



# City of Richmond

## Report to Committee

**To:** General Purposes Committee **Date:** February 25, 2019  
**From:** David Weber **File:** 01-0105-00/Vol 01  
 Director, City Clerk's Office  
**Re:** **Council and Committee Agenda Distribution Options**

### Staff Recommendation

1. That the staff report titled "Council and Committee Agenda Distribution Options" dated February 25, 2019, from the Director, City Clerk's Office be received for information; and,
2. That staff be directed appropriately, should Council wish to select an alternative option for agenda distribution and the frequency of Planning Committee meetings.

David Weber  
 Director, City Clerk's Office  
 (604-276-4098)

<b>REPORT CONCURRENCE</b>	
<b>CONCURRENCE OF GENERAL MANAGER</b>  	
<b>REVIEWED BY SMT</b>	<b>INITIALS:</b> 
<b>APPROVED BY CAO</b> 	

**Staff Report**

**Origin**

At the February 4, 2019 General Purposes Committee, the following referral to staff was made:

*That staff be requested to review the current agenda production process and report back with options for earlier distribution of agenda packages.*

The purpose of this report is to respond to the referral and provide Council with options for revising the current agenda distribution cycle.

**Analysis**

Background

The City of Richmond has six Standing Committee meetings integrated into the schedule of Regular Council meetings. This allows for discussion to take place and for recommendations to be developed at the Committee level, which are then brought forward to Council for consideration and ratification.

For any given meeting week, agenda packages are provided to Council by courier on the Friday late afternoon or evening immediately prior to the start of the Monday meeting cycle. The current distribution schedule provides Council members the weekend to review the agenda materials. Following the delivery of agenda packages to Council, open agenda materials are then published to the City of Richmond’s website.

There has been concern expressed by some Council members that the current agenda distribution schedule does not provide sufficient time to review agenda materials in advance of the scheduled meetings.

**Committee Agenda Distribution – Proposed Options**

The proposed options for Committee agenda distribution are as follows:

<b>Option</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Ease of Administering</b>
Option 1	Status Quo – Friday Distribution (3 days before)	<b>Straightforward</b>
Option 2	Thursday Distribution (4 days before)	<b>Straightforward</b>
Option 3	Wednesday Distribution (5 days before)	<b>Challenging</b>
Option 4	Friday Distribution (10 days before)	<b>Relatively Straightforward</b>

**Earlier Committee Package Distribution – Benefits and Challenges**

With an earlier distribution of Committee packages, the benefits and challenges are similar for Options 2 to 4, however, the noted “challenges” increase in magnitude as the distributions becomes earlier. The benefits and challenges are highlighted in the Table below:

Benefits for Options 2 to 4	Challenges for Options 2 to 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No change to actual meeting cycle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased likelihood of agenda changes</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Depending on Committee, material would be distributed in advance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased likelihood of late agenda additions resulting in subsequent distribution</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Additional time for staff to respond to Council members’ agenda queries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ External process deadlines would need to be adjusted (i.e., delegation requests)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased time for Council to review material prior to being posted to website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential increased delivery costs as Council, Public Hearing and/or Special Council packages would continue to be distributed on Fridays</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Finalizing reports for agendas would need to take place on actual Council/Committee meeting days</li> </ul>

**Option 1 – Status Quo (Straightforward to administer)**

The current distribution of Committee agendas takes place on the Friday late afternoon or evening immediately before the Monday meeting cycle commences. For Committee meetings held on a Monday, such as General Purposes and/or Finance, Council members have the weekend to review the Committee agenda material. For Committee meetings held on a Tuesday and Wednesday, the packages are distributed on the preceding Friday.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>MARCH</b>						
					★ 1	2
3	GP FC 4	PC 5	6	7	★ 8	9
10	CO 11	CS 12	DP 13	14	★ 15	16
17	GP PH 18	PC 19	PWT 20	21	★ 22	23
24	CO 25	PRC 26	DP 27	28	★ 29	30
31						

★ Committee agendas 3 days prior (i.e. March 4<sup>th</sup> GP, Finance and March 5<sup>th</sup> Planning packages distributed on Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup>)

★ Council and Public Hearing agendas distribution on Friday (i.e. March 11<sup>th</sup> Council package distributed on Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>)

**Option 2 – Thursday Distribution (4 days before) (Straightforward to administer)**

This option proposes no change to the Committee, Council and Public Hearing meeting schedule. The current distribution of Committee agendas would move one day earlier from Friday to Thursday under this option. For Committee meetings on a Monday, Council would receive the meeting material 4 days in advance; for Tuesday Committee meetings, the meeting material would be available 5 days in advance; and for Wednesday Committee meetings, the meeting material would be available 6 days in advance. Council agenda packages would continue to be distributed the Friday prior to the meeting as most of the material would have already been distributed and reviewed as part of the previous Committee packages.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>MARCH</b>						
				★	1	2
3	4 <small>GP FC PC</small>	5	6	7 <del>★</del>	★ 8	9
10	11 <small>CO</small>	12 <small>CS</small>	13 <small>DP</small>	14 <del>★</del>	15	16
17	18 <small>GP PH</small>	19 <small>PC</small>	20 <small>PWT</small>	21 <del>★</del>	★ 22	23
24	25 <small>CO</small>	26 <small>PRC</small>	27 <small>DP</small>	28 <del>★</del>	29	30
31						

- ★ **Committee agendas 4 days prior** (i.e. March 4<sup>th</sup> GP, Finance and March 5<sup>th</sup> Planning packages distributed on Thursday, February 28<sup>th</sup>)
- ★ **Council and Public Hearing agendas distribution on Friday** (i.e. March 11<sup>th</sup> Council package distributed on Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>)

Distribution of Committee agenda materials on Thursdays (4 days before) is straightforward to implement, as the internal processes would not require too much adjustment. With a Thursday distribution, there is an increased likelihood of late agenda additions on the Friday, however, the potential for agenda additions/changes is higher with a Wednesday (5 days before) and a Friday (10 days before) distribution.

**Option 3 – Wednesday Distribution (5 days before) (Challenging to administer)**

This option proposes no change to the Committee, Council and Public Hearing meeting schedule. The current distribution of Committee agendas would move from Friday to Wednesday under this option. For Committee meetings on a Monday, Council would receive the meeting material 5 days in advance; for Tuesday Committee meetings, the meeting material would be available 6 days in advance; and for Wednesday Committee meetings, the meeting material would be available one week in advance. Council meeting agenda packages would continue to be distributed the Friday prior to the meeting as most of the material would have already been distributed and reviewed as part of the previous Committee packages.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>MARCH</b>						
			★		1	2
3	GP 4	FC 5	★	7	★	9
10	CO 11	CS 12	★	14	★	16
17	GP 18	PH 19	★	21	22	23
24	CO 25	PRC 26	★	28	29	30
31						

- ★ **Committee agendas 5 days prior** (i.e. March 4<sup>th</sup> GP, Finance and March 5<sup>th</sup> Planning packages distributed on Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</sup>)
- ★ **Council and Public Hearing agendas distribution on Friday** (i.e. March 11<sup>th</sup> Council package distributed on Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>; March 18<sup>th</sup> Public Hearing distributed on Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup>)

Distribution of Committee agenda materials on a Wednesday (5 days before) would be challenging to administer. With the Committee materials being distributed on a Wednesday, the likelihood of late agenda additions is very high, which would result in a subsequent distribution, and the creation of supplemental Friday agenda packages. This would neither be cost effective with regard to additional courier costs nor be an effective use of staff time and resources. The process of finalizing the Committee reports and preparing the agenda packages would be taking place on Council and Committee days, which would pose challenges. At the present time reports and associated packages are being finalized and prepared on non-Council/Committee days.

**Option 4 – Friday Distribution (10 days before ) (Relatively straightforward to administer)**

This option proposes no change to the Committee, Council and Public Hearing meeting schedule. Under this option, Council members would receive Committee packages 10 days before a Monday Committee meeting; for Tuesday Committee meetings, the meeting material would be available 11 days in advance; and for Wednesday Committee meetings, the meeting material would be available 12 days in advance. Council meeting and Public Hearing agendas would continue to be available the Friday prior to the meeting as most of the material would have already been distributed and reviewed as part of the Committee packages.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>MARCH</b>						
					★ 1	2
3	GP FC 4	PC 5	6	7	★ 8	9
10	CO 11	CS 12	DP 13	14	★ 15	16
17	GP PH 18	PC 19	PWT 20	21	★ 22	23
24	CO 25	PRC 26	DP 27	28	★ 29	30
31						

★ **Committee agendas 10 days prior** (i.e. March 12<sup>th</sup> Community Safety package distributed on Friday, March 1<sup>st</sup>; March 18<sup>th</sup> GP, March 19<sup>th</sup> Planning and March 20<sup>th</sup> PWT distributed on Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>)

★ **Council and Public Hearing agendas distribution on Friday** (i.e. March 11<sup>th</sup> Council package distributed on Friday, March 8<sup>th</sup>; March 18<sup>th</sup> Public Hearing distributed on Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup>)

Distribution of Committee agenda materials 10 days before would be relatively straightforward to implement, however there would be some challenges. In addition to the previously noted challenges of early distribution (i.e., likelihood of late reports, supplemental agendas, additional courier costs etc.), distribution of Committee agenda materials 10 days prior to their consideration may introduce confusion to the agenda cycle process. For instance, distribution of Committee materials on the Friday would not be for the following week’s meetings; instead those materials would have been distributed the Friday prior. The internal process deadlines would require adjustment in order to have Committee packages ready for this much earlier distribution.

**Additional Consideration – Monthly Planning Committee**

In addition to the proposed options for the distribution of Committee agenda packages, a further consideration is moving the Planning Committee from a bi-weekly schedule to a monthly Planning Committee schedule. With a monthly Planning Committee, the agenda would be more substantial and there would be one less meeting for Planning Committee members to attend. While the external process deadlines would need to be adjusted, there would be no impact to the

stream of applications being forwarded to their scheduled Public Hearings. Should Council consider a monthly Planning Committee, staff would recommend that the Planning Committee take place on the Tuesday following the first General Purposes Committee meeting and the Planning Committee that currently follows each Public Hearing meeting be removed from the schedule. If this change were to be contemplated, then the Public Works and Transportation Committee meetings scheduled for Wednesday could be bumped forward to Tuesday, which would necessitate revising the 2019 Council Meeting schedule. This potential change could be undertaken for a test period, such as 6 months, to ensure the intended benefits of a monthly Planning Committee would be materialized.

Council & Public Hearing Agenda Distribution

**1. Status Quo**

Currently, Council agendas are distributed on the Friday preceding a Council meeting, which include items considered by Committees in the immediate two weeks prior to the Council meeting. Council meeting packages do not contain new material for the most part, as most of the agenda items stem from previously distributed and reviewed Committee packages.

Figure 1 illustrates the current Friday agenda distribution for the 2-week Council cycle, whereby the Council meeting acts as an end to the Committee meeting series. As an example, the March 25<sup>th</sup> Council package would be distributed on Friday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> and would consist of items considered by Committees from March 12<sup>th</sup> to March 20<sup>th</sup>.

Figure 1 – Current 2-Week Council Agenda Cycle

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>MARCH</b>						
					1	2
3	GP FC 4	PC 5	6	7	8	9
10	CO 11	CS 12	DP 13	14	15	16
17	GP PH 18	PC 19	PWT 20	21	★ 22	23
24	CO 25	PRC 26	DP 27	28	29	30
31						

★ Friday distribution

**2. Earlier Council Agenda Distribution (10 days in advance)**

Figure 2A illustrates a Friday agenda distribution 10 days prior to a Council meeting. In this scenario, items considered by Committee in the first 2-week Committee cycle would be forwarded to Council on March 25<sup>th</sup> for its consideration. For the March 25<sup>th</sup> Council meeting, the agenda package would be distributed on Friday, March 15<sup>th</sup>; in this example, the March 25<sup>th</sup> package would be a compilation of items considered by Committees between March 4<sup>th</sup> and March 12<sup>th</sup>. Although Council would have the benefit of receiving the Council agenda materials well in advance of the meeting, the consideration and ratification of Committee items would be significantly delayed.

Figure 2A – Council Agenda Distribution 10 days prior to meeting (1<sup>st</sup> Committee cycle)

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>MARCH</b>						
					1	2
3	4 GP FC PC	5	6	7	8	9
10	11 CO	12 CS	13 DP	14	15 ★	16
17	18 GP PH	19 PC	20 PWT	21	22	23
24	25 CO	26 PRC	27 DP	28	29	30
31						

★ Friday distribution

In addition, with distribution 10 days prior to a Council meeting for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Committee cycle, a further delay presents itself with meetings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the month, which happens to be the heaviest week of meetings, not being considered by Council until the first Council meeting of the following month (Figure 2B). This significantly impacts the flow and timeliness of applications and related land use bylaws being forwarded to Public Hearing. In order to meet legislative requirements for public notification and publication of the Public Hearing Agenda in the local newspaper, applications and related land use bylaws would not be brought to Public Hearing until 2 months after their consideration at Planning Committee (2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the month).



Figure 2B – Council Agenda Distribution 10 days prior to meeting (2<sup>nd</sup> Committee cycle)

★ Friday distribution

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>FEBRUARY</b>							<b>MARCH</b>						
					1	2						★ 1	2
3	GP 4	FC 5	PC 6	7	8	9	3	GP 4	FC 5	PC 6	7	8	9
10	CO 11	CS 12	DP 13	14	15	16	10	CO 11	CS 12	DP 13	14	15	16
17	STAT 18	GP 19	PH 20	PC 21	PWT 22	23	17	GP 18	PH 19	PC 20	PWT 21	22	23
24	CO 25	PRC 26	DP 27	28			24	CO 25	PRC 26	DP 27	28	29	30
							31						

In examining the potential modification of the current Council agenda distribution schedule to distribution 10 days prior, staff offer the following information for consideration:

- early distribution will likely result in late reports, which would trigger the creation of supplemental agenda packages;
- supplemental agenda packages complicate the agenda meeting cycle and may cause confusion with regard to what items are being considered at what meetings; and
- early distribution will likely necessitate the calling of Special Meetings, which shifts the cycle from deliberate to reactive; Special Meetings do not afford the public significant time to consider item(s), as a result, public perception on the transparency of the Council process may suffer.

A change to the Council agenda distribution cycle would also require an amendment to the Council Procedure Bylaw to reflect revised deadlines for items to Council including non-agenda delegations.

It is worthwhile to note that the majority of materials that form a Council agenda are duplicated from Committee; therefore, Council has had the benefit of already reviewing materials previously at the Committee level.

### **3. Public Hearing Distribution**

The Public Hearing agenda distribution mirrors that of Council's in that materials are distributed on the Friday preceding a Public Hearing meeting. As noted with Council agenda packages, the majority of Public Hearing agenda materials are also duplicated materials in that Council has had the opportunity to review them first at the Planning Committee stage, and then again at the Council level when applications and related land use bylaws are considered for first reading.

New information that forms part of the Public Hearing agenda material include correspondence from the public, and occasionally memorandums from staff providing clarification. Correspondence is generally received by the Clerk's Office in the week immediately prior to the Public Hearing, which is following delivery of the public notices to affected properties. Every effort is made to include correspondence received prior to a Public Hearing as part of the published agenda as there are inherent benefits in including these materials. Moreover, a preliminary Public Hearing agenda is posted on the City's website 10 days prior to the Hearing in addition to the regular posting of the Public Hearing agenda and materials on the City website on the Friday preceding the meeting.

For these reasons, staff suggest that the Council and Public Hearing agenda distribution schedule not be revised.

#### **Additional Consideration**

Should there be a strong desire to distribute Council and Public Hearing agenda materials earlier, a Thursday distribution (i.e., one day earlier from status quo) is possible but not without challenges. For instance, Public Works and Transportation Committee (PWT) minutes (Wednesday meeting) would have to be finalized immediately following the meeting in order for items considered at that Committee to be included on the Council agenda, which would be distributed the next day. Moreover, in months where a statutory holiday falls on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month, PWT meetings are bumped to the Thursday. This further poses challenges in Thursday Council agenda distribution as the PWT meeting would be taking place simultaneously as the production of the Council agenda; as a result, the minutes and items of the PWT meeting would be provided to Council on-table in piecemeal.

#### **Next Steps**

Should Council select one of the proposed Options to adjust the current Committee agenda distribution cycle, staff will require between 3-4 weeks to transition to a new cycle. Options 2 to 4 will require internal report deadlines to be changed, which will require all departments and staff to adjust to new timelines. Should changes be contemplated to Council agenda distribution, staff would need to bring forward amendments to the Council Procedure Bylaw regarding deadlines, delegations, and timelines for serving notices of motion.

**Financial Impact**

Depending on which option is selected, there may be additional courier costs and staff overtime costs that would be covered under the existing budget.

**Conclusion**

The current agenda distribution cycle has been reviewed and options for the earlier distribution of Committee and Council packages have been provided for Council's consideration.



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CJ:hb