DATE: December 30, 2014

TO: City Council

FROM: Karl Lawson, Acting Interim Director Housing Department

SUBJECT: Restructuring of Commission on Homelessness

RECOMMENDATION

That City Council approve the first reading by title only and subsequent adoption of an ordinance amending Chapter 2 of the City Code related to the Commission on Homelessness (COH) to reduce the size of the COH from eleven to seven Commissioners, reduce the quorum requirement for the conduct of COH business from six to four Commissioners, and allow for the Commissioners’ two-year terms of office to commence in March of odd-numbered years.

DISCUSSION

A. Background

The Commission on Homeless (COH) is one of several Citizen Advisory Groups (CAGs) created pursuant to Chapter 2 of the City Code. The powers and duties of the COH, which are set forth in Section 2-129 of the Code, include (a) Advising the City Council on all matters pertaining to homelessness in the City; (B) Serving as a liaison between the City Council and the community in matters related to homelessness issues; (C) Reviewing and evaluating programs, requests for homeless funds, and homeless services in the City; and (D) Recommending programs, strategies, and funding for preventing and reducing the incidence of homelessness in the City.

Section 2-125 (A) of the City Code states that the COH shall be composed of eleven members, and Section 2-128(B) states that “six members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of [Commission] business.” The Commissioners’ terms of office are set by Section 2-126 of the Code, which provides that the Mayor shall appoint the members of the COH at the first meeting of the City Council in every December after a general election involving the office of the Mayor. Commissioners’ two-year terms of office thus begin in January of odd-numbered years, and expire at the end of December of even-numbered years.
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B. Current Composition of COH  

The most-recently constituted COH has ten appointed members, and one vacancy. However, two of those members are not registered voters in the City of Oxnard, and thus are not eligible to serve. A review of the minutes of the COH meetings in 2014 indicates that the quorum of six Commissioners required by the City Code has been met on five (5) occasions, and was not met on six (6) other occasions.

The City Clerk’s office reports that as of December 30, 2014, five applications for membership on the COH have been received.

C. Staff Analysis  

Staff and the COH are committed to carrying out City policy and to fulfilling the spirit and the letter of that policy, as set forth in the City Code. Volunteer membership on a CAG such as the COH requires dedication and a substantial time commitment. It is clear that it is difficult to maintain a body with eleven Commissioners willing to participate to the degree necessary. Staff also believes that the history and evidence shows that the existing quorum requirement of six Commissioners presents an obstacle to the COH being able to effectively carry out its duties.

One of the most crucial activities related to homelessness occurs every January, when the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development asks local communities to participate in the “Point In Time” count of homeless individuals. Given the critical importance of an accurate count to assist the COH in advocating on behalf of the homeless community, it is clear that an experienced and dedicated COH can play a key role in ensuring that this annual, volunteer-intensive activity is successful.

Based on the foregoing, and in order to increase the efficacy and allow for smoother functioning of the COH, staff presented three recommendations to the COH: (1) Reduce the size of the COH from eleven to seven Commissioners; (2) Reduce the quorum requirement from the current six to four or fewer; and (3) change the term of office in order to allow Commissioners to serve at least through the end of January, when the annual Point In Time count is conducted.

D. Commission Action and Recommendation  

At its regular meeting of December 1, 2014, the COH discussed the staff recommendations extensively. Following the discussion, the COH formally endorsed the recommendations. A letter from COH Chair Peggy Rivera is attached hereto.

E. Homeless Committee Action and Additional Recommendation  

In addition to the COH, another City-created body exists to address issues related to homelessness. Several years ago the City Council established a Homeless Committee (formerly known as the Homeless Task Force). The Homeless Committee consists of Mayor Pro Tem Ramirez and Councilwoman Padilla.

Pursuant to a procedure adopted at the November 2014 COH meeting, the staff and COH recommendations for re-structuring of the COH were presented to the Homeless Committee meeting of December 10, 2014. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the COH were present at that meeting. Following extensive discussion, the Homeless Committee formally endorsed the recommendations to reduce the size and quorum requirement for the COH, and to change the Commissioners’ terms of office as discussed.
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The Homeless Committee specifically recommended that the COH quorum requirement be set at four members.

Implementing the proposed re-structuring of the COH requires amending the City Code. Staff recommends adoption of the attached ordinance to accomplish the following:

(A) Amend Section 125(A) to reduce the size of the COH from eleven to seven Commissioners;

(B) Amend Section 128(B) to reduce the quorum requirement for the conduct of COH business from six to four Commissioners; and

(C) Amend Section 126 to allow for the Commissioners’ two-year terms of office to commence in March of odd-numbered years.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with the adoption of the attached ordinance.

ATTACHMENTS

No. 1: Letter of December 4, 2014, from Peggy Rivera, Chair of the COH
No. 2: Ordinance

KL/kl
December 4, 2014

Honorable Members of the Homeless Committee,

As Chair of the Commission on Homelessness, I wish to report to your Committee that at our regular meeting of December 1, 2014, the Commission on Homelessness received a report on and unanimously endorsed a proposal to recommend changing the size of the Commission from 11 to 7 members, reducing the quorum requirement from its current six to a new requirement of 50% of the Commission’s membership, and allowing for the terms of the Commissioners to not expire in January as they do now. The reason for this last recommendation is because one of the major activities is the national Point-In-Time Count, which occurs every January in the last week of that month, and we feel that it is important to have continuity on the Commission at such a critical time of the year.

In addition, the Commission received a report on the upcoming city-wide Needs Assessment and the Oxnard Housing Authority’s Section 8 plan annual amendment process. Our Commission intends to participate and provide input to both of those processes. To this end, the Commission on Monday established a Subcommittee to formulate recommendations for those two processes. That Subcommittee will be bringing those recommendations back to the full Commission on Homelessness at our January meeting.

As always, I am available to answer any questions or provide any information to your Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Rivera, Chair
Oxnard Commission on Homelessness
1300 E. Pleasant Valley Road, #89
Oxnard CA 93033
ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OXNARD

ORDINANCE NO. __

ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OXNARD, CALIFORNIA
AMENDING DIVISION 10 OF ARTICLE 2 OF CHAPTER 2 OF THE
OXNARD CITY CODE, REGARDING THE NUMBER OF
COMMISSIONERS, COMMENCEMENT OF OFFICE AND QUORUM
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE COMMISSION ON HOMELESSNESS

THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OXNARD DOES ORDAIN AS
FOLLOWS:

Part 1. Subsection (A) of Section 2-125 of the Oxnard City Code is hereby
amended to read as follows:

“(A) There is hereby established a commission on homelessness composed of 7
members.”

Part 2. Subsection (B) of Section 2-126 of the Oxnard City Code is hereby
amended to read as follows:

“(B) The term of office of a member of the commission on homelessness shall be
two years and shall begin in March.”

Part 3. Subsection (B) of Section 2-128 of the Oxnard City Code is hereby
amended to read as follows:

“(B) Four members shall constitute a quorum for transaction of business by the
commission on homelessness.”
Part 4. Within 15 days after passage, the City Clerk shall cause this ordinance to be published one time in a newspaper of general circulation within the city. Ordinance No. ____ was first read on __________, 2015 and finally adopted on ______________, 2015 to become effective thirty days thereafter.

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

__________________________
Tim Flynn, Mayor

ATTEST:

__________________________
Daniel Martinez, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

__________________________
Stephen M. Fischer, Interim City Attorney