



Midpeninsula Regional
Open Space District

R-14-132
Meeting 14-30
October 28, 2014

AGENDA ITEM 3

AGENDA ITEM

Proposed Study Issues Process

GENERAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

Review and approve and/or amend and approve the proposed Study Issues process and policy.

SUMMARY

At previous Board meetings, the issue has been raised of creating a process for Board members to request items of interest for consideration to be included in the annual Action Plan. Staff has researched various options for implementing this suggestion and is returning with a proposed process for Board consideration.

DISCUSSION

A study issue is a topic that may result in a new or revised Board policy or District project or program which requires staff time to research to provide a complete picture of the subject, such as costs and time required to implement. The primary purpose of the study issues process is to provide a method for identifying, prioritizing and analyzing issues in an efficient and effective manner. It provides a structured approach for addressing issues that are raised and provides greater clarity and advance notice to the public on when they can expect a staff report on a particular issue before the Board of Directors.

With exceptions as noted below (e.g. emergency issues, safety issues, etc.), the Board would review all study issues once a year at a Board Study Issues Workshop, held annually in early October in conjunction with the Strategic Plan Workshop) to determine priority. The process would allow the Board to rank the issues, separating those issues that may have seemed important when they were first raised from truly critical issues which require a commitment of public resources.. It also allows the General Manager and department managers to set and schedule the examination of issues so the workload does not interfere with the day to day delivery of District services including Action Plan and Capital Improvement Program projects.

Study Issue Sponsorship

Study issues are sponsored by members of the Board of Directors. Board members may introduce study issue topics at any public Board meeting during the Director Reports portion of the meeting agenda. The Director submitting the request may submit a self-prepared memo or a report summarizing his/her position on the matter. Board members may request limited

assistance from staff with obtaining copies of existing materials and/or data related to their agenda item, provided said assistance does not require new work or independent analysis to be performed and in the aggregate, does not require more than one hour of staff time. After the issue is raised by the Director during “Director Reports,” the District Clerk will agendize the item for a subsequent meeting at which the Directors may discuss the proposed item and vote whether to support inclusion of the study issue at the annual Board Study Issues Workshop. A majority of Board support is required for inclusion in the Board Study Issues Workshop.

Timeline for Study Issues

The study issues process would be ongoing, and study issues could be proposed at any time for the upcoming calendar year. Ideas proposed by the public must be sponsored by members of the Board. For those issues that are sponsored by a majority of Board members, staff will prepare and submit study issue papers to the General Manager for review and approval. The study issue paper describes the topic of concern proposed to be studied, the origin of the issue, expected public outreach, staff hours, any additional resources required for study, and a staff recommendation regarding the issue.

The Board would hold a public hearing in September as part of a regular Board meeting to gather public input on the posted issues. While the Board may choose to sponsor a new issue at the hearing, the intent of the hearing is to gather public feedback on already posted issues. At the Board Study Issues Workshop (typically held two to three weeks following the public hearing) Board takes action on the issues. At the workshop, the Board first identifies those issues they would like to “drop” or “defer,” then ranks the remaining issues. Deferred issues are automatically brought back to the next year’s workshop. Dropped issues are considered “dead,” though any Board member can resurrect a previously “dead” issue for consideration at a future year’s workshop.

In late October/November, staff will identify the number of ranked issues (by department) that budgeted resources will support (issues are undertaken in priority order), and provides Board with the dates that the issues will be completed. Study issues will be incorporated into the upcoming fiscal year’s Action Plan & Budget.

Month	Activity	Result
Day after October workshop through the public hearing the following year	Study issue topics may be introduced and sponsored by members of the Board	Study issue papers would be drafted by members of staff, and those receiving majority support from the Board would be included in the annual Board Study Issues Workshop
Early September	All sponsored study issues would be posted to the District’s website	Public notice of study issues proposed for the upcoming fiscal year Action Plan
Late September	Board holds a public hearing on the study issues proposed for the upcoming fiscal year at a publicly noticed Board meeting.	Members of the public comment on the proposed study issues.
Early October	Board Study Issue Workshop held	Board assigns priority ranking to the study issues.
December	The General Manager	Staff presents to the Board a list of study

	<p>considers staff resources by department to determine how many issues can be studied during the fiscal year, noting the start and completion dates</p>	<p>issues that will be undertaken during the current fiscal year, given currently budgeted resources.</p>
<p><i>Cycle repeats</i></p>		

(Note: Exceptions to this timeline include emergency, safety-related, legally mandated, and urgent policy issues – those that must be completed in the short term to avoid serious negative consequences to the District.)

Roles of Board, Staff, Members of the Public

The study issues process includes participation by Board members, District staff, and the public. A brief explanation of each of their roles follows:

- Board – Board’s role is to set policy. Regarding the study issues process, policy-related responsibilities include generating (or sponsoring) study issue topics; taking public input; prioritizing or “ranking” issues at the Board Study Issues Workshop in October; and approving target completion dates for each study.
- District staff – District staff manage the annual study issues administrative process; prepare the study issue papers; following Board ranking of issues, determine how many issues available operating resources will support (issues are begun, and studied, in priority order); and propose target completion dates for studies able to be completed.
- Members of the Public – Members of the public suggest study issue topics to the Board of Directors. In order for a study issue topic to get to the Board Study Issues Workshop it must be “sponsored” by Board members. Members of the public also provide input to Board on the relative importance or priorities of individual studies at the annual Study Issues public hearing, which is held two to three weeks prior to the Board’s Study Issues Workshop.

Study Issue Papers

One purpose of the study issues process is to ensure the Board and staff are aligned with respect to the scope of a project and what is required to complete the item to the Board’s satisfaction (including timeframe). This it is important for each item to have a Study Issue Paper to be reviewed by the Board. Study issue papers are completed by staff once a study issue has received support from a majority of the Board for inclusion in the annual Board Study Issues Workshop. The study issue paper includes information regarding estimated staff hours for completion, the cost of completing the study including whether a budget modification will be needed, a brief description of the issue, how the study issue relates to current District policy, and when appropriate, staff’s recommendation on whether or not the item should be studied. All study issue papers for study issues proposed throughout the year will be compiled in advance of the annual Board Study Issues Workshop. These will be posted on the District’s website in advance of the public hearing to be held two to three weeks in advance of the Annual Workshop for review by members of the public.

ALTERNATIVES

At the Board’s request, the current Annual Board Retreat has been timed to provide the Board of Directors with a scheduled opportunity to provide early, broad direction to staff to guide the development and implementation of the Action Plan and Capital Program for the coming year. As this process has only been in effect for one year, the Board may wish identify and discuss the

drawbacks in the current process before deciding to move forward with the proposed Study Issues Process.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact to this report. If the Board decides to adopt a policy regarding study issues, then the fiscal and budget impact of adding various study issues to the annual Action Plan will be determined on a case by case basis.

BOARD COMMITTEE REVIEW

This item was brought before the full Board of Directors to determine if it should be further studied by a Committee or acted on by the entire Board.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice was provided as required by the Brown Act.

CEQA COMPLIANCE

This item is not a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will return with a draft policy outlining the Study Issues process for approval by the Board.

Attachments

1. Draft Board Policy: Study Issues Process
2. Proposed Study Issue Paper
3. Flow Chart Outlining Study Issues Process

Responsible Department Head:
Stephen E. Abbors, General Manager

Prepared by:
Jennifer Woodworth, District Clerk

Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Board Policy Manual

Study Issues Process	Policy # Chapter 1 – Administration & Government
Effective Date:	Revised Date:
Prior Versions:	

Purpose

One of Board's primary roles is to establish District policy. It does so by creating new policies and revising/deleting old policies by majority vote. The Board's time is limited, however, as is the number of issues it is able to consider in any given year. The study issues process provides a method for identifying, prioritizing and analyzing policy issues or District projects or programs in an efficient and effective way. It provides a structured approach for addressing the large number of issues that are raised and considered by Board for study each year.

It is the purpose of this policy to identify those aspects of the District's Study Issue process for which Board has established required standards. Those aspects of the District's Study Issue not addressed by this policy are considered administrative or operational in nature, and shall be established under the authority of the General Manger.

Policy

1. Study Issue Sponsorship

A Board sponsored study issue may be introduced by any Board member during the Director Reports portion of the meeting agenda. The District Clerk will agendize discussion of the topic at a subsequent Board meeting. The Director submitting the request may submit a memo or a report summarizing his/her position on the matter. Board members may request limited assistance from staff with obtaining copies of existing materials and/or data related to their agenda item, provided said assistance does not require new work or independent analysis to be performed and in the aggregate, does not require more than one hour of staff time. At the subsequent meeting, the Directors may discuss the proposed item and vote whether to support inclusion of the study issue at the annual Board Study Issues Workshop. A majority of Board support is required for inclusion in the Board Study Issues Workshop.

2. Selection of Issues for Study

Any substantive policy change (large or relatively small) is subject to the study issues process (i.e. evaluated for ranking at the Board Study Issues Workshop). Policy related issues include such items as new or expanded service delivery programs, changes to existing Board policy, and/or amendments to the Strategic Plan. Exceptions to this approach include emergency issues, and urgent policy issues that must be completed in

the short term to avoid serious negative consequences to the District, subject to a majority vote of Board.

3. Deadlines for Board member-Proposed Study Issues

A. New Board-proposed study issue topics are due to the General Manager no later than three weeks in advance of the annual study issues workshop. If the public hearing is held less than three weeks before the workshop, Board members may also sponsor issues introduced by the public at the public hearing, but must do so during that Board meeting.

B. Any Board-generated study issues proposed later than three weeks in advance of the annual workshop, with the exception of those sponsored under A. above, shall be considered in the next year's study issues process.

4. Drop or Deferral of Issues

At the Study Issues Workshop, Board shall drop, defer, or rank in priority order each proposed study issue. Any issue that is dropped by a majority vote of Board will not be eligible for consideration at the next year's Workshop unless sponsored by a majority of the Board. Any issue that is deferred shall automatically be returned for Board's consideration the following year. After being deferred for two consecutive years, a study issue would automatically be dropped unless sponsored by a majority of the Board.

5. Ranking Method

Board shall vote utilizing a Forced Ranking system for ranking study issues at the annual workshop. Specifically, Board members individually and simultaneously rank each issue that was not deferred or dropped. Ranking are from "1" to the total number of issues, with "1" representing the highest priority issue for study. Each number can be used only one (no ties) and each issue must receive a ranking.

6. Number of Study Issues Conducted Each Year

Following Board's determination of study issue priorities, the General Manger shall advise Board of staff's capacity for completing ranked issues through the Annual Action Plan and Budget process. Board reserves the right to expand that capacity by increasing budgeted resources.

Proposed New Board Study Issue

Number

Status

Calendar Year

New or Previous

Title

Lead Department

1. **What are the key elements of the issue? What precipitated it?**
2. **How does this relate to existing District policy?**
3. **Origin of issue**
 - Director(s)**
 - Public (include Board sponsor)**
4. **Multiple year project?** **Planned completion year**
5. **Expected participation involved in the study issue process?**
 - Is a Board Study Session anticipated?**
 - What is the public participation process?**
6. **Cost of Study**
 - Operating Budget Program to cover costs**
 - Project budget to cover costs**
 - Budget modification amount needed**
 - Explain below what the additional funding will be used for:**
7. **Potential fiscal impact to implement recommendations in the Study approved by Board**
8. **Staff Recommendation**
 - If “For Study” or “Against Study,” explain:**
 - Note: If staff’s recommendation is “for Study” or “Against Study,” the Manager should note the relative importance of this Study to other major projects that the Department is currently working on or that are soon to begin, and the impact on existing services/priorities.
9. **Estimated staff hours for completion of Study Issue**

Role	Manager	Hours
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Reviewed by:

Department Manager

Date

Approved by

General Manager

Date

