

TO: Housing Methodology Committee

DATE: October 10, 2019

FR: Deputy Executive Director, Policy

RE: HMC Chartering Conversation Overview

## HMC Overview

The Housing Methodology Committee (HMC) has been convened with the following goals:

- **To advise** ABAG staff on the RHNA allocation methodology for the 6<sup>th</sup> RHNA cycle (2022-2030).
- **To ensure** the methodology and resulting allocation meet statutory requirements.
- **To ensure** the methodology and resulting allocation are consistent with the forecasted development pattern included in Plan Bay Area 2050.

The HMC is a key part of ABAG's approach to creating the RHNA allocation methodology. Through the HMC, ABAG staff seek to facilitate dialogue and information sharing in order to enable coordinated action to address the Bay Area's housing challenges.

As ABAG strives to increase housing choices for people at all income levels and improve regional equity, the agency seeks to ensure that a breadth of voices are included in the methodology process. Unlike most other Councils of Governments in California, ABAG has invited stakeholders from across the Bay Area with a diverse range of backgrounds to join local elected officials and local agency staff in shaping the allocation methodology.

The HMC is comprised of:

- 9 elected officials (one from each Bay Area county)
- 12 jurisdiction housing or planning staff (at least one from each county)
- 13 regional stakeholders representing diverse perspectives, from equity and open space to public health and public transit
- 1 partner each from State and Federal government

ABAG staff will share information about the HMC's deliberations and recommendations with the ABAG Regional Planning Committee (RPC). Serving as the primary committee for the working group to interact with, the RPC will then use the input from the HMC to make recommendations to the ABAG Executive Board, which has the authority to make final decisions.

## HMC Roles and Responsibilities

Committee Members will be expected to:

- **Prepare for, attend and actively participate** in monthly HMC meetings, currently scheduled for October 2019 through May 2020 in both San Francisco and Oakland
- **Support and guide ABAG staff's work** in developing the RHNA allocation methodology such that it meets statutory requirements and is consistent with Plan Bay Area 2050

- **Contribute to dynamic discussions**, respectfully engage in sometimes challenging conversations and bring innovative ideas to the group that will ultimately make a recommendation to ABAG staff and the ABAG Regional Planning Committee on the Bay Area's housing allocation methodology
- **Be thoughtful** when requesting staff resources for research or other preparations

ABAG Staff will be expected to:

- **Prepare materials** for HMC members with as much advance notice as possible
- **Be as responsive as practicable** to the needs of HMC members as they think creatively about innovative housing methodology considerations
- **Be transparent** about the process and any needs of HMC members
- **Provide guidance** to ensure the allocation methodology will meet the requirements of Housing Element Law

### **Proposed HMC Decision-Making Framework**

HMC meetings will be primarily focused on creating space for respectful dialogue and opportunities for those with dissenting opinions to share their perspectives and be heard.

That said, some form of group decision making will likely be necessary to move through decision points and arrive at a helpful methodology recommendation for ABAG staff.

ABAG staff recommend the HMC utilize a modified "consensus" decision making process for the HMC. The following excerpt from Seeds for Change describes "Consensus Decision Making":

Consensus decision making is a creative and dynamic way of reaching agreement between all members of a group. Instead of simply voting for an item and having the majority of the group getting their way, a group using consensus is committed to finding solutions that everyone actively supports, or at least can live with. This ensures that all opinions, ideas and concerns are taken into account. Through listening closely to each other, the group aims to come up with proposals that work for everyone.

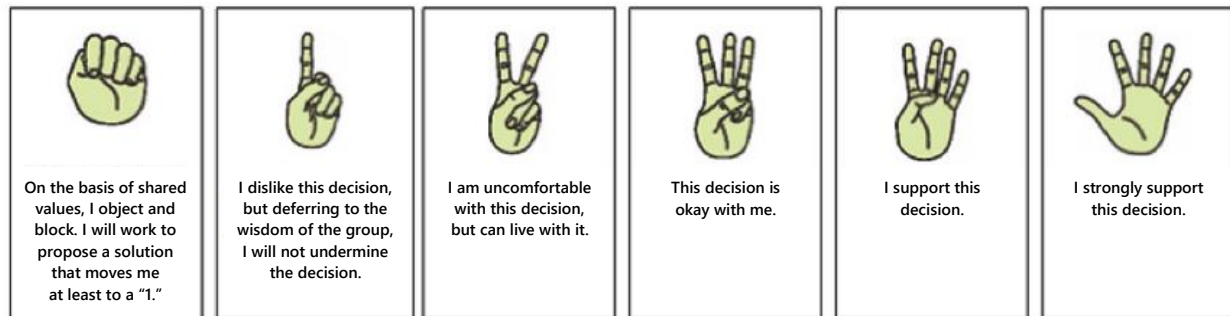
By definition, in consensus no decision is made against the will of an individual or a minority. If significant concerns remain unresolved, a proposal can be blocked and prevented from going ahead. This means that the whole group has to work hard at finding solutions that address everyone's concerns rather than ignoring or overruling minority opinions.

Some groups that use a consensus decision making process require that all group members consent to any proposal for it to be adopted by the group. A super-majority threshold is common. Other groups use the consensus process to maximize agreement, but allow proposals to pass without full unanimity.

ABAG staff recommend working with a “modified consensus model” where nine or more individuals can block a proposal from moving forward, but enthusiastic support for any decision point is not the goal.

HMC members will also be allowed to “stand aside” and not vote if they are not supportive but do not want to block the decision from moving forward.

For the purposes of the HMC meetings, staff recommend using the “fist of five” voting technique often used in a modified consensus process:



### ***How Decision-Making Would Work***

Working with a modified consensus decision making model, decision making might look like:

- When a question is called or a decision is needed, the facilitator can ask the group to show their “fist of five” and see where the group is in terms of support. If most of the group is showing one or two digits, consent is available (though not enthusiasm) and the decision moves forward.
- If nine or more fists are showing, the decision would be considered blocked. More discussion is necessary to arrive at a “consensus” vote where eight or fewer members are blocking. If that is not possible, the facilitator will urge the committee to move on.
- If HMC members block a decision, they take on responsibility for working to find a mutually agreeable solution for the entire group through the discussion that follows the blocking vote. The option to “stand aside” is available to any HMC member who does not consent but is unwilling to take on finding a mutually agreeable solution.
- If needed, the “modified consensus model” can allow for voting where a majority +1 prevails. For example, if there are ten people present, and each person can vote with up to 5 digits (representing strong support), a decision will “pass” if 26 digits are held up around the room.

### ***ABAG Staff's Role in Decision Making***

Because the HMC's ultimate goal is a methodology recommendation to ABAG staff, ABAG staff can weigh in on potential decisions before they are made. In particular, this is necessary to ensure there is significant staff bandwidth to accommodate research tasks in advance of the next HMC meeting. ABAG staff can let the HMC know that a request could not be reasonably accommodated, thus deferring action on the potential decision.

### **HMC Meeting DRAFT Norms**

Norms are the unwritten rules for how we act and what we do. They are the rules that govern how we interact with each other, how we conduct business, how we make decisions, how we communicate, etc. When establishing norms for any group, it's worthy to consider: time, listening, confidentiality, decision making, participation, and expectations.

Sample norms include:

- Start and end on time.
- Listen respectfully to all ideas.
- Express disagreement in a professional manner.
- Have good snacks.

### ***Proposed HMC Norms for Discussion:***

- We will focus our discussions on how best to increase housing for all income levels in the Bay Area.
- We will remain professional and respectful in all of our interactions.
- We will use our time together wisely, arriving prepared by reading the packet materials shared ahead of each meeting.
- We will prioritize a thoughtful, robust process that makes transparent the "how" and "why" of our path towards recommendations.
- We will use the modified consensus and "fist of five" decision making tools.
- If interested, we will ask any "blocking," "stand aside," or 1's and 2's to share written thoughts within 3 business days to be included in the HMC meeting notes.
- We will share ideas or comments about the methodology with the entire group rather than directing them solely to ABAG staff.