

**Snohomish City Council Special Meeting Minutes
May 30, 2023**

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Redmon called the Snohomish City Council Special Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 30, 2023. The meeting was held in hybrid format with in-person attendance at the Snohomish Carnegie, 105 Cedar Avenue, Snohomish, and remote online access via Zoom.

Roll Call:

Present: Councilmembers Lea Anne Burke, David Flynn, Karen Guzak, Judith Kuleta, Felix Neals, Tom Merrill, and Donna Ray; Mayor Linda Redmon

2. **DISCUSSION ITEM:** Boards and Commissions Review

Mayor Redmon provided opening remarks, covering items submitted in the agenda packet. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss the City Council's advisory boards and commissions, evaluating their form and purpose.

City Attorney Nikki Thompson shared ways other cities approached their boards, roles of the executive and legislative branches, and how advisory boards could be utilized. Most cities' councils assign a task to an advisory board who then does the work and reports back to Council, who can then make a decision based on the information presented. For staff, the council identified big picture objectives as part of the Comprehensive Plan, Capital Improvement Projects, or other overarching directives, and provided direction to the City Administrator. The City Administrator then worked with department directors to break that task into smaller work plans that were then distributed to department staff. Each of the smaller plans ultimately supported the larger objective of the Council. Boards that did not have clear direction could end up working on topics or formulating their own plans that were not in line with what staff had been directed by Council, creating inconsistencies and inefficiencies, conflicts, or duplication of effort. Boards that dictated their own work plan and directed staff were usurping the authority of the Mayor. Some cities utilized council committees--where members of the council would meet to discuss specific topics--rather than advisory boards.

Advisory boards were advantageous in providing subject matter experts who could delve into the details on topics, and work with staff to vet ideas and provide concise reports for Council consideration.

Councilmembers and staff discussed several ideas related to boards and commissions:

- Who decided when to hire a consultant, and which one, rather than using an advisory board.
- Council did not have to accept board recommendations.
- Weighing differences of opinion; balancing executive and legislative decisions.
- Clarification from Council on their objectives and asks.
- How could staff present information to be most helpful for Council to make decisions.
- Clear objectives from Council, either directly or through staff, to clearly define role of the board and its members.
- Council liaisons with community groups (such as Snohomish for Equity or the Chamber of Commerce) provided a line of communication, not direction.
- Utilizing ad hoc committees that would disband when their assigned task was

- completed.
- Concerns with losing resources and subject matter experts if the Council did not retain advisory committees.
- Considering expanding scope of the Park Board to include environmental factors and climate change.
- Providing set schedules rather than meeting as-needed so members could adjust their schedules and understand the commitment when joining a board.
- Maintaining two-way communication; allowing boards to present ideas and topics to the Council and not just focus on what Council directed them to.
- Completing the Comprehensive Plan update to better determine focus of the Council, which could then influence directions for advisory boards.
- Staff could develop an annual workplan for each board, subject to Council approval, to help maintain focus and provide meeting consistency.
- OPMA and public records training for board members; necessity of advisory boards to follow OPMA and PRA laws.
- New administrations and councils could change direction and implementation of boards.
- Open communication between Council, staff, and boards.
- Encouraging collaboration amongst boards.
- Scheduling annual or biannual joint Council/board workshops.

At 7:42 p.m., Mayor Redmon called for a five-minute **RECESS**.

After much discussion, Council generally concurred that the Planning Commission, Design Review Board (DRB), Youth Council, and Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC) were working well. Most questions pertained to the Public Safety Commission (PSC) and Park and Recreation Board (Park Board). Several Council members were hesitant to sunset any board, but rather felt clarity of roles and purpose was needed.

Code revisions were discussed, and Council generally concurred to:

- Term limitations set at three consecutive terms, including truncated terms due to appointment to fill a vacancy.
- Retain staggered term expirations.
- Term length for Planning Commissioners reduced to four years, as allowed by RCW.
- Term length of one year for Youth Council and LTAC members; three years for all other boards.
- Uniform bylaws, approved by Council, to address certain details, rather than being incorporated in the municipal code.
- Changing the name of the Public Safety Commission to Public Safety Board.
- Council liaisons no longer attending advisory board meetings.
- Other eligibility requirements and/or considerations, such as geographic and demographic diversity.

Council and staff discussed development of workplans and bylaws for each board, essentially providing structured rules to follow. Differences of Council advisory boards, staff advisory boards, ad hoc committees and independent neighborhood groups were considered. Role of the boards in general was recapped, as well as role of the staff liaison. Meeting frequency, duration, and sharing of meeting minutes were outlined.

Staff would work with legal counsel on draft code revisions and would be expected to communicate changes with current board members. Council liaisons would continue to attend one or two more board/commission meetings to assist in the transition.

3. **ADJOURN.** There being no objection, the meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

APPROVED this 20th day of June, 2023.

CITY OF SNOHOMISH

ATTEST:

Linda Redmon, Mayor

Brandi Whitson, City Clerk