



STAFF REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL

DATE: Regular Meeting of October 14, 2025

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

SUBMITTED BY: Dante Hall, City Manager

SUBJECT: Discussion Regarding the Structure of the Police Chief Advisory Board Meetings

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the Council discuss this item and give direction to staff by minute order.

BACKGROUND:

At the February 25, 2025, City Council meeting, Mayor Bailey requested that the City Council discuss options for a Police Department Advisory Committee that would be subject to the Brown Act. This requirement would ensure that the meetings are publicly noticed and allow the public to attend and participate. On April 22, 2025, staff reported back to the Council with that analysis and sought the Council's direction on this matter.

After reviewing the existing Chief Advisory Board (CAB) and engaging in a constructive discussion about the matter, Vice Mayor Kelley made a motion, seconded by Council Member Walker-Griffin, for the staff to evaluate options for enhancing the transparency of the existing CAB meetings and establishing a formal advisory board meeting structure. The Council identified three options for discussion. Option 1 would maintain the current CAB format and structure, while also including the posting of meeting agendas and minutes for public review. Option 2 would retain the current format and structure of the CAB, but would include the posting of meeting agendas, excluding minutes, and require the Police Chief to regularly provide a summary report on discussions with the CAB at City Council meetings. Option 3 would establish a formalized Police advisory body under the municipal code, which would be subject to the Brown Act and the Council's rules and procedures.

On July 8, 2025, staff returned to the City Council to discuss these options and other considerations. After hearing the staff presentation, the Council continued the item to a future date. Staff returns this evening to seek Council direction on the matter.

ANALYSIS:

In January 2021, retired Chief of Police William Imboden and then City Manager David Biggs began discussing a proposed CAB as part of an ongoing review of policing, social justice, and oversight of the Hercules Police Department. The CAB initiative was designed to foster trust and collaboration between the Hercules Police Department and the community. It serves as a resource for strategy development, policy awareness, and community input, but does not have decision-making authority or investigative power. Instead, it provides a forum for discussion on policing trends, use of force, and other significant law enforcement issues. The members serve as a direct conduit between the Police Department and the community, providing invaluable information on improving public safety services. Chief Vasquez took over the CAB in October 2022. The CAB currently has nine members who reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of this City. While the CAB meetings do have agendas, they typically feature free-flowing discussions among members in a roundtable format.

When evaluating options for enhancing transparency in the advisory committee meeting framework, the Council should assess the potential benefits and challenges associated with each.

Option 1 – Maintain-Publish Agenda and Minutes - This option involves maintaining the current CAB format and publishing meeting agendas and minutes for public review.

Pros:

- Flexibility and adaptability: Maintaining the existing structure of the CAB with the addition of published agendas and minutes can be done easily, without requiring formal ordinances or establishing complex committee structures.
- Lower administrative burden: Fewer procedural and reporting requirements help limit the need for additional staff resources.
- Focus on dialogue and community building: Informal meetings can foster more open and conversational discussions, promoting trust and understanding between police and community members.

Cons:

- Limited formal authority: The CAB may have less official influence or ability to impact policy decisions or departmental accountability.
- Difficulty in tracking outcomes: Evaluating the effectiveness of the CAB without clear objectives may be challenging, and outcomes may be less predictable.

Option 2 - Maintain-Publish Agenda w/o Minutes and Report - This option is similar to Option 1, as it involves maintaining the current CAB format, publishing meeting agendas (without minutes), and providing regular public updates from the Police Chief at City Council meetings.

Pros:

- Flexibility and adaptability: An informal structure with the additions of published agendas and regular updates by the Police Chief can be established relatively quickly.
- Lower administrative burden: Fewer procedural requirements limit the need for additional staff resources.
- Public reporting builds community trust: Regular public updates from the Police Chief regarding the activities of the CAB at City Council meetings promote trust and understanding between police and community members.

Cons:

- Limited formal authority: An informal committee may have less official influence or ability to impact policy decisions or departmental accountability.
- Potential for inconsistency and lack of structure: Without formal procedures and defined roles, the committee's activities and outcomes may be less consistent and predictable.

Option 3 – Establish a Formal Committee Subject to the Brown Act – This option involves establishing a new committee under the City's municipal code that adheres to California's Brown Act. The process begins with the formal creation of the committee by the City Council, enacted through an ordinance. Clearly defining the committee's purpose is essential, outlining its role, responsibilities, and jurisdiction to ensure compliance with Brown Act provisions.

Next, the committee's membership must be determined. This includes identifying whether the body is advisory or decision-making. Once the committee is established, it must operate in accordance with the official council rules and procedures, including quorum requirements and voting protocols. Agendas for meetings must be publicly posted at least 72 hours in advance, providing detailed descriptions of the topics to be discussed. Meeting minutes would be recorded and maintained for public review as required by law.

Ensuring accessibility is another key requirement—meetings must be held in locations open to the public and compliant with ADA regulations. Additionally, the public should be allowed to participate and provide comments on matters within the committee's jurisdiction.

Pros:

- Increased legitimacy and authority: A formally established committee can have clearly defined powers and responsibilities, including recommending policy changes.
- Enhanced transparency and accountability: Formal structures can incorporate mechanisms for public meetings, published reports, and tracking of recommendations, which can increase public confidence in the police department's accountability.

Cons:

- Increased complexity and time commitment: Establishing a formal committee requires developing ordinances, defining roles and responsibilities, and navigating potential legal considerations.
- Higher administrative burden and cost of implementation: Formal committees necessitate formal meeting procedures, record-keeping, and reporting requirements, which would require additional staff resources. Training committee members and establishing operational procedures may require additional staff and financial resources

Both informal and formal Police advisory bodies offer potential benefits and challenges. Staff seeks the City Council's direction on this issue.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this action.

ATTACHMENTS:

No attachments