



TO: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
FROM: Carol Wolfe, Supervisor, Community and Economic Development
Ricardo Noguera, Director, Community and Economic Development
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution Request: Adoption of Neighborhood Council Program Standards and Guidelines Document
DATE: December 17, 2013

SUMMARY:

Staff conducted a review of the existing TMC Chapter 1.45 and Neighborhood Council Guidelines handbook and is proposing an updated and revised Ordinance on December 10, and an updated “Standards and Guidelines” document for adoption by Resolution on December 17.

BACKGROUND:

On February 4, 2013 staff presented to the Neighborhoods and Housing Committee the approach for a comprehensive review of the Neighborhood Council TMC Chapter 1.45 and the Neighborhood Council Program. Representatives from the Community Council of Tacoma were in attendance at the Committee when the approach was discussed and approved. The review consisted of community outreach to existing Neighborhood Councils and the Community Council of Tacoma, stakeholder surveys and focus groups as well as Peer City review for Neighborhood Engagement best practices.

Progress updates and summaries of recommendations were presented to the Neighborhoods and Housing Committee on July 1, August 19, and November 4. The Community Council of Tacoma presented recommendations for revisions to TMC 1.45 on August 5. A working group consisting of Chairs from each Neighborhood Council and the Community Council of Tacoma, in addition to 5 additional members representing neighborhood groups citywide, provided feedback to staff on the final drafts of both the TMC 1.45 and the Standards and Guidelines document at three separate meetings during the month of October 2013.

At the November 18, Neighborhoods and Housing Committee, members recommended consideration by the City Council for the adoption of the presented revisions to TMC Chapter 1.45 and the Resolution to adopt the Standards and Guidelines document.

ISSUE:

With the elimination of a dedicated Neighborhood Council Coordinator in 2012, the re-organization of key City departments that provide services to neighborhoods in 2013, and the review by the CCOT of TMC 1.45, it was determined that a more extensive review of the Neighborhood Council Program was desired beyond what had previously been involved in previous reviews.

As a result of the review it was determined that many neighborhoods were not represented within the existing Neighborhood Councils and that there were barriers in the existing program to neighborhood communication and outreach, meeting attendance and/or transparency in the decisions and governance requirements of Neighborhood Council Boards.



Additional issues were identified by the working group regarding existing language in both the original Ordinance and previous Guidelines document that gave the appearance of conflict between state law governing non-profit incorporation and its definition of “members” from the City’s stated intention that all “residents, property owners and business owners” within the Neighborhood Council be considered as “members.”

As a result of the review, the following recommendations were made:

- Reduce Governance and Program Language in TMC 1.45
- Revise Current “Guidelines” Document into “Standards and Guidelines” Document for Program and Contracting Direction
- Enhance Program Resources for Outreach, Online Presence and Leadership Capacity Building

The revisions to TMC Chapter 1.45 and the Standards and Guidelines document achieve the objectives stated above.

ALTERNATIVES:

Council may choose not to adopt the revised Standards and Guidelines document resulting in the program continuing in its existing structure.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff reviewed the existing TMC Chapter 1.45 and corresponding Guidelines documents for necessary revisions as the Neighborhood Council Program is an important civic tool which supports the most basic bloc of citizen participation, the neighborhood, in the opportunity to advise City Council on matters impacting the quality of life within Tacoma neighborhoods.

Due to the importance of this topic, the review was comprehensive and included Peer City research, inclusion of best practice methods found in the Racial and Social Equity Tool Kit, and extensive stakeholder engagement took place before arriving at the final documents presented to City Council for full consideration.

Staff recommends adopting the revised Standards and Guidelines document on December 17th which provides program and contract direction to staff in support of Neighborhood Councils as a tool for neighborhood involvement in creating and maintaining Safe, Clean and Attractive Neighborhoods throughout the City.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No Fiscal Impact