



INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: **Finance & Governance Committee**
 BY: **Andy Youn, City Clerk**
 CC: **Mayor McLeod**
Marty Wine, Interim City Administrator
 DATE: **June 14, 2024**
 SUBJECT: **Council and Committee agenda packet process**

ISSUE

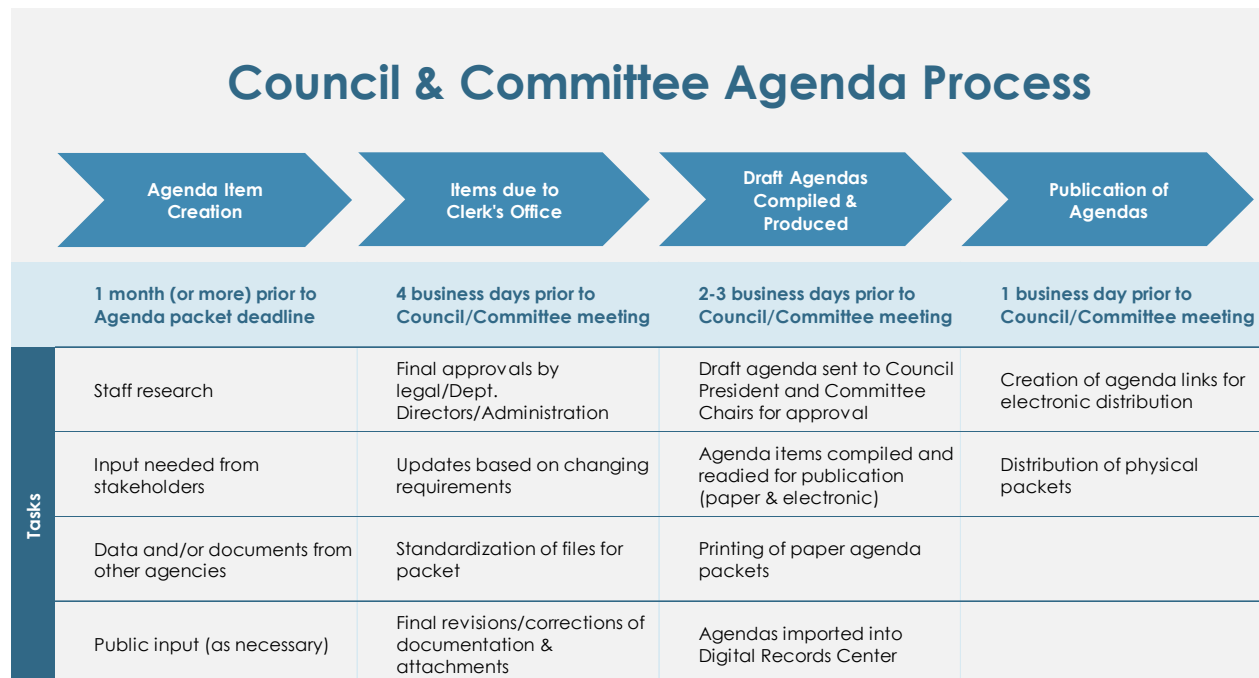
At the April 22, 2024 Committee of the Whole meeting, a Councilmember expressed interest in receiving Council and Committee agenda packets sooner than the Friday before Council and Committee meetings. The issue was referred to the Finance and Governance Committee for further discussion on the current process for agenda packets.

BACKGROUND

Current Process:

RCW 42.30.077 requires that agendas be posted online no later than 24 hours in advance of the published start time of the meeting. The City Clerk is responsible for preparing and publishing agendas for Council (Regular, Special, Committee of the Whole, Work Sessions) and Committee meetings, in accordance with the provisions of chapter 42.30 RCW.

The following flowchart shows the current process and timelines for agenda packets, from creation of individual agenda items by Citywide staff, submission to the Clerk’s Office, to final production by the Clerk’s Office.



Under the current process, agenda packets are distributed on Fridays prior to the meetings. This reflects a long-established workflow and has the benefit of allowing staff to produce timely, relevant information for Council review. All individual agenda packet items are due to the City Clerk's Office by 1:00 p.m. on the Tuesday prior to the meeting for Council and Committee agenda packets. Upon receipt of all agenda items on Tuesday afternoon, the Clerk's Office sends the draft agendas to the Council President and Council Committee Chairs for approval by 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday morning. The Council President reviews the draft Council agenda on Wednesday afternoons, and following approval, from Wednesday to Friday morning (the timeframe depending on the complexity of the agenda packet process for that week), the Clerk's Office proceeds with digitally compiling all Council and Committee agenda packets. The packets are then readied for publication in paper and electronic format, including importing the packets into the Digital Records Center and creating weekly agenda links for electronic distribution. Packets are distributed on Friday morning following a final quality check.

Common packet delays:

Several key variables can influence the production of agenda packets, often causing delays to the standard timeframes shown above:

- Agenda items require significant work by staff in advance of submission to the Clerk's Office: necessary documentation may often be delayed by the need for input from other stakeholders, updated data, public input, or changing requirements.
- Agenda documentation that has already been submitted can require updates based on new requests for information given by Committee or Council the night prior to agenda deadlines, or may need to be revised based on emerging information.
- Occasional printing or content management system malfunctions may sometimes cause additional delays.

Potential options for consideration – Pros and Cons:

If the City Council is interested in receiving packets earlier, following are some potential options for the Council's consideration and the implications of each for staff:

a) Agenda packets distributed earlier (e.g., by Thursday evening):

This option would have several upstream effects for Citywide staff, to include the need to move up agenda deadlines Citywide, and potential work stoppages in the Clerk's Office.

- Moving up agenda deadlines would impact the workflow for items moving from Committees to C.O.W. or Regular Meetings. With Council meetings on Monday nights and deadlines for agenda packet documentation on Tuesday afternoons, staff often balance tight turnaround times to provide updated information or data as requested by Committee or Councilmembers. Moving up agenda deadlines would not provide enough time for staff to make the desired changes or gather the additional information, so these items would likely be delayed in moving through the legislative process.
- Staff often seek to address/respond to real-time events occurring in the City. Requiring earlier submission of documents could also result in outdated information by the time it reaches a Council or Committee meeting.
- Agenda packet production is work-intensive for the Clerk's Office due to the multiple steps involved (formulation of motions on agenda front sheets, standardization and quality control of documents, correction of typos, manual hyperlinking for online accessibility, image and legibility enhancements, importing to the Digital Records Center, assigning searchability to uploaded packets/individual items, publishing legal notices for meetings, printing all paper packets, and distributing printed and electronic packets). The Clerk's Office currently has 2.5 working days to produce packets following Council President and Chair approval on Wednesdays. Shortened timelines would mean the Clerk's Office would

need to move to an all-hands approach to prioritize agenda packet production ahead of other core departmental services and functions such as records management, pet licensing, notarization, resident inquiries, legislation development, processing of contracts, and more.

b) Streamlining for “bite-sized” agenda packets:

Agenda packet materials typically include a Council Agenda Synopsis (CAS) sheet, an informational memorandum, and relevant attachments such as legislation, draft contracts, quotes, draft grant agreements, bids, CIP documents, PowerPoints, flyers, and more. Combined, one agenda item may often exceed 50 pages, with some complex items reaching 100 or more pages. The Clerk’s Office produces an average of 3 different packets for Council and Committee meetings weekly. Each agenda typically contains 3 – 5 agenda items per packet, averaging over 200 pages per agenda packet.

Streamlining and reducing the documentation needed for agenda packets may create efficiencies for Citywide staff while also aligning with the Council’s need to receive packets timely. “Bite-sized” agendas could be implemented in a way that would maintain the transparency of City operations and spending, reduce technical jargon, and provide cleaner documents that result in plain speech agendas that are more easily understood by the general public and are more responsive to the community’s interests. Staff could also explore methods to ensure continued transparency such as adding hyperlinking to the Digital Records Center to full supporting documentation.

Shifting the standard format and documentation required for smaller, cleaner agenda packets will likely require the formation of an internal workgroup and legal review to assess feasibility and ensure continued compliance with chapter 42.30 RCW prior to Citywide implementation. Staff would also need further direction from the Council on the level of information and documentation desired for inclusion in “bite-sized” agendas. Finally, given staff hope to begin reviewing options in the 2025–2026 biennium for agenda management software, beginning the work now of determining how to streamline agendas will allow the City to strategically align with that planned work in order to create greater organizational efficiencies and provide expanded services to the public in the future.

c) Inclusion on Committee meeting packet distribution lists

Agenda items typically begin in one of four standing Council Committee agendas, before being forwarded to a future Council meeting for discussion and/or action by the full Council. This means most agenda items appearing at a C.O.W. or Regular Meeting are duplicates of agenda items that have already been published for a Committee agenda packet at least 1 – 2 weeks prior to full Council meetings. All Councilmembers receive links to all Committee packets and may sign up to receive hard copies of Committees they are not on. This is one way to read ahead on upcoming issues.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

None

RECOMMENDATION

For discussion only

ATTACHMENTS

Current workflow – Calendar view

2024

JULY

CALENDAR YEAR

CALENDAR MONTH

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
01	02	03	04	05
	Document Deadline	Agendas Produced	Agendas Produced	Agenda Published
08	09	10	11	12
Committee Meeting	Document Deadline	Agendas Produced	Agendas Produced	Agenda Published
15	16	17	18	19
C.O.W. Meeting	Document Deadline	Agendas Produced	Agendas Produced	Agenda Published
22	23	24	25	26
Regular Meeting				
29	30	31	01	02
05	06	07	08	09