

Study Session Overview

During Council Visioning 2102, Council discussed the concept of a “Study Session”.

Items for consideration at a Study Session are similar to those that historically would have been presented at a work session, but lend themselves to a greater amount of give and take discussion between Council members and staff.

	Study Session	Work Session	Regular Session
Purpose	Discussion	Direction	Decision
Staff Report	Short staff report, background material, no recommendation	Staff report with background, analysis, recommendation & specification of direction needed	Staff report with background, analysis, recommendation & specification of decision needed
Public Input	None	If noticed for public input or if Mayor decides to take public input	If noticed for Public Input

Purpose of a Study Session:

- Understanding the issue(s)
- Problem identifications
- Understanding “best options”
- Building commitment
- Emphasis on learning

The intent and the process of a Study Session will differ from a regular work session:

- Topic may be one where future direction or decision from Council will be needed, however, the topic may be one where a leadership role may be needed from the Council and no future direction or decision will be necessary;
- Short staff report, intended provide Council with background material to review prior to the Study Session;
- The Study Session would be held either before a regular Council meeting or after a regular Council meeting (we will try having Study Sessions after Council Meetings to start and then gather feedback from Council on preference);
- The seating arrangement would change – Council would move to the table at the back of Council Chambers and sit alongside the presenting staff members;
- The format would include a presentation, information sharing and discussion. The discussion would include both Council and staff members, but not the public. It is expected that staff participation in the discussion would likely be greater than in normal work session discussion (because there will only be a short formal presentation);
- A normal Study Session would run for at least an hour and possibly longer;
- Council can submit questions or ideas they have to staff prior to the Study Session;

- No public input “While these study session are open to the public, as observers, the public should not participate in the Council-staff dialogue. May Councils short-change this arena, pushing the opportunity for learning into the formal public hearing, which is not designed to promote much in-depth analysis of complex issues.” (From the 2012 Visioning Session handout provided by Carl Neu)

Like work session,

- No formal action or vote would be taken during a Study Session; and
- The meeting would be noticed as a public meeting with no formal action.

Focus:

- Developing knowledge for decision making
- Sorting of options
- Examine consequences
- Set strategies
- Gives Council the ability to make competent & informed decisions at a later date

Key Characteristics

- Purpose: Council-staff dialogue
- Questioning – testing of ideas
- Information Exchange
- Negotiating – consensus building
- No voting
- Face to face group interaction

Staff Preparation

- Short staff report with background material and no recommendation
- Staff can send an email to Council asking for any questions Council members may have about the topic -- and please reply to sender only. Questions may or may not be addressed during Study Session. (For example, if a Council member submitted a question about the permitting status for the Kennecott mine expansion, this question could be answered offline and would not be addressed in the Air Quality study session—even though the expansion impacts SLC air quality.)

Topics

During Council Visioning 2012 the following topics were identified:

- Bond and Funding Options for Capital Projects (April 26): Nate
- High Altitude Training Center (May 17): Jason
- Substation Study Session (May 24): Matt & Diane
- Sundance Policy: Jonathan
- Night Sky Ordinance: Tyler
- Air Quality: Joan
- Hispanic Issues: Phyllis
- Business Recruitment: Bret