

Race and Equity Pocket Questions

Title and purpose of this initiative:

2024 Council Meeting Calendar Revision

This item is for the Town Council to have any discussion and adopt the revisions to the 2024 meeting calendar.

Department: Town Manager and Town Clerk

What are the racial and equity impacts?

Fewer meetings could mean less opportunities for community members, particularly those from marginalized groups who may face barriers to participation, to voice their concerns, and have their needs addressed. Fewer opportunities for public engagement through meetings could lead to decreased civic engagement, particularly among marginalized groups who may already feel disconnected from the political process.

Who is or will experience community burden?

Marginalized communities facing historical disparities in political participation, like people of color, low-income residents, or non-English speakers, may have limited access to alternative engagement methods. Individuals with limited mobility or transportation could be disproportionately impacted. With fewer opportunities for public scrutiny, marginalized groups may perceive decreased responsiveness from the council regarding their concerns.

Who is or will experience community benefit?

Fewer meetings could allow the council and staff to be more efficient and focused on their work, potentially leading to faster decision-making, more quality decisions, and improved outcomes. Staff could focus on daily operations, constituent outreach, policy research, and project implementation. This would lead to increased productivity and improved service delivery. This could benefit all residents, including those from marginalized communities. With fewer meetings dedicated to routine matters, the council could have more time to focus on long-term planning and strategic initiatives that address systematic issues and promote equity within the community. This could lead to more effective planning and sustainable solutions for issues like economic development, infrastructure improvements, and environmental sustainability.

What are the root causes of inequity?

Groups facing historical discrimination or neglect from local government may already feel excluded of official channels. Individuals unfamiliar with navigating government processes or public participation might feel intimidated or unsure how to engage through alternative formats, leading to lower participation rates. Failure to effectively communicate about changes in meeting schedules, alternative engagement options, and decision-making processes can exacerbate existing inequalities and leave certain communities uninformed and excluded.



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FACING RACE, EMBRACING EQUITY

What might be the unintended consequences of this action or strategy?

Fewer meetings could mean fewer opportunities for residents to voice their concerns and opinions on important issues. This could lead to decisions being made without considering the full range of perspective within the community, potentially exacerbating existing inequities. Groups who are already marginalized or lack access to alternative engagement methods could further exclude them from the decision-making process leading to the council becoming more out of touch with the needs of the community and making decisions that benefit certain groups over others.

How is your department planning to mitigate any burdens, inequities, and unintended consequences?

The town staff would publish clear and accessible information by providing detailed explanations of the new meeting schedule, alternative engagement methods, and decision-making processes through multiple channels in various languages, using plain language to ensure widespread understanding. Staff would regularly update information and respond promptly to community inquiries. Meeting materials will be published online and in public access points. Meetings are streamed live and recorded to provide transparency and accessibility. Staff will continue to provide a variety of ways for residents to participate, including online forums, surveys, and pop-up events in accessible locations. Staff can also reinstitute the Citizen Academy to educate residents on local government functions, council roles, and the importance of civic engagement.