



Title: Citizens Advisory Committee Assessment: Process Update

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Purpose: Provide a brief update on the CAC Re-Assessment process after conclusion of the Discovery and Insights phase, ahead of a second Operations and Programs Committee (OPC) discussion in April.

Background:

As part of MCWD's systematic realignment of each of its programs, District Board, Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), and staff are in the midst of a process to define a clear and agreed-upon purpose for the role of the CAC in supporting MCWD's work. This process follows a similar approach MCWD has used for evaluating and realigning its other programs:

- Defining the problem or opportunity
- Gathering data and drawing insights
- Defining the core value proposition of the program relative to the organization
- Evaluating options to optimize for this core value
- Defining operational considerations based on strategic directions

Throughout February, staff summarized the findings and insights from the discovery phase in a series of discussions with the OPC, CAC, and staff.

These discussions have continued to clarify the core value proposition that a resident advisory body can provide, that is different than advisory bodies made up of staff, board, technical, or expert advisors. This value is rooted in providing fresh and diverse perspectives that help the organization think about, and communicate, its work in new ways. This value is captured in the name of the committee itself:

Citizen: Technical or expert advisory panels provide value by leveraging their shared expertise in a topic. In contrast, it is the *lack* of a particular shared expertise among members of a resident advisory committee that provides a source of value. This wider range of expertise allows members to provide perspectives and ask questions that groups who share a similar understanding may not. In addition, requiring staff to communicate their key work to an audience that may not share their professional background, vocabulary, or depth of background on a topic challenges staff to be able to think about and communicate their work in new ways. As a result, staff members leading key initiatives sharpen their messaging, consider answers to new questions, and refine their own understanding of the work.

Advisory: An advisor is someone who can help people think about their work in a new way, providing non-binding advice on how to improve their ideas and plans. Advisors are different than "deciders" who make binding policy decisions, or "doers" who execute the work of the organization in a paid or volunteer capacity. Advisors leverage their unique perspective, background, and connections to offer ways to help the organization think about its work, solve problems, and seize opportunities.

Committee: A committee is a group of people appointed for a specific function, which operates differently than an individual advisor. Committees provide a venue for multiple points of view to learn from each other,

strengthen each other's ideas, and become greater than the sum of their parts. Over time, members of a committee build relationships and mutual understanding that allow them to continually improve as an advisory body. Additionally, presenting work to a group of people, rather than an individual, challenges staff to consider multiple perspectives when thinking about and communicating their work.

This understanding of the CAC's core value proposition sets the stage for the next round of discussion: How to optimize the committee's purpose, structure, and operations for providing this unique value. As foreshadowed in the previous discussions, the committee will likely fall somewhere on the following spectrum:

Administrative oversight: The committee's scope is highly targeted to the baseline functions of reviewing and commenting on the District's budget, watershed plan and capital improvement plan.

Vetting: MCWD staff periodically presents a key initiative to CAC members, who leverage their fresh perspective to provide input, flag potential issues, and evaluate the clarity of the messaging. This review is typically limited to a single meeting per topic.

Long-Range Strategic Counsel: The CAC is involved at distinct phases of key District policy and organizational initiatives, often over multiple meetings. Phases of involvement include at the beginning of initiatives to help shape and frame ideas, following Board input to provide further refinement to work products, and post implementation to identify measurements of success.

Throughout April, the OPC, CAC, and staff will vet these options. After this phase of discussions, staff will refine the recommendations into a draft final report and seek Board approval in May.

March 11 OPC:

At the March 11 OPC meeting, staff will provide a brief summary of recent discussions and overview of the content of this memo. While not planned as a facilitated discussion, the update will be an opportunity for Board members to ask questions and remain up to speed on the assessment process.

Next Steps:

Staff will synthesize the discovery process results and discussions held in February with the OPC, CAC and staff into a range of options on the strategic orientation of the CAC to best support the organization in the future.

The range of options, along with structural and operational considerations will be reviewed and discussed by District staff, OPC, and CAC throughout April.

After this final round of discussions, staff will draft a final report with a recommended strategic direction for the CAC and seek Board approval in May.