

MEMORANDUM

Date: 23 December 2024
To: Boards, Committees, and Commissions
From: President Figueroa Cole and Mayor Rhodes-Conway
Subject: BCC Streamlining Project

Summary:

The Madison Common Council has been leading a process to streamline the City's Board, Committee, and Commission (BCC) system for several years through a series of steps detailed in the Background section below. While Madison values all of its BCCs and the contributions of members over the years, we have also long recognized that Madison has many more BCCs than its peer cities and City staff are increasingly stretched thin in the work they do. Due to budgetary constraints, staffing has not been able to scale at pace with population growth. We believe it is evident that staff have not been able to support the work of the committee system as robustly as needed to maintain consistently strong committees. Further, we must balance the amount of time both staff and alders dedicate to work occurring within committees versus elsewhere such on active project work and/or other forms of engagement with the community. This leads us to look for ways to conduct the work more efficiently. And finally, we value the time our volunteer committee members put into the BCCs they serve. We aim to improve staff support to our BCC system, which relies on staffing fewer BCCs overall.

As part of the streamlining process, a number of BCCs have been proposed for changes. This memo is being sent to members of BCCs proposed for changes, which are detailed in the table below starting on page 3. Please review the table to identify the changes proposed for the committee you serve on.

Staff from the Common Council and Mayor's Office will attend your BCC's January meeting to seek your input regarding the changes proposed. **Specific questions to be discussed are listed near the end of this memo, and we ask that members come prepared to discuss them.**

After staff gather and deliver the input received to the Common Council Executive Committee (CCEC), the CCEC will make a final recommendation and anticipates introducing an ordinance related to the proposed changes in February 2025.

We understand that learning of this proposal related to your committee may be difficult. To be clear, these changes are not meant to suggest the topics and the work conducted are not valuable. They all are valuable. The City does not intend to stop focusing on these topics. However, we must reconsider the way in which we conduct that work. Again, this is a key finding of numerous committee and task force processes over years. Thank you for your understanding and thank you in advance for the input you offer during the January discussions.

Purpose and Goals

The Boards, Committees, and Commissions (BCC) Streamlining Project is a result of many years and iterations of creating an efficient, effective, and equitable BCC system. Project goals include:

- **Efficient Operations** – focus in on where we allocate staff support, alder time, and legislative referrals.
- **Enable More Engagement** – free up alder time for engagement in their districts; avoid substituting committee input for robust, equitable engagement.
- **Clarity for Residents** – when following legislation, it can be confusing to know how many committees to follow. Fewer committees can help mitigate this.
- **Strong, Accountable Committees** – Staff are better able to support committees (e.g. work plans, member onboarding, etc.) if there are fewer.

There is a general recognition amongst the project team, City leaders, and staff that these goals are difficult to accomplish without reducing the number of BCCs.

Background

Task Force on Government Structure (2017-2019)

In 2017, the Madison Common Council created the Task Force on Government Structure (TFOGS) in an effort to increase efficiency and effectiveness of our local government. TFOGS and its subcommittees met for nearly two years to evaluate, discuss, and make recommendations on a variety of elements of the local government structure, including the City BCCs, among other topics.

TFOGS found that the current BCC system: lacks diversity; can cause a drain on resident, staff, and alder time; lacks accountability; varies in authority and influence; has BCCs that lack a well-defined purpose, outlived their purpose, or have overlapping purposes; requires processes that do not facilitate resident participation; and is often inadequately staffed or has inadequate resources. They offered 11 recommendations on ways to improve the BCC organizational structure, training and support, and resident engagement experience, including recommendations to restructure the BCCs and to “eliminate or combine BCCs that are redundant or have outlived their purpose.”

Ad Hoc Task Force on the Structure of City Government Final Report Implementation Work Group (2020-2023)

After receiving the report, the Common Council formed a working group to study and plan for the implementation of the recommendations. That working group met between 2020 and 2023 and developed the End of Term Report of the Ad Hoc Task Force on the Structure of City

Government Final Report Implementation Work Group. The recommendations of interest for this BCC Streamlining Project were:

1. Create an organizational chart of all BCCs and organize BCCs around lead committees.
2. Eliminate or combine BCCs that are redundant or have outlived their purpose.
3. Reorganize BCCs to increase accountability.
4. Review BCC enabling ordinances and resolutions to ensure clarity of purpose and authority.

Common Council Executive Committee (CCEC) (2023-present)

In March of 2023, the Common Council dissolved the Ad Hoc Task Force and shifted the responsibility to CCEC. From here, CCEC took up the work of streamlining BCCs. The CCEC supported an approach to the work that focused on making changes to the existing BCC system, rather than restructuring it. To that end, they directed staff to review performance data of existing BCCs such as number of times quorum was not reached, number of legislative referrals, and other metrics; review scopes and mission statements to identify redundancies; seek input from alders regarding BCCs they have served on; and seek information from agency staff about needs, capacity, and opportunities for sensible changes. From this analysis, staff identified several changes for CCEC to consider.

Proposal

At their December 10 meeting, CCEC affirmed the changes were of interest to pursue. A committee that you serve on has been identified, as follows:

Proposed Changes to BCCs	Explanation / Rationale
Combine 3 community services committees into new Community Resources Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Services • Committee on Aging • Early Childhood & Educ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar missions and activities serving different segments of population. Reduce siloing and unnecessary segmentation. • Some committees struggle with agenda items year-round. • Streamline staffing: all three of these committees are staffed by CDD and combining into one body will allow for more efficient and less segmented staffing.
Eliminate the Community Development Division Conference Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once was charged with overseeing a funding pool that no longer exists. • Was also intended as a place to reconcile decisions between different committees, but hasn't proven to be needed.
Combine Vending Oversight Committee and Economic Development Committee into a single committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlines staffing between two committees • Enhances the holistic, broader view of all small business perspectives in decision-making

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timeline for implementation may need to reflect current project activities.
Eliminate Downtown Coordinating Committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose relates to downtown urban design and placemaking, which is also addressed in other City venues (e.g. Arts, Vending Oversight, Plan Commission, Urban Design, Landmarks) and non-City venues (e.g. Downtown Madison Inc and the Business Improvement District). • Sometimes struggle to identify agenda items.
Eliminate Public Safety Review Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Topics of interest overlap with other venues, including the Police Civilian Oversight Board, the full Council meetings, and some overlap with Board of Health (violence prevention) • The Council takes up public safety policy at full meetings and through special task force / ad hoc committees on specific topics • Struggles with quorum • Sometimes struggles to identify agenda items
Transfer Urban Forestry oversight from the Board of Parks Commissioners (Habitat Stewardship Subcommittee) to the Board of Public Works.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Forestry moved from Parks Division to Streets Division in 2020. Staff suggested committee move. • Urban Foresters do more work in the right of way with street trees, which requires significant coordination with Engineering, Traffic Engineering, Stormwater, Sewer, and Water Utility that are more closely associated with the Board of Public Works than with Parks. • Habitat Stewardship Subcommittee only meets quarterly which can cause delays in work. • Staff can still attend Board of Park Commission or Habitat Stewardship Subcommittee meetings when tree work is in City parks.

Questions for Your Committee

In January, staff are requesting a discussion of this topic be included on the agendas of relevant BCCs. As we proceed in our efforts to streamline BCCs, we will ask these BCCs what we should make sure to maintain in any future version of the work. Specifically, we ask you to think about and come prepared to give input on the following questions:

1. What are your committee’s major responsibilities, and how much time is dedicated to each over the course of a year? Are there seasonal or other time-related components to be aware of?

2. What is the ratio of work between discussion items, informal guidance, advisory recommendations on legislative approvals, quasi-judicial decision-making, and other functions this committee performs?
3. If this work were to occur in a different forum as part of a different committee's responsibilities, what elements of the work are most important to lift up or carry over to the new structure? This may include specific topics, duties, a membership structure, etc.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to engage with City staff on this topic.