



**CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST**

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: City Councilwoman Rebecca J. Viagran, District 3

COPIES TO: Sheryl Sculley, City Manager; Leticia Vacek, City Clerk; Andy Segovia, City Attorney; John Peterek, Assistant to the City Manager; Christopher Callanen, Assistant to City Council

SUBJECT: Request to Review Processes Related to Board and Commission Appointments

DATE: January 11, 2018

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CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
CITY CLERK
2018 JAN 11 PM 3:27

Issue Proposed for Consideration

I ask for your support for the inclusion of the following item on the agenda of the earliest available meeting of the Governance Committee:

Our Boards and Commissions are a fundamental part of how we make and administer public policy in San Antonio. Each Board and Commission connects Council directly to issues, policies, and constituencies, through their review and recommendations. Therefore, I am requesting the Office of the City Clerk and Office of Equity complete an Equity Impact Assessment of the entire pipeline, including (but not limited to):

1. Review of all existing processes and outreach strategies utilized to recruit, appoint, and train community members to serve on City of San Antonio Boards and Commissions,
2. Assess the diversity of past and current council appointments by district/councilmember, and
3. Recommend concrete steps to enhance meaningful community outreach and engagement, increase diversity and representation, and reduce implicit bias.

Brief Background

Over the past six months, Council has taken clear and intentional action to ensure our policies and policy-making is focused on equity. What could otherwise be seen as a subtle, ineffectual change in perspective has instead become a profound statement of San Antonio's readiness to not just state our values, but to act on them.

Moving forward, our Boards and Commissions will be central to our efforts to create a more equitable San Antonio. Some, like the Board of Adjustment and Historic Design Review Commission, exist to make formal, binding decisions that directly impact residents and

neighborhoods. Others, like the Zoning and Planning Commissions, make formal recommendations to Council on cases that impact the fundamental character and identity of those same neighborhoods. Still others are focused on specific issues of vital importance and members' experience, passion, and commitment to service often catalyze new perspectives and approaches to long-standing problems. Our current new member orientation does not include diversity training, an oversight that fails to address the potential influence of implicit bias on how we make public policy in San Antonio.

Our focus on equity must include diversity. Today, 60% of all board and commission members are men and 37% are Hispanic, even though San Antonio's population is 51% women and 64% Hispanic. In the past, individual Councilmembers have offered various policy initiatives to address lacking diversity of all kinds on our boards and commissions. One item discussed at the FY2018 Budget Worksessions was the persistent barrier to equitable community outreach and engagement created by the relatively small number of applications we receive. In this case, an existing inequity – the digital divide – reinforces another inequity by keeping board and commission service out of reach. A robust strategy is needed to address this and other barriers to increased engagement.





Because most boards and commission are filled by district and members are appointed by Councilmembers, increased diversity can be achieved by growing the pool of applicants and tracking individual Councilmembers' appointments so they can understand the diversity of their overall roster of appointments.

Finally, just as it is important for Councilmembers to identify and understand our own biases so we can better serve our constituents and all of San Antonio, so, too, should the members of our boards and commissions. The incredibly important role they have in our City demands that they have the tools necessary to better understand the needs of all San Antonio residents.

Submitted for Council consideration by:


Councilwoman Rebecca Viagran, District 3

Supporting Councilmembers' Signatures (4 only)

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District

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