

# Council Alters Frequency, Location of Sessions

Expect Panel to Meet More Often, and in Chamber Rather than Pine Room

By Bob Barrett,

Those who pay attention to our city government may have noticed an evolution in the City Council's meeting schedule the last few months. In the interest of civic engagement, I'd like bring you up to speed on the changes and the rationale behind them.

For several years, the City Council held regular meetings at 7 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday of the month in the City Council Chamber, housed in the low building out in front of City Hall. On the first Tuesday, the meeting was part of "double-header" with an afternoon City Council study session in the City Hall Pine Room.

## Meeting More Often

The councilmembers and I find great value in the study sessions, which enable us to hear staff presentations, ask questions and discuss policy – without the formal rules of a regular meeting. As time passed, it became clear that having just one a month, with the length limited by the regular meeting scheduled following, simply didn't allow enough time for in-depth discussion on multiple topics. And we have plenty to discuss.

After some experimentation, we've settled on one meeting and up to three study sessions a month. The third Tuesday will be a double-header – a 5 p.m. study session followed by a 7 p.m. meeting. The first and second Tuesdays generally will be have just a 5 p.m. study session.

For every rule, of course, there are exceptions. For instance, there will be just one double-header each in July and August, per the City Council's traditional summer schedule.

And there may be other schedule changes too, as events necessitate.

## Moving Study Sessions

For the last few years, the City Council has held its study sessions in the City Hall Pine Room. We like that arrangement because it allows for face-to-face discussion without the formality of the City Council Chamber. But no sector of Peoria's government is immune for the current budget crunch, and staff members have estimated that we can save about \$30,000 a year in set-up and TV-production costs by moving study sessions back to the Council Chamber. (The aforementioned budget sessions will remain in the Pine Room.)

Moving study sessions to the Council Chamber also jibes with upgrades the city is planning to improve chamber access for the disabled.

I am aware that these changes could cause some initial confusion. What's important to know is that the City Clerk's Office keeps track of the schedule and posts upcoming meetings at [www.peoriaaz.gov/councilmeet](http://www.peoriaaz.gov/councilmeet).

###