

Committee of the Whole (COW)

Modernization and Process Improvement



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Policy Process and Core Principles



The Why: Clarity and Consistency

The Committee of the Whole (COW) lacks a clear role in the Council's policymaking process.

- **Limited Early Input; Unclear Path for Ideas:** Council Members may have few opportunities to contribute ideas/inputs before a policy is already well-developed.
- **Inefficient Agenda Management:**
 - Inconsistency in how and when items are scheduled on the COW agenda
 - Scheduled meeting time is underutilized when meeting agendas run short. Valuable meeting time should be maximized for fulsome policy discussions.

Proposed Policy Process

1. Idea Generation & Sourcing

Ideas are brought forward through the Standing Committee Chairs for the Chair to consider adding to the COW Agenda.

2. Early Discussion & Direction Setting

The Committee of the Whole is the forum for initial, high-level discussion among all members.

3. Detailed Policy & Technical Work

Standing Committees use direction and feedback received from COW to develop the technical details and specific policy language.

4. Final Deliberation & Action

The Metropolitan Council takes final action. All members have been fully briefed from the start of the process.

Proposed Purpose and Role: Core Principles

- **Early Engagement:**
 - Ensure Council Members can shape policy discussions at the beginning of the development process.
- **Strategic Alignment:**
 - Ensure new initiatives connect to the Council's overall strategic goals and existing work across divisions.
- **Governance and Clarity:**
 - Provide a clear, transparent, and predictable path for policy development that members of the public can easily track.
- **Efficient Deliberation:**
 - Use Council time effectively by dedicating the appropriate venue to the appropriate type of discussion.

Standing Committee Chairs
discuss potential topics with the
Met Council Chair



Metropolitan Council Chair
sets the COW agenda



- Staff present to inform broadly (horizon scan).
- CM discussion and questions.
- The Chair/RA directs policy and technical issues to the standing committees and for expert staff analysis.

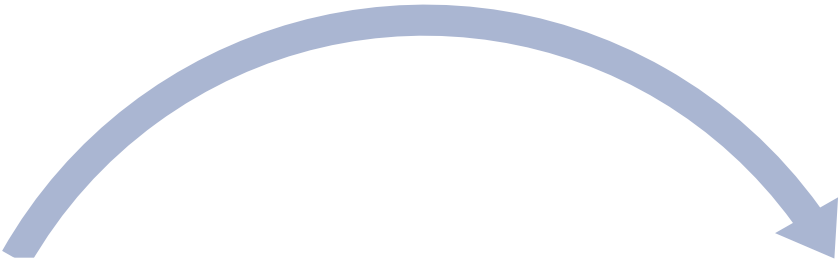
**Committee
of the Whole**

**Standing
Committee**

- Division Directors break down issues* into Info Items on their Work Plans.
- Committee Chairs lead discussions; ensures COW issues are considered.
- Committee members decide on actions to forward to the council.

- Committee Chairs report to the Council as part of their leadership on the issue.
- Council decides on actions/policies.

Met Council



*Workgroups and sub-committees can be engaged as needed by Standing Committee Chairs for deep dives requested as part of the topic discussion.

Roles and Responsibilities



How Everyone Is Engaged By This Process: Roles and Responsibilities

Met Council Chair:

- Selects topics for the COW Agenda in consultation with Committee Chairs, Council Members and lead staff;
- Guides COW discussions; and
- Directs issues to the appropriate Standing Committees based on the discussion.

Standing Committee Chairs:

- Facilitate the raising of potential topics to the Chair;
- Accept referrals from the COW discussion; and
- Lead their committees in developing and refining policy proposals.

How Everyone Is Engaged By This Process: Roles and Responsibilities (pt. 2)

Council Members:

- Propose topics for consideration to committee chairs;
- Actively participate in discussions; and
- Provide high-level policy direction at COW.

Cabinet, Directors, and Staff:

- Prepare and deliver contextual presentations for the COW;
- Track discussion outcomes; and
- Develop policy options for Standing Committees based on COW direction.

Community Relations & Admin Services:

- Manage the COW agenda-setting process; facilitate communication; and ensure procedural integrity.

What Supports This Work: New Tools Offer A Path

New Tools

- Annual Work Plan
- Administrative Procedures
- Standing Agenda
- New Staff
- Council Member Support



Presentation Standards and Examples



Presentation Standards

Governance and Context: Each presentation begins with a slide that clearly outlines the item's current stage in the policy process.

Clarity: Staff will use a standardized presentation template (Tunheim) to ensure clarity and consistency.

Focus on Policy Questions: Clear takeaways from facilitated discussion.

Exploratory Nature: Presentations at the COW are intended to be exploratory and open to direction and change.

Example COW Topics

- Sustainable Aviation Fuel
- Large Volume Water Users (i.e. data centers)
- Homeless Regional Solutions
- Large Capital Projects
- Construction Impacts on Businesses
- Tourism
- Others?



Next Steps: Timeline for Implementation

- **Oct 8 Metropolitan Council Meeting:**
 - Discuss the proposed framework and gather feedback from Council Members
- **Next Staff Cabinet Meeting:**
 - Work with key staff leaders to propose this process; identify potential topics
- **Next Leadership Meeting:**
 - Work with committee chairs to identify pilot topics to test and refine this new process
- **2026 and Beyond:**
 - Implement the modernized COW process as a standard procedure

Questions

- Does the proposed process address current concerns for information flow and roles?
- Are there additional considerations needed in designing this process?
- Would you feel engaged and heard in this process?



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