

Policy 7.3.26 Study Issues Process

POLICY PURPOSE:

One of Council's primary roles is to establish City policy. It does so by creating new policies and revising/deleting old policies by majority vote. Council's time is limited, however, as is the number of policies it is able to consider in any given year. The study issues process provides 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 and considered by Council for study each year.

It is the purpose of this policy to identify those aspects of the City's Study Issue process for which Council has established required standards. Those aspects of the City's Study Issue not addressed by this policy are considered administrative or operational in nature, and shall be established under the authority of the city manager.

POLICY STATEMENT:

1. Study Issue Sponsorship

A Council sponsored study issue must receive the support of at least two councilmembers in order for staff to prepare a study issue paper, and for the issue to be considered at the Council Study Issues Workshop.

2. Selection of Issues for Study

Any substantive policy change (large or relatively small) is subject to the study issues process (i.e. evaluated for ranking at the Council Study Issues Workshop).

Policy related issues include such items as proposed ordinances, new or expanded service delivery programs, changes to existing Council policy, and/or amendments to the General Plan. Exceptions to this approach include emergency issues, and urgent policy issues that must be completed in the short term to avoid serious negative consequences to the City, subject to a majority vote of Council.

3. Deadlines for Councilmember-Proposed Study Issues

- A.** New Council-proposed study issue topics are due to the city manager no later than three weeks in advance of the annual study issues workshop. If the public hearing is held less than three weeks before the workshop, councilmembers may also sponsor issues *introduced by the public* at the public hearing, but must do so during that Council meeting.
- B.** Any Council-generated study issues proposed later than three weeks in advance of the annual workshop, with the exception of those sponsored under A. above, shall be considered in the next year's study issues process.

4. Drop or Deferral of Issues

- A. At the Study Issues Workshop, Council shall drop, defer, or rank in priority order each proposed study issue. Any issue that is dropped by a majority vote of Council will not be eligible for consideration at the next year's Workshop unless sponsored by a majority of the Council. Any issue that is deferred shall automatically be returned for Council's consideration the following year.

5. Sub-Element Revisions

Unless adjusted by a majority of Council, Sub-Elements of the City's General Plan shall be revised according to the schedule of revisions depicted in the Council-approved Capital Improvement Project Plan included in the City's ten year budget. As each sub-element is reviewed and updated, pending policy issues are addressed, resulting in fewer policy-related study issues being generated and proposed for Council consideration each year. Sub-element revisions shall not be ranked by Council during the study issues ranking process.

6. Ranking Method

Council shall vote utilizing a combination of *Forced Ranking* (for departments with ten or fewer issues to rank) and *Choice Ranking* (for departments with eleven or more issues to rank) for ranking study issues at the annual workshop. Specifically,

- **Forced Ranking** (for ranking ten or fewer issues) – Councilmembers individually and simultaneously rank each issue that was not deferred or dropped. Ranking are from “1” to the total number of issues, with “1” representing the highest priority issue for study. Each number can be used only one (no ties) and each issue must receive a ranking.
- **Choice Ranking** (for ranking eleven or more issue) – The total number of items to be ranked (after deferring or dropping issues) is divided by three and each Councilmember is given the resulting number of votes (rounding up). For example, if there are twelve issues, each Councilmember will receive four votes. Councilmembers allocate their votes, one each, to their highest priority issues. Some issues will receive votes and others may not. A tally is made of votes received for each issue. Two-way ties between issues are resolved by quick hand votes of the Council. The final ranking is determined by the number of votes received.

This method shall also be utilized by boards/commissions when ranking study issues for Council consideration.

7. Number of Study Issues Conducted Each Year

Following Council's determination of study issue priorities, the city manager shall advise Council of staff's capacity for completing ranked issues. Council reserves the right to expand that capacity by increasing budgeted resources.

(Adopted: RTC #08-180 (June 24, 2008); Amended: RTC #08-344 (December 2, 2008); Amended: RTC #10-017 (January 26, 2010))

Lead Department: Office of the City Manager