

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE: New Room Format for Study Sessions DEPARTMENT: City Manager's Office (CMO) PRESENTED BY: Julie Underwood, Assistant City Manager

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

The City Council reviewed this agenda item on March 17 and May 5, 2008 and determined that a "pilot" of the new study session room format would worth trying and considering. The format was adjusted for eight study sessions (June 2, 16; July 7, 21; August 18; September 2, 15; and October 6).

BACKGROUND:

During the Council's January 12, 2008 half-day retreat, it was expressed that there was a need to have more time for collegial discussion and thoughtful deliberation during study sessions among the Council. 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.

In their discussion of this topic, there was consensus to form a Council subcommittee to address the efficiency and productivity of study sessions. Three Councilmembers volunteered to serve on the committee: Mayor Cindy Ryu and Councilmembers Chris Eggen and Doris McConnell and they recommended that the Council consider this new room format on a trial basis.

The City has heard from regular meeting attendees who dislike with the new room format. Concerns raised center around the room's limitations. Overhead presentations are difficult for the audience to view from their seats; therefore, staff has started to provide hardcopies of the presentations. In the addition, the lighting and audio visual have been an issue, which staff continues to correct and adjust for. Undeniably, set-up and take-down for the meeting takes additional time and costs an estimated \$150-175 more per study session (for eight study sessions the added cost has been approximately \$1,200-\$1,400).

While the room format has its challenges, staff recommends that the Council continue holding their study sessions in the Highlander Room. The setting is more intimate, allowing for the discussions to be more meaningful. Changing room formats for different types of Council meetings is a practice that many other cities engage in. It signals to the public that this meeting is intended for the Council, the governing body,

the policy-makers to "study" policy issues, deliberate among each other, and ultimately make well-informed, carefully considered policy decisions. It is just as important for the Council to listen to each other as it is for them to listen to the public.

Staff believes that the new room format has addressed the problem that it was intended to address--increase productive discussions among Councilmembers during study sessions. Within a year, the Council will be in their new Council Chambers and much of these issues will be resolved. Staff believes that it would be helpful to continue to meet in the Highlander Room until City Hall is completed; this would be for approximately 18-20 study sessions.

RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommends that Council move forward with using the Highlander Room for study sessions.

Approved By:

City Manager 

City Attorney ____