

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE:	Council Subcommittee Recommendations for Study Sessions and Public Input/Involvement Opportunities
DEPARTMENT:	City Manager's Office (CMO)
PRESENTED BY:	Julie Modrzejewski, Assistant City Manager

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

During the Council's January 12, 2008 half-day retreat, there was consensus to form a Council subcommittee to address the efficiency of study sessions and to explore opportunities for the public to provide input to the City. Three Councilmembers volunteered to serve on the committee: Mayor Cindy Ryu and Councilmembers Chris Eggen and Doris McConnell. The subcommittee met three times with various staff including City Manager Bob Olander, Assistant City Manager Julie Modrzejewski, City Clerk Scott Passey, Communications Specialist Susan Will and CMO Management Analyst John Norris.

The subcommittee defined the problem statement as follows:

- Increase productive discussions among Councilmembers during study sessions and
- Enhance public input/involvement opportunities, including increasing information outreach to citizens and gathering input from citizens.

BACKGROUND:

During the Council's half-day retreat it was expressed that there was a need to have more time for collegial discussion and thoughtful deliberation during study sessions. It was felt that more time was needed to learn and understand each other's perspectives and points of view. In addition, the Council wanted the discussion to focus on the study session agenda items specifically, keeping the public and Council's focus on items on the agenda.

The subcommittee discussed various strategies to increase productive discussions among Councilmembers during study sessions and this report outlines the proposed changes. The subcommittee would like the proposed changes to be implemented on a trial/temporary basis and would like the full Council to consider this a "pilot" to last for four (4) study sessions or two (2) months. In order to do this, the subcommittee suggests a "suspension of the Council Rules and Procedure." After this trial period, the Council would discuss whether or not the pilot was successful, and if affirmative, the Council Rules and Procedure would be amended.

Study Session Proposed Changes

A.	Remove "General Public Comment" from the beginning of the meeting.	Unanimous
B.	If any member of the public is present for "General Public Comment," and not for a specific agenda item, the Mayor, under her discretion, may offer the beginning or end of the meeting for this; however, this would not be a standard item on the agenda.	Unanimous
C.	It is recommended that the Council move into the Highlander Room and to change the room format to create a setting for greater discourse among Councilmembers. The subcommittee preferred Diagram 2 (see attachment A for room format diagrams). This recommendation would cost approximately \$200 more per meeting to address the meeting's A/V needs.	Unanimous
D.	To accomplish the proposed changes, the Council would need a motion "to suspend the Rules of Procedure" to a date certain.	Unanimous
E.	After each agenda item, change the public comment length from three (3) minutes to two (2) minutes per speaker. <i>Since this proposed change was not unanimous, the subcommittee wanted to provide it for the full Council's discussion and consideration.</i>	Not unanimous (2:1)

In addition to discussing proposed changes to the study sessions, the subcommittee discussed ways to improve the City's outreach to citizens, including communicating information or seeking public input. Topics discussed were website related items such as adding links, hosting a community calendar, implementing a "blog," and conducting online polls/surveys. Likewise, the subcommittee discussed enhancing printed materials made available at City meetings or functions. The subcommittee expressed a desire to help non-profit/non-city agencies promote their organizations and events and discussed ways the City could facilitate this.

Public Input/Involvement Opportunities

A.	Increase direct access to the City Council and Department Directors: • Direct phone numbers were added to <i>Currents</i> • The subcommittee suggested creating a "city business card" to organize how the public may contact the City; this would be made available at City Council meetings and City events.
B.	Increase opportunities for non-profits/non-city agencies to promote their organizations and events: • The staff provided initial research and found a community calendar for Cowlitz County, WA, called, "Cowlitztoday.com," which was formed by a community partnership: ○ A community volunteer serves as the webmaster and manages the entire online calendar. In lieu of direct payment to use the site, he sells Internet advertisements and banners. ○ Groups "register" with the site and can upload their events on the calendar. ○ Events must meet certain criteria to be on the calendar.

	In an effort to help agencies market and promote their events and programs, staff will be adding a "how to publicize your event" guide on the City's website.
C.	Increase the opportunity for the City to learn the community's perspective and to share the City's perspective: - The subcommittee discussed the implementation of a blog and asked staff to research other communities that have implemented them. The subcommittee learned that some communities that started blogs inevitably discontinued them due to the public's lack of interest. Likewise, it was determined that it would increase staff's workload to maintain the timeliness of the content on the blog and to ensure that profanity and offensive language was not being added by blog participants. While this was considered an innovative approach to have an "interactive discussion" on various policy/project topics (e.g., land use, environment, City Hall, etc.) that may interest the community and especially younger generations, the subcommittee decided to hold on this suggestion. - The subcommittee discussed the implementation of online surveys and polls. It was noted that the City is already conducting online surveys. For instance, the City currently has an online survey regarding cable television and internet service in Shoreline.. And while this method would not be considered a statistically significant sampling of the community, it does provide a way for the City to learn and understand individual point of views on various subjects. The subcommittee also discussed online polling. Staff expressed how this technology and "instant voting" could reach younger generations (e.g., "American Idol" phenomenon). Time is often an issue for members of the public when engaging City leadership, so this method could be a speedy way to gather the public's reaction to a particular issue. This technology is readily available and could be implemented with relative ease. - With both the blog and online surveys/polls, it should be noted that since the City's website is on the World Wide Web, anyone in the world with Internet access could participate; there is no way to determine where the responses are truly coming from. Likewise, non-random surveys/polls are unscientific and should not be used to generalize statistically to larger populations.

RECOMMENDATION

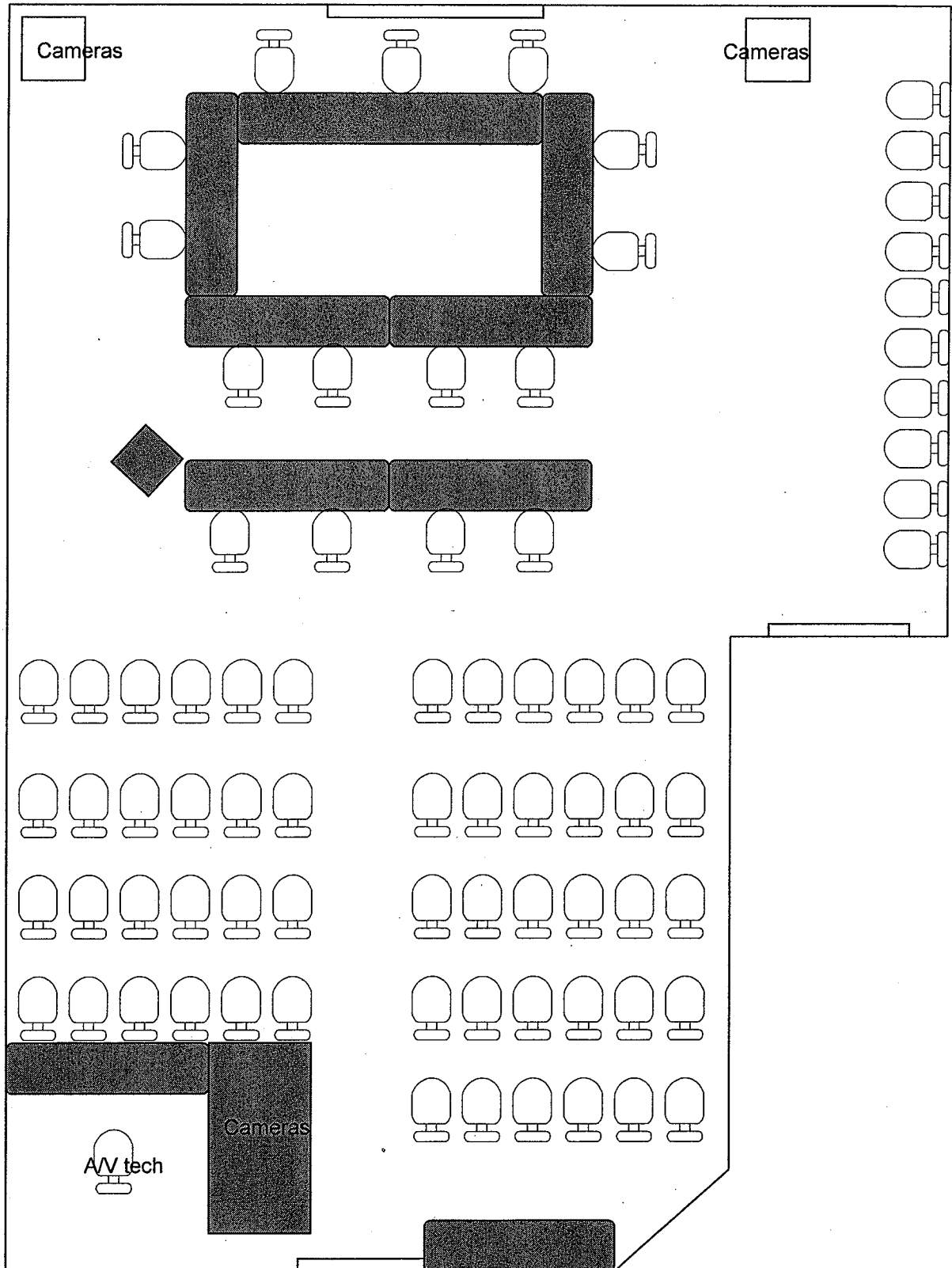
The subcommittee recommends that Council consider the proposed changes for study sessions. If there is Council consensus for the proposed changes, staff would be prepared to implement the changes by the Council's April 7 study session. Likewise, it would be helpful to hear Council's discussion regarding alternate methods for increasing public input/ involvement opportunities.

Approved By: City Manager  City Attorney _____

ATTACHMENT A

Highlander room format diagrams

Shoreline City Council Study Session
Highlander Room, Shoreline Conference Center



Shoreline City Council Study Session
Highlander Room, Shoreline Conference Center

