



**CITY OF BOULDER  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

**MEETING DATE:** December 21, 2023

**AGENDA TITLE**

Consideration of a motion to accept the November 9, 2023 Study Session Summary regarding the Boards and Commissions Assessment Findings and Initial Recommendations

**PRESENTERS**

Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, City Manager  
Chris Meschuk, Deputy City Manager  
Pam Davis, Assistant City Manager  
Megan Davis, Temporary Senior Project Manager

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The purpose of this study session was to share the Boards and Commissions Assessment findings and discuss initial recommendations. The City-retained consulting partner, Coreflection (formerly hrQ), shared findings and recommendations around each of the key areas identified by City Council and staff in prior discussions. Council provided feedback on the findings and key policy recommendations identified through the assessment to guide the implementation of improvements to the Boards and Commissions program.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Suggested Motion Language**

Motion to accept the November 9, 2023 Study Session Summary regarding the Boards and Commissions Assessment Findings and Initial Recommendations

**SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION**

City Manager Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde opened the discussion with an overview of the history of work to improve the Boards and Commissions (B&C) program and the importance of this effort to create a system and program that is more accessible and

inclusive. She summarized the consultant's approach to completing the assessment, and the extensive efforts to engage all stakeholders through the assessment process.

The impetus for this work was initiated through the 2021 Racial Equity Plan which outlines goals to enhance the inclusiveness of and equitable access to service on boards and commissions for community members. Following this framing City Manager Rivera-Vandermyde introduced the Coreflection consulting team, Melissa Antol and Brian Wilkerson to share the findings and recommendations.

First Melissa provided an overview of the assessment process, including Coreflection's approach, process, scope, and timeline. The assessment project began in July/August and has been guided internally with a core team including staff from the City Manager's Office, City Clerk and Records Office, Communications and Engagement, and the Office of Equity and Belonging. She shared a summary of the engagement process which included interviews, surveys, and focus groups with B&C members (new and experienced), City Council members, the City Council Boards and Commissions Subcommittee, staff involved in B&C, and interested community members with past engagement in B&C issues. Coreflection shared additional data and information generated through the process, including demographic data of B&C members and benchmarking data from communities with similarities to the City of Boulder. Through this comprehensive review of the program, Melissa shared four key areas for improvements to the B&C program:

- Clarity of Purpose and Results
- Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Experience
- Representation
- Program Model and Service Delivery

Melissa outlined the guiding principles developed by the core team to ensure the recommendations are aligned with the objectives and desired outcomes for the project and program. She provided details around the four categories of initial recommendations, detailing the specific assessment findings related to each issue and proposing recommendations for improvements in each area.

The initial recommendations included both policy and operational/organizational changes to the program. While more than 30 recommendations were presented, staff specifically requested council input on key policy recommendations, including:

### **1. Categorization of Boards:**

A key recommendation for the future of the B&C program is to categorize boards and commissions by type. This is due to recognizing the varied nature of work B&Cs address. The B&C structure, purpose, requirements, and associated processes would be different based on the type. Melissa presented four categories of B&C including Quasi-judicial, General Improvement Districts, Advisory, and Task Forces (not currently in existence). She shared a proposed categorization structure for B&C that defined each type of Board or Commission.

## **2. B&C purpose, composition, appointment process, term length, review, and potential sunset process.**

Coreflection proposed that within the categorization system, Council may have input around the other defining characteristics of the B&C within each category such as their purpose/scope, composition, appointment process, term length, and a review or sunset process for each category.

In addition, Melissa shared recommendations that would improve program operations and processes to meet the desired goals for the program, specifically to improve recruiting, applications and appointments, training, on-boarding, staff liaison support, etc. She indicated that these recommendations would be further developed by staff through implementation planning.

### **COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

Mayor Pro Tem Wallach opened the floor to questions by Council members on the Coreflection presentation.

Councilmember Josephs stated she liked the direction of the work and would like staff to move forward with the categories.

Councilmember Benjamin was glad to see the bold recommendations that can truly transform the program.

Mayor Brockett stated some boards may be in multiple categories. Generally supports a review process, preferably not focused on specific Boards or Commissions, more general process and approach.

Councilmember Speer was interested in understanding the necessary code changes, she'd like to see consistency.

Councilmember Folkerts, B&C Subcommittee member, would like to see some details about how to address the disparities in workloads across boards. Address rebalancing that can occur so that not one board isn't carrying a very heavy load when others don't have enough work. Asked if City Manager appointments is a common approach. Melissa responded that it is an approach that has become more common.

Councilmember Winer, B&C Subcommittee member, interested in the categorization and generally supports, would like to consider subcategories in the Advisory Boards. This idea was echoed by Councilmember Folkerts. Council should not be prescriptive about the composition (specific to the make-up of board members), interested in a one-year term (for some seats) to encourage college student participation.

Mayor Pro Tem Wallach asked about the peer cities comparison for benchmarking, and why there were some large cities like Minneapolis and Portland. Melissa indicated that the cities were selected for comparable size, location (Front Range), type of Boards and

Commissions, and those with similar progressive policy approaches. Mayor Pro Tem Wallach also indicated interest community training academies so the public can learn more about what volunteering for a B&C entails.

Mayor Pro Tem Wallach segued into the questions posed by staff and comments about the proposed policy recommendations or broader program.

Councilmember Speer asked about implementation and what that process would look like. Deputy City Manager Chris Meschuk said that with Council feedback staff would begin to develop an implementation plan that would look at phasing the work. Speer commented on the impact to staff/staff capacity.

Speer continued with comments about the need for role clarification and stated her goals are to achieve better representation and to create a culture shift in the program.

Councilmember Winer is interested in the review process of Boards and Commissions. Task Forces would be helpful for specific issues. Would like to see public comments at B&C meetings more relevant.

Councilmember Benjamin stated that the workplan coordination is very important. There needs to be better alignment with council and staff.

Councilmember Friend said that any B&C discussion and workplan items should be on the workplan of council. She is also interested in seeing metrics for success put in place to understand how the changes are working.

Councilmember Folkerts followed up on previous comments, agreed with statements about alignment with council and/or staff workplans, with some flexibility to address emerging issues that may come from the community. She supports the review process and would like to see what the criteria would be.

Councilmember Yates supports shorter terms. Cautions to not oversimplify the classification, since it may vary from board to board. Ensure there is ongoing community engagement.

Mayor Brockett recognizes more challenges may come in implementation. More communities are centralizing this work, would be helpful to learn from their experiences. Would like to see the details of the phased implementation plan moving forward.

Mayor Pro Tem Wallach wrapped up the conversation by thanking staff and the consultants for their work on this matter.