

Boards, Commissions, and Committees Subcommittee Update to the Task Force on Government Structure

January 16, 2019

The Purpose of this document is to update the full Task Force on Government Structure (“TFOGS”) on the work of the Subcommittee on the Common Council and the Subcommittee on Boards, Commissions, and Committees.

Each Subcommittee should answer the following questions with a brief narrative or series of bullet points that will update the TFOGS on the work of the subcommittee and generate discussion at the next full TFOGS meeting.

1. How many times has the Subcommittee met since the last TFOGS meeting?

Four (4): 10/24/18; 11/19/18; 12/3/18; 12/12/18

2. Briefly describe the process used by the Subcommittee to identify and examine issues relevant to the Subcommittee’s topic area.

The Subcommittee developed a work plan that required it to: 1) discuss the current structure of the City’s BCCs, 2) identify the strengths and potential of the current structure, 3) identify the challenges of and potential alternatives to the current structure; and 4) issues related to appointment to and service on BCCs.

3. List the key issues identified by the subcommittee as being most important Subcommittee’s examination of its topic area.

- High number of BCCs in current structure.
- Lack of diversity of members serving on BCCs (Less than 25% of members are people of color; 38% of members (267/699) come from Districts 4, 6, 11, 13, and 19 while 12.5% of members (88/699) come from Districts 1, 7, 8, 9, and 16).
- Whether time, place, rules, and procedures of meetings help or hinder resident participation.
- Whether BCCs represent a true forum for resident participation and whether other forms of resident participation may be better forums.
- Role of BCCs not always well defined.
- Lack of training for chairs and members.
- Quality of product produced by BCCs varies among BCCs.
- Service on and to BCCs require lots of alder and staff time.

- Staffing: Uniformity and expectations, accountability, responsibilities, resource allocation, reporting requirements, etc.
- Lack of authority? Wasn't it more of the issue of variance
- Disparities in authority? Lack of clarity re: authority
- Large number of vacancies.
- Accountability.
- BCC relevance and redundancy.

4. When discussing the key issues listed above, what themes or patterns of thought emerged among subcommittee members?

A number of themes and patterns of thought have emerged among subcommittee members. Following are the four themes that have seen the most robust discussion:

1. The subcommittee has generally agreed that the current number of BCCs is too high. As a result, the subcommittee has discussed how the existing structure can be cumbersome, time consuming for all involved (including alders, members, staff, and residents), redundant, and at times unproductive.
2. The subcommittee has generally agreed that although nearly 100 BCCs with over 700 possible membership opportunities would appear to create a robust forum for resident participation, the opposite appears to be true in Madison. The lack of diversity on BCCs both in terms of people of color and variety of districts suggests the existing structure serves as a forum of participation for some residents, but certainly not all. As a result, the existing structure appears to serve as little more a veneer of resident participation.
3. The subcommittee has generally agreed that issues related to organization, purpose, staffing, training, and whether a BCC has a well-defined purpose and authority / influence vary greatly among BCCs and that this can result in some BCCs that are productive others that are not. Furthermore, it is not clear that there are clearly defined parameters regarding authority, or that the decision-making authorities of one BCC relative to another are equal or clearly defined.
4. The subcommittee generally agreed that the existing manner in which BCC meetings are run (time, place, rules, and procedures) may serve as a barrier to service or participation for a significant portion of the city's residents.

5. As the discussion of these key issues evolved, did the Subcommittee identify potential improvements to the city's current government structure that might address the issues identified? If so, please describe any alternatives discussed by the Subcommittee.

The subcommittee has discussed a number of alternatives that may help address some of the challenges identified, including:

- Reorganize the BCC structure to increase accountability and require annual review of BCCs relevance and usefulness.
- Eliminate BCCs that have outlived their usefulness.
- Eliminate BCCs that perform work that would better be performed by staff.
- Eliminate or combine BCCs that work on the same or similar subject areas.
- Provide better clarity of purpose for BCCs either through ordinance amendments or otherwise.
- Provide better training for chairs, members, and staff on the role of each BCC and the rules and procedures for running an effective meeting and achieving a meaningful result.
- Change the time, place, rules, and procedures of BCC meetings to create a greater likelihood of achieving diversity in participation and representation.
- Explore alternative forums of resident participation that may or may not take the form of a traditional BCC.
- Office of community representation; responsible for staffing, training, minutes/reporting, liaison with citizens and general response.
- Greater use of ad-hoc committees, with clearly defined mission, authorities, oversight, staffing and reporting requirements
- Committees have more representation and greater clarity of authority

6. Are there any issues that the subcommittee has found particularly difficult? If so, what are they?

Whether the mayor, council, or a combination of both should appoint BCC members.

7. The full TFOGS would like a formal report from the Subcommittee in March. Does the Subcommittee have any questions in particular it would like the full TFOGS to address or discuss before March?

Many of the issues relative to BCCs intersect with work being performed by the Subcommittee on the Common Council. How would the Task Force like the Subcommittees to deal with those issues?