



## Administrative Report

DISCUSSION ITEM

**TO:** HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** James Vega, City Manager

**DATE REPORT PREPARED:** April 19, 2023

**MEETING DATE:** July 11, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Request from Mayor Stix to remove Planning Commissioner Jeffrey Starkweather from Planning Commission

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### Recommendation

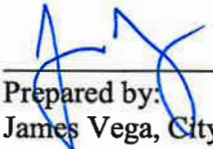
That City Council consider Mayor Stix's request to remove Planning Commissioner Jeffrey Starkweather from Planning Commission.

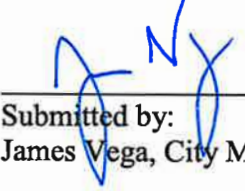
### Discussion

Per the City Council's protocols, the Mayor has the "power to add items to the Council agenda without the need for concurrence by another Member of the City Council." On July 5, 2023, the Mayor submitted the attached request and added the item to the July 11, 2023 agenda. Consistent with past Council practice, the item is being placed at the end of the agenda without staff analysis.

### Fiscal Impact

Staff has not analyzed this matter or determined fiscal impact pending Council direction.

  
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Prepared by:  
James Vega, City Manager

  
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Submitted by:  
James Vega, City Manager

### Attachment:

A – Request from Mayor Stix – Removal of Planning Commissioner Jeffrey Starkweather

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I put city council consideration of removal of Commissioner Starkweather on the agenda because he has circulated innumerable emails that were detrimental to the function of our local government. In one email dated August 10th, 2022, he disparaged several city residents who were running for city council seats in the November election. He referred to them as “weak young female opponents.”

There is a minimum standard of behavior for commissioners. The protocols for operation of our city state, “The citizens of the City of Ojai are entitled to have a fair, ethical and accountable local government. It is necessary that the public have confidence in the integrity of its government and in those who represent them.”

His characterization of young women interested in serving on our council as “weak” crossed the line. It is very important that commissioners communicate in a way that supports rather than belittles the residents of our town.

In addition, I am gravely concerned about Commissioner Starkweather’s unrelenting and inappropriate requests to city staff that they perform research and compile information on his behalf. Mr. Starkweather sent over 140 demands to staff during the time period June 14th, 2022 to April 5th 2023, which if acted upon could have collectively required hundreds of hours of work. During this same time period, Mr. Starkweather also sent numerous emails disparaging our city manager and city council members.

In a February 23rd, 2023 email, City Manager James Vega responded to an email from Commissioner Starkweather in which Mr. Starkweather was debating policy. City Manager Vega responded, “You’re sending several of these [emails debating/discussing policy] a day at this point but you’re sending policy debate to staff which is not the process and staff are not able to spend city resources on that - unless and until the City Council directs staff to do so...In the future, these would be appropriate to send to the City Council - and it will be their choice whether or not to agendaize items - but staff can’t explain why they do or do not choose to and won’t be able to respond to these sorts of emails.”

It is not helpful when commissioners repeatedly disparage local residents, city staff, and council members. Also, they may not direct city staff to work on their behalf. Therefore, I suggest that the City Council strongly consider removing Commissioner Starkweather from the Planning Commission.

Thank you,  
Mayor Betsy Stix