



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO


MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 16, 2025

TO: Honorable Budget Review Committee

FROM: Councilmember Henry L. Foster III, Chair, Budget Review Committee

SUBJECT: Budget Review Committee Meeting Format



This memorandum outlines the format for the Budget Review Committee (BRC) hearings scheduled from May 5th through May 9th, based on last year's implementation during the Fiscal Year 2025 BRC hearings and the findings and analysis in the Office of the Independent Budget Analyst's (IBA) Report 23-25, *Comparative Analysis of Budget Processes of California Strong-Mayor Cities*, published on November 17, 2023.

The report compares the budget processes of other California jurisdictions with a Strong Mayor form of government, specifically examining the practices of the City of Los Angeles, the City and County of San Francisco, the City of Oakland, and the City of Fresno. As part of its analysis, the IBA undertook comprehensive research, which involved engaging directly with representatives from each of these cities.

Based on the IBA's report and the format of last year's BRC hearings, I intend to structure this year's hearings as outlined below:

- 1. Reduced department presentations to prioritize Councilmember engagement.**
The IBA found that Los Angeles prioritizes Councilmember questions over formal departmental presentations during budget hearings. This approach was successfully implemented at last year's BRC hearings, and to continue fostering meaningful dialogue with department directors, the BRC will again limit formal presentations to allow more time for Councilmember engagement.

Questions from San Diego City Council offices for city departments regarding the Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Budget that are not being formally presented can be addressed to appropriate staff in the Department of Finance via memorandum. Please send to the following:

Matt Vespi, Chief Operating Officer
mvespi@san Diego.gov

Rolando Charvel, Director, Department of Finance
rcharvel@san Diego.gov

Ben Battaglia, Assistant Director
bbattaglia@san Diego.gov

CC: Charles Modica, Independent Budget Analyst
cmodica@san Diego.gov

Jillian Andolina, Deputy Director, Independent Budget Analyst
jandolina@san Diego.gov

The Department of Finance will respond to these questions to Council Offices through a memorandum.

2. **The BRC will be held as one continuous meeting.** Building on last year's successful format, the BRC hearings will again be treated as one continuous meeting, recessed at the end of each day and resumed the next. This structure helps the Committee manage its schedule more effectively and dedicate more time to in-depth budget discussions. This format provides greater flexibility for the Committee to manage its time and is consistent with practices in other major cities, as noted by the IBA. Public comment on the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget will be held on Monday, May 5, at 6:00 p.m. to better accommodate community members with daytime obligations. Non-agenda public comment will follow the conclusion of public comment on the budget. Holding the hearings as a single, multi-day session supports more focused discussions, improves transparency around public participation, and offers a more consistent process for both Councilmembers and the community during budget review.

3. **Dedicated hearing on budget modifications.** Due to its success during last year's BRC hearings, a dedicated hearing to discuss budget modifications will once again be held this year. The budget modification hearing creates an opportunity for the City Council to fully review and deliberate on potential budget modifications carefully and clarify to the public which modifications are under consideration and ultimately approved. The IBA found that all other cities reviewed include such a step in their process. **Thus, a budget modification hearing has been scheduled for Friday, June 6, at 9:00 a.m., providing both the City Council and the public with greater clarity and transparency on which changes are being considered and adopted.**

4. **Continued Use of the Budget Referral Response Process.** Following its success during last year's BRC hearings, the Budget Referral Response Process will be continued this year. The IBA noted that other large cities rely more on written

memos from Councilmembers to departments to address operational, fiscal, and program issues ahead of budget hearings and also to address additional questions or clarifications after presentations. To support this practice, Councilmembers are encouraged to submit any budget-related questions through written memorandums to the appropriate staff in the Department of Finance. Please send to the following:

Matt Vespi, Chief Operating Officer
mvespi@sandiego.gov

Rolando Charvel, Director, Department of Finance
rcharvel@sandiego.gov

Ben Battaglia, Assistant Director
bbattaglia@sandiego.gov

CC: Charles Modica, Independent Budget Analyst
cmodica@sandiego.gov

Jillian Andolina, Deputy Director, Independent Budget Analyst
jandolina@sandiego.gov

Memorandums will be routed to the appropriate departments as soon as they are received to ensure directors are prepared to respond during their formal presentations.

I appreciate the opportunity to share ideas for improving the BRC process. I'm committed to working alongside the Mayor's Office, City Council, the IBA, and the community to deliver a budget that not only reflects our City's progress but also ensures resources are directed where they are needed most to support all neighborhoods.

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cc: Matt Vespi, Chief Financial Officer
Charles Modica, Independent Budget Analyst
Rolando Charvel, Director, Department of Finance
Matt Yagyagan, Director of Policy, Office of the Mayor
Kohta Zaiser, Council Affairs, Office of the Mayor
Ty Burch, Deputy Director, Council Administration