

**STRENGTHEN TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY OF CITY ADVISORY BODIES**IF YOU WISH TO SPEAK TO CITY COUNCIL, **PRINT** YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, AND EMAIL.

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✓ Soe Walsh		
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<del>Anthony Crowell</del>		
<del>Charles Martin</del>		
✓ Charles Bridgecrane JOHNSON		
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## The League of Women Voters of Portland

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**DATE:** May 10, 2017

**TO:** Mayor Wheeler, Commissioners Eudaly, Fish, Fritz, and Saltzman

**FROM:** League of Women Voters of Portland  
Frances Dyke and Doreen Binder, Co-Presidents  
Debbie Aiona, Action Committee Chair

**RE:** City Advisory Bodies Accountability and Transparency

The League of Women Voters of Portland supports efforts to build more transparency and accountability into the city's boards and commissions. Tracking membership, terms of service, whether training has been completed, and other information in a central location will assist the public, staff, and elected officials in keeping tabs on Portland's advisory bodies.

The process described in the resolution calls for the City Attorney to work with the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, Office of Equity and Human Rights, and Office of Management and Finance to develop written materials, including an application, training materials, bylaws template, and other information that will be provided to city advisory bodies. The League urges Council to instruct the City Attorney to also consult with the Public Involvement Advisory Council and the Human Rights Commission during the policy development phase and to include the public in the discussions related to these new policies. In the last several years we have become increasingly concerned that policies of importance to the community are developed without involving advisory bodies at open meetings. Tapping into the expertise of these two groups and the public at large is an essential step that should not be overlooked.

Over the years, League members have attended numerous advisory group meetings. In our experience, one size does not fit all when it comes to governing procedures, training needs, staffing, selection process, and terms of service, including whether or not term limits are imposed on members. Therefore, we want to emphasize that, where appropriate, the materials produced by the City Attorney should include guidelines or recommendations, but not requirements. We oppose the universal imposition of term limits.

Each board and commission is unique and the specifics applicable to that body should be included in code or in bylaws and protocols. For example, as long-

"To promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government."

time observers of the Independent Police Review's Citizen Review Committee we have come to appreciate the importance of experience and institutional knowledge in this advisory body, because of the complexity of the oversight system and police bureau policies. Term limits would be a barrier to CRC's effectiveness. Their recruitment process allows the selection panel to consider the current make-up of the committee and, if experienced members are in short supply, it can renew a member's term without limits.

The League recommends a full public discussion of disclosure and recusal rules. State law allows individuals with actual or potential conflicts serving on advisory bodies to participate in committee decisions as long as their conflicts are disclosed. The most current version of the resolution implies a potential change to that practice by calling for recusal when appropriate. If the city is contemplating adopting a higher standard than that required by state law, the public should be involved in a full consideration of the tradeoffs. We believe that it is important for advisory bodies to include a broadly representative group of community members with a range of interests in the outcomes of City decisions. Requiring advisory board members to recuse themselves when decisions may affect their own personal interests might limit the inclusion of legitimate concerns. The pros and cons of requiring recusal should be discussed with PIAC, the Human Rights Commission, and the public before a final decision is made on this issue.

In conclusion, the Public Involvement Advisory Council, Human Rights Commission, and the public must be involved in developing the materials cited in the resolution. Those materials should be written in a way that allows advisory bodies to tailor their procedures, membership, training, and terms of service to fit their function and responsibilities.