to add an additional seat from outside the City limits as the

Commission is directed to make decisions concerning the City of Sebastopol. We are not charged with projects outside of the City limits. As permitting and other issues directly impact the property owners, renters and business owners within the City limits, it seems we should maintain that as the focus of the Commission while also integrating public comments from all people who have a stake in a particular project.

Jurisdiction is commonplace in elected office and public appointment to ensure that the communities are represented by community members. That is why there are districts within San Francisco and each district has a Supervisor which covers a discrete and defined area. It is the same for state, federal and locally elected officials. While I might want to support a high density development in Napa and can voice my support through public comment, it is up to the people living there to enact laws which reflect their community will, their General Plan and their values. In the end, the people of Napa are the ones who have to live with the impact of the development.

The City often hires consultants for various projects. These experts give their professional opinions and advice but they never vote on an item. Public input is crucial and necessary for our democratic process and also to gain insight and information on a topic. Yet, decisions made by the Planning Commission explicitly impact the residents and businesses of Sebastopol and therefore the people making those decisions should bear the burden of them.

Diversity on the Commission should be a goal and if possible there should be representational parity across gender, sexual orientation, race, age, ability, homeowners, renters, parenthood and business owners. It is important that all political bodies from the Commission to the Council to the national Senate reflect the life experience of its citizens.

At this point, the Commission could have more women as there are 3 out of the 8, more racial diversity and more parents with young children. Diversity goals are often difficult to achieve in a volunteer committee as the selection process is solely based on those that apply.

If the Commission meetings are circulated more widely through social media and news outlets, a more diverse pool of applicants might appear.

I have enjoyed being an alternate and truly appreciate the education it has provided. I also value the opportunity to discuss such a wide-range of topics with my fellow Commissioners, all of whom are articulate, thoughtful and well-informed individuals. While I do not always get to vote, I do feel that my input is heard and do not feel that it is a waste of time or frustrating to be an alternate. That might change over the course of my term but at this point, it has been a wonderful experience.

I would vote not to change the makeup of the Commission but to post meeting agendas earlier, to use social and other media to publicize meetings, and to use social and other media to advertise when there are openings to get a wider range of applicants on the Commission.

Best,

Kate Haug