



Boards, Commissions, and Committees

2/1/2023 Update

Task Force for Government Structure

- The Common Council created the 11-member Task Force on the Structure of City Government (“TFOGS” or “Task Force”) in 2017
- Consider issues related the powers and duties of the City’s Common Council (“Council”), Mayor’s Office, and Boards, Commissions, and Committees (“BCCs”).
- Examine these issues through a specific lens:
 - whether the City’s current government structure ensures that municipal decision-makers are representative of and accountable to all of the City’s residents, not just to those who have the time, resources, and knowledge to actively participate in the City’s current government structure. Of preeminent concern to the Council at the time it created the TFOGS was whether the City’s current government structure adequately represents people of color and those living with lower incomes.

Task Force for Government Structure

- First meeting was Feb 22, 2018
- Issued final report on November 20, 2019 after The Task Force and its subcommittees met ninety (90) times over an almost two-year period
- Boards, Commissions, and Committees (“BCCs”) Subcommittee

TFOGS: Boards, Commissions, and Committees

- Nearly 100 BCCs.
- Approximately 700 total members made up of residents and Council members.
- Supported by City staff, who schedule meetings, create agendas, provide public notice, maintain minutes, and supply substantive information BCCs need to make decisions/recommendations.

TFOGS: Boards, Commissions, and Committees

- “Original intent of the current BCC structure was to support a part-time Council, serve as a robust forum for public discussion, and maximize public participation”
- Current BCC structure has become one that **lacks diversity, clarity of purpose, and accountability.**
- Tend to vary widely with regard to levels of authority and resources available to support BCC work.
- Has become so large and confusing that navigating it favors those with the time, resources, and knowledge to do so.
- **The Task Force believes that the BCC structure itself serves as another impediment to full resident participation and representation.**

TFOGS: Boards, Commissions, and Committees - Size

- Staff Survey: Most cities of similar size (~250,000) generally have between **25 and 50 BCCs**. Other state capital cities with flagship universities have between **12 and 33 BCCs**, except Salt Lake City, which has 77. **Other Big Ten Cities have between 11 and 50 BCCs.**
- No Formal Organization Chart; Some not even in Legistar
- Committee struggled to figure out how many there exactly was

TFOGS: Boards, Commissions, and Committees

- Lack clarity of purpose and are subject to policies and rules of procedure that further increases the complexity of the BCC system.
- BCC topic areas **often overlap**, either making them **redundant or unnecessary**.
- BCCs do not always keep within their jurisdiction, in part, because they **do not fully understand where their jurisdiction ends and another BCC's jurisdiction begins**.
- The practices and procedures governing these BCC meetings make an already daunting structure even more difficult for residents to access. (e.g., time and location of meetings, intricacy of Robert's Rules of Procedure, time limits for speaking, etc.)
- The BCCs vary widely with regard to the impact of their recommendations on City decision making. Some BCC recommendations tend to be adopted more often by the Council than others, resulting in a kind of de-facto authority that is not necessarily rooted in the ordinance or resolution that created the BCC.
- BCCs tend to vary widely in terms of staff and resource commitment. In other words, some BCCs command a significant amount of power, of time, and of resources, while others struggle to be heard or be adequately staffed.

TFOGS: Boards, Commissions, and Committees – Summary

- Current BCC structure better represents some districts than others, unfairly favors people with the time, resources, and knowledge to influence government decisions, and facilitates a system where some BCCs act with considerably more power and resources than others.

TFOGS: Boards, Commissions, and Committees – Recommendations

- Create an organizational chart of all BCCs
- An Office of Resident Engagement and Neighborhood Services and an Administrative Support Team to support the BCC structure
- Organize the BCCs around lead committees.
- **The Task Force necessarily believes this will require the Council to eliminate or combine current BCCs that are redundant or no longer necessary and to implement new procedures, policies, and resources to make it easier for residents to provide input to them.**