



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Debra Figone

SUBJECT: STUDY SESSION PROCESS

DATE: October 4, 2012

OUTCOME

- (1) Develop an understanding of the purpose of City Council Study Sessions and the current process for setting them.
- (2) Explore additional options to set City Council Study Sessions

BACKGROUND

On August 15, 2012, the Rules and Open Government Committee discussed a memo from Councilmember Rocha requesting that Council discuss and give direction on which policy issues the Council would like to discuss in future council study sessions (http://www.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/CommitteeAgenda/Rules/20120815/rules20120815_g2.pdf). The Rules Committee requested staff to provide information on the current process and possible modifications for prioritizing future study session topics. The Committee also requested that this item be presented at the same time as the Ordinance Prioritization discussion.

ANALYSIS

Council study sessions can provide an effective and efficient venue for Council and staff to have an in-depth discussion of a specific subject and to ensure that there is a common level of understanding among the Council and the community at large. Study sessions can provide an opportunity for staff to inform the Council of the issues that should be considered in future Council actions and allow Council the opportunity to review and discuss issues without needing to provide specific direction. No actions are taken at study sessions by Council unless the meeting is declared a Special Meeting. Study sessions can also provide an opportunity for external experts or stakeholders to participate and provide specific expertise or perspective.

Study sessions are currently used to complement other discussion forums such as Council Committee meetings, Special Meetings, and Council meetings, in which Council can discuss issues about specific ordinances, policies and programs. Discussions may move from study sessions to Council Committees or vice versa before being placed on a future City Council agenda for action.

Study Session Setting Process

Council Resolution 76184 establishes the rules for the conduct of Council meetings and "Rule 8 – Study Session" specifically describes the process by which study sessions are set

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(<http://www.sanjoseca.gov/clerk/CouncilDocs/RulesOrder.pdf>). Per Rule 8, any member of the Council or the City Manager may request that the Rules and Open Government Committee set study sessions. Administratively, dates for study sessions are set in advance by Council twice a year for two six month periods: August through December and January through July.

Study session topics have been, for the most part, over the years, proposed by staff. However, Council does periodically advance topics as was the case with the recent study session "Update on Police Response to Crimes and Gang Activity" held on September 18. Attachment A shows study sessions since January of this year as well as potential study session topics through December 2012. Attachment A also includes placeholders for sessions through June 2013. Study session topics are typically determined based on certain criteria such as complexity and urgency of the issues, and whether external stakeholders are involved. Study session topics generally fall in the realm of more than one Council Committee and thus lend themselves to a substantive discussion before the full Council. It should be noted that Council Budget hearings are also study sessions and take a significant Council and staff focus for the months of May and June each year.

The Mayor and Council have several opportunities throughout the year to set study session topics.

1. Council members, Council Committees, staff, external stakeholders, and the general public, can request a study session through the weekly Rules and Open Government Council Committee (Rules Committee).
2. Council Committees may request study sessions through the Rules Committee as part of the semi-annual Committee work plans.
3. Council members may set study sessions as part of the annual budget adoption process.

Once a study session is reserved for a topic, staff will develop the agenda and presentation and schedule outside presenters, if necessary. Study sessions can require a significant amount of planning and staff resources to adequately frame the issue for a thoughtful Council discussion. Thus, the number of study sessions have been limited to a small number every year to focus efforts on topics of strategic importance.

Additional Options for Setting Study Session Topics

In addition to the current process, Council may want to consider additional options for setting study session topics such as agendaizing study session topics as part of a regularly scheduled Council meeting or setting a Special session separately or in combination with the policy and ordinance prioritization.



DEBRA FIGONE
City Manager

For questions please contact Ed Shikada, Assistant City Manager, at 408-535-8190.

Attachment

Attachment A – Study Sessions for January 2012 - June 2013

Date	Topic
Saturday, January 21	Neighborhood Association/Youth Commission Priority Setting Session
Monday, February 13	Council/Senior Staff Budget Planning Retreat
Thursday, March 29	Future Retirement Costs
Wednesday May 9- Friday, May 11	2012-2013 Proposed Budget Study Sessions: Operating Budget Fees and Charges Capital Budget and Capital Improvement Program
Tuesday, September 18	Update on Police Response to Crimes and Gang Activity
Friday, October 5	Joint City Council/Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors Meeting
Tuesday, October 9	Priority Setting Session
Monday, October 29	Homeless Encampments (tentative)
Tuesday, November 13	Housing Investment Plan (tentative)
Monday, December 10	Joint Meeting w/SCVWD (tentative)
January 2013	Neighborhood Association/Youth Commission Priority Setting Session (tentative)
January 2013	TBD
February 2013	Council/Senior Staff Retreat (tentative)
February 2013	TBD
March 2013	TBD
March 2013	TBD
April 2013	TBD
April 2013	TBD
May 2013	2013-2014 Proposed Budget Study Sessions: Operating Budget Fees and Charges Capital Budget and Capital Improvement Program