



General public comment
City Council
October 19, 2022

Dear Mayor and City Councilmembers:

We are concerned about the lack of transparency in the city's commission appointment process. The city committed to "promote diversity in the membership of city commissions" in the Sundown Town resolution as a measure to correct its past history of racial exclusion. It is not clear what, if any, steps the city has taken to effectuate this commitment.

In 2022, the city declined to appoint at least one Black applicant. Omari Ferguson applied for the Public Works Commission, Planning Commission, and the Design Review Board. He is well-qualified for all three commissions based on his background as a licensed professional engineer (see Omari's application attached for your reference). Omari has a demonstrated interest in the equitable enforcement of maintenance and nuisance ordinances in the city. Initially, the city suggested Omari was to be appointed to the Public Works Commission. Then he heard nothing for several months. Omari followed up, and was told he had to reapply. He resubmitted his application. He was not selected for any of the three commissions.

In 2021, a Black resident of South Pasadena, Chris Smith, applied for the Public Safety Commission. Chris is licensed clinical social worker with experience in crisis management. He also has a demonstrated commitment to racial equity in policing. The city never responded regarding Chris's application. It appointed other residents to the vacant seats on the Public Safety Commission.

Meanwhile, many of today's commissioners are familiar faces on the dais, having already served multiple terms on various commissions. The city has a practice of appointing political and personal allies to term after term on different commissions. This perpetuates cycles of governance that keep power and influence within the hands of the same cohort of residents year after year—particularly given that commission work is a significant entry point into elected office in South Pasadena.

The city's municipal code sets broad selection criteria: To be eligible for appointment or retention on any board or commission, a citizen must be and must maintain his or her status as a resident of the city, with a strong commitment and demonstrated ability to work in a collaborative manner with other commission members and city staff.

The mayor has discretion in selecting individuals for commission appointments. But this process should promote diversity—racial and ethnic diversity, ideological diversity, and diversity of backgrounds and experience. This process should not be opaque.



We call on the city council to make public a fairer, more transparent commission appointment process. Further, we urge the city to survey the existing commissioners based on demographics (race/ethnicity, age, gender, and disability), whether they have previously served on any commission(s), and whether they are own or rent their residence in South Pasadena to determine a baseline of the commissions' diversity. All this information should be made public.

The city must change its recruiting efforts and appointment practices to rectify the city's past as a Sundown Town. A more transparent commission appointment process is necessary to build and maintain trust in our community, achieve more diversity among commission members, and give all residents who want a chance to participate the opportunity to do so.

Thank you for your consideration of this comment.

Sincerely,

Care First South Pasadena

CITY OF SOUTH PASADENA ADVISORY BODY APPLICATION

(This Application is a Public Document)

For Official Use Only

Residents are the underpinning of our community and the Mayor and City Council encourage your participation by volunteering to serve on a City Advisory Body. The City Advisory Bodies are groups of volunteers that advise the City Council and staff on matters that affect policy and issues that will affect the future of the community.

Full Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Preferred Phone No.: _____

Secondary Phone No.: _____

Email Address: _____

Current Middle/High School Grade (Youth Commission Only): _____

Are you a registered voter of the
City of South Pasadena?

Yes

No

Have you ever been convicted of a crime
other than a minor traffic violation/infraction?

Yes

No

If yes, please describe the nature of each conviction under "remarks."

(Additional sheets may be attached – You are welcome to provide a resume and/or letters of endorsement)

Occupational Experience: _____

Educational Background: _____

Why do you want to serve on a City Advisory Body: _____

Civic or community experience, membership, or previous public service appointments: _____

Additional Information/Remarks: _____

Advisory Body of Interest: _____

1st Preference

2nd Preference

3rd Preference

City of South Pasadena Advisory Bodies

To learn more about each Advisory Body, visit www.southpasadenaca.gov/volunteer:

- Animal Commission
- Cultural Heritage Commission*
- Design Review Board*
- Finance Commission*
- Library Board of Trustees*
- Mobility and Transportation Infrastructure Commission*
- Natural Resources & Environmental Commission
- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission*
- Public Arts Commission
- Public Safety Commission
- Public Works Commission*
- Senior Citizen Commission
- Youth Commission

*Disclosure of Economic Interests

Certain Advisory Bodies are required to file a Statement of Economic Interest upon appointment, termination, and annually. Under existing California law, a member of a board or commission may not make, participate in making, or attempt to influence a governmental decision if it is reasonably foreseeable that the decision could have a material financial effect on that member, the member of the immediate family, or any of his or her financial interests. Careful consideration should be given to this issue and applicants are encouraged to contact the City Clerk's Division or the Fair Political Practices Commission if they have any questions.

Who Can Be Appointed to an Advisory Body?

All registered voters within the South Pasadena city limits are eligible for appointment to an advisory body. Residency and registered voter status requirements may be waived for certain Youth Commission positions. Elected City officials and City employees are not eligible for membership on any board or commission.

How Does the Process Work?

In November of each year, the City Clerk's Division conducts a recruitment campaign for advisory body positions that are due to expire in the upcoming year. Regular appointments are made each year in January. All candidates are appointed by the Mayor and ratified by the City Council. Terms are for three years and Commissioners can be reappointed for a second term.

If an unscheduled vacancy occurs, applications on file will be considered for appointment by the Mayor, to be ratified by the City Council. Applications remain active for two years and applicants will be contacted to renew or update their applications. You are encouraged to apply at any time, as applications will be considered for unscheduled vacancies.

Where Do I File My Application?

Applications can be completed online at www.southpasadenaca.gov/volunteer. You may also return completed applications to the City Clerk's Division in person or by fax, mail, or email:



City of South Pasadena
City Clerk's Division
1414 Mission Street
South Pasadena, CA 91030

Phone: (626) 403-7230 ● Fax: (626) 403-7211 ● cityclerk@southpasadenaca.gov