Moore, Tania

From: Fikes, Cathy
Sent: Tuesday, October 19, 2021 2:02 PM
To: Agenda Alerts
Cc: Frakes, Sandie
Subject: FW: Comment on HB City Council 10/19/2021 Item 29

SUPPLEMENTAL COMMUNICATION

Meeting Date: 10/19/2021

Agenda Item No.: 29 (21-593)

From: Mark Sheldon <surfcitysheldon@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 19, 2021 2:01 PM
To: supplementalcomm@surfcity-hb.org; CITY COUNCIL <city.council@surfcity-hb.org>
Subject: Comment on HB City Council 10/19/2021 Item 29

Re: Huntington Beach City Council 10/19/2021 Agenda Item #29 (File #21-593)
" Recommendations to Reconfigure a Select Number of City Boards, Commissions, and Committees "

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

I wish to speak to the subject item, specifically to changes proposed for the Huntington Beach Environmental Board (HBEB).

I am a 30+ year resident of Huntington Beach, a past member of the HBEB, and continue my interest in it's activity.

A number of changes are being proposed, some of which are:
- Change of name to "Sustainability Board,"
- Shifting focus of the group to the Sustainability Master Plan
- Reducing number of members to 7, Chaired by two City Council Liaisons
- Reducing meetings to every other month (6x per year)

I appreciate that the proposed are intended constructively and to provide group focus.

However, I would argue that there are several undesirable consequences.
"Sustainability" is an important concept, and many of the the Environmental Board's past activities have been aimed with sustainability in mind, but it is not synonymous with "Environmental" or cover the full scope of potential issues affecting the environmental health of safety of Huntington Beach and it's residents.

As an advisory entity the Environmental Board is not tasked with direct response to environmental problems, but the advisory role is important. Members are screened for their professional background and understanding of community needs, to help provide a level of engagement on these issues that is often not easily within the scope of work of City Council or Staff. Per it's current description in the Municipal Code, the Environmental Board is there to provide advice to Council and facilitate public outreach. (In this regard I would argue that the current nine member allotment gives a greater breadth of professional and community representation than the proposed reduction to seven members.)

The refocus of the Board on a specific Sustainability Master Plan, which appears to not yet be in place, the Board would be limited in it's ability to respond to a broader scope of environmental issues. At best, the current

description of it's scope under the current brief but comprehensive Municipal Code definition would be replaced by a definition tied to a Sustainability Master Plan that is more complex and constrained. At worst, the redefined Sustainability Board could ultimately be considered a closed-end "task force" to implement specific aspects of the Sustainability Master Plan and possibly ultimately closed once some implementation of those narrowly defined objectives was in place.

The change in meeting frequency and format is also concerning. The presence and active engagement of two City Council Liaisons is definitely welcome and an important part of the Board's communication with City Council. However, requiring the presence of one or both City Council Liasions to Chair the meetings places strain on the already full calendar of those Councilmembers, which could prove problematic for board scheduling. The reduction to six meetings a year would further constrain the board from effectively implementing any initiatives of it's own.

I recommend that the City Council consider activities of the Environmental Board which it considers constructive. In particular, consider

(1) the HBEB analysis and advice to City Council on Environmental Impact Reports, a time consuming recurring task which Board members willingly take on as part of their responsibilities; and

(2) the Student Environmental-themed Art Contests which have been organized by Environmental Board in recent years. This activity was developed by the HBEB on its own initiative as a means of community engagement and has been positively received.

I respectively ask that you consider the proposed modifications to the HBEB and ask yourself whether the they would facilitate or hinder current flexibility of the Board to respond and innovate useful responses to the City's Environmental issues. I would argue that it will be difficult to implement the Board changes without making response more cumbersome and in some cases, preventing it entirely.

I know that the keeping Boards on the same message as the City Council is a concern that may be motivating some of these changes, but the real answer is to an effective communication channel and understanding of everyone's role and responsibilities. Restucturing does not take the place of those basic understandings and a mutually supportive working relationship.

Thank you for your consideration.

Mark Sheldon

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Mark Sheldon
surfcitysheldon@gmail.com