

RESOLUTION NO. 15-24

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SUGAR LAND, TEXAS ADOPTING
A CITY COUNCIL POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND
COMMITTEES.**

WHEREAS, the City Council wishes to adopt a policy that establishes procedures for City boards, commissions, and committees; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF SUGAR LAND, TEXAS:

Section I. That the City Council of the City of Sugar Land, Texas adopts a City Council Policy and Procedure for Boards, Commissions, and Committees as described herein:

**CITY COUNCIL POLICY AND PROCEDURE
BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES**

BACKGROUND:

It is the policy of City Council to annually appoint citizens to serve on various boards, commissions and committees. Each board and commission exercises a number of advisory and quasi-judicial powers and functions essential or useful to the operation of city government.

Boards and commissions are a vital part of city government, providing an opportunity for citizen involvement in the governing processes of the City and providing City Council with input, ideas, feedback and suggestions on public policy.

Boards and commissions are created and enabled in different ways. Some are creations of governing statutes and laws, while others are creations of City Council. Terms of office and qualifications for office vary; terms begin and expire either with the beginning of the fiscal year (October) or the beginning of the calendar year (January).

PURPOSE:

The policy and procedure establishes guidelines for appointment of citizens to boards, commissions and committees; the recognition of their many contributions; and provides reference for orientation and training for members. The policy and procedure applies to all citizen volunteer boards, commissions and committees and the appropriate staff who support them. The policy and procedure does not apply to City Council member committees and task forces.

RESPONSIBILITY:

The Office of City Secretary is responsible for implementation of this policy and procedure.

OBJECTIVE:

The intent of City Council is to manage the appointment process by:

- Keeping boards and commissions strong and viable through appointment of qualified members who have a basic understanding of the role and responsibility of the board or commission sought; understanding of time commitment; and what is expected of members.
- Using application, resume; general and supplementary questionnaires with defined description and criteria of each board or commission.
- Active City Council involvement in direct recruitment by discussing application process with constituents, and open vacancy recruitment on city web site and through media publications and press releases.
- Maintaining low turnover of quasi-judicial boards and commissions and advisory boards with specific criteria set by City Council.
- Review of member performance, attendance, expertise, experience, and decision-making ability; and consider member participation in appropriate training and continuing education when considering reappointments.
- City Council to obtain input from Chairs of selected board and/or commission.
- City Council interview of selected applicants for selected positions.
- City Council to give strong consideration to both the reappointment of incumbents and new appointees.
- Appointments are made thirty days prior to the beginning of term.
- City Council to discuss each appointment in workshop and where allowed by law in closed executive session, prior to appointing and voting in open session.

APPOINTMENT PERIOD:

The City Council shall make appointments to board, commission and committees in September of each year before the beginning of terms starting in October of each year; and in December for terms beginning in January.

BOARD DEFINITIONS:

BOARD TYPES: Boards, commissions and committees serve many different roles within the City. It is important that staff and the board members understand the role of each board and the authority and responsibility for the board and its members. To help define these roles, each board, commission and committee will be designated by type as defined below:

- **Advisory Boards:** An advisory board serves as an ongoing forum for providing public input to the City Council and appropriate department, providing them with advice on issues. Advisory boards are not authorized to make decisions on behalf of the City. The City Council will consider input from the advisory boards, as well as from other sources, in making decisions on issues. The City Council may or may not take action that is in agreement with the advice of an advisory board.

Advisory boards may not speak for the City or take independent positions on issues with the public or the press. The purpose of the boards is only to advise the City Council or the appropriate department.

- **Quasi-Judicial Boards and Commissions:** These boards and commissions are defined in state statute and have certain statutory responsibilities and authorities, as designated by statute. The boards and commissions have the authority to hold formal hearings and issue decisions. The decisions are not subject to review by the City Council. Members of these boards must be cognizant of protecting the unbiased quasi-judicial nature of the board and its formal hearings. Activities of these boards and commissions are limited to those authorities granted by statute.
- **Committees and Task Forces:** These are special ad-hoc panels created by the City Council for a specific project or task and are limited in duration and are not ongoing. The responsibilities of the committee or task force shall be designated by resolution by the City Council at the time the committee or task force is authorized. The City Council will consider the input of the committee or task force in making decisions on issues. The City Council may or may not take action that is in agreement with the advice of the committee or task force. A committee or task force may not speak for the City, and are to only advise the City Council or the appropriate department, and are not to take independent positions on issues with the public or press.

TERMS:

Unless otherwise mandated by state statute or unless deemed required by City Council, no member of a board or commission shall serve on any one board or commission for more than eight consecutive years. In the event an individual fills the unexpired term of a board member; that unexpired term shall not be counted as a complete term.

Terms shall be staggered, beginning October 1st and ending September 30th of the following year, except for Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone Boards whose terms shall end on December 31st and begin on January 1st of each year.

Mid-term appointments to positions that become vacant may be made at any time or may be postponed, at the discretion of City Council, to the regular term period.

RECRUITMENT:

City Council will seek the most qualified individuals representing a cross-section of gender, diversity, geographical representation and representation of the public at large, including viewpoints and special interest and expertise.

The Office of City Secretary will market and advertise board, commission, and committee vacancies in the official newspaper and on the City web page ninety (90) days prior to term expiration date and on an as needed basis throughout the year; and extend invitations periodically in the City newsletter, print media, and other produced materials that might engage interested residents.

The recruitment deadline for returning the application will be stated in the public notice.

APPLICATIONS:

Applications shall be available in the Office of City Secretary and on the City web page. Applications may be submitted at any time and will be retained for one year for use during the appointment process and when vacancies occur. Citizens may apply for more than one board and may prioritize their requests on the application form.

All citizens interested in serving on a board, commission, committee or task force shall complete an official application. Completed applications along with resume, completed general and supplementary questionnaires shall be submitted to the Office of City Secretary, and during the regular recruitment period must be returned by the stated deadline.

Applicant books used during the appointment process will be compiled and made available to City Council in July of each year prior to City Council considerations in August for September appointments.

ELIGIBILITY AND QUALIFICATIONS:

Eligibility for board, commission, committee or task force appointments is defined by city charter, ordinance, resolution, or state statute that established and governs the board, commission, committee or task force.

Because of the time commitment involved, and to allow more citizens the opportunity to participate on a board, commission, committee or task force, serving on more than one board or commission is discouraged.

The City Council reserves the right to appoint individuals to multiple boards, commissions, committees, or task forces when, in the opinion of the City Council, it is in the best interest of the City.

Appointments to boards and commissions that have specific eligibility requirements must be made in accordance with the governing requirement; appointed members must continue to meet the eligibility requirements during the term of appointment. If a member does not continue to maintain the necessary requirements, the member shall resign the appointed position.

RESIDENCY:

Except by special circumstance as approved by City Council, all members of boards, commissions, committees or task forces must be residents of the City.

ATTENDANCE:

Members are expected to be available to attend most board meetings. If a member becomes unable to attend most board meetings, the member should submit his or her resignation so that a replacement may be appointed. The City Council may dismiss any member for poor attendance. A member who misses three (3) successive meetings, except for special circumstances, is deemed to have automatically resigned from his or her position.

APPOINTMENT PROCESS:

The City Council will make appointments to boards, commissions, committees and task forces. Staff may assist with recruitment of new members but should not make recommendations for appointments, unless specifically requested to do so by City Council.

Selection of members to the boards and commissions will be carried out as follows:

- City Council will review all applications, resumes, and completed general and supplementary questionnaires as provided in the applicant books to find the most qualified individuals representing a cross-section of gender, diversity, geographical representation and representation of the public at large including viewpoints, special interest and expertise.
- The Office of City Secretary will send board and commission members with terms expiring, a reappointment letter of interest which they will return, indicating if they desire a reappointment. Members who desire reappointment will be considered along with all applicants.
- By agreeing to serve on a board, commission, committee or task force the member agrees to abide by the policies and procedures of the City. Any board, commission, committee or task force member who violates the terms of the ordinances, policies and procedures or the bylaws of the board may be asked to resign or be removed from the board, commission, committee or task force by the City Council.

NOTIFICATION:

The Office of City Secretary shall prepare letters for the Mayor to notify appointees of their appointment by City Council, with copies to the board staff liaison. The Office of City Secretary will prepare letters notifying all applicants of the status of their application.

VACANCIES:

If vacancies occur during the year, the position may be filled from the current list of applicants using the appointment process delineated in this policy or through recruitment for interested volunteers. The Office of City Secretary will maintain applications on file for one year. For difficult to recruit boards and commissions, applications will be maintained for two years.

Resignations from any board, commission, committee or task force shall be in writing addressed to the Mayor; the Office of City Secretary will notify City Council by Memorandum. A vacancy occurs on the effective date shown in the resignation, when a member is removed, or has been deemed to have automatically resigned from the position.

ALTERNATES:

Alternate members shall be appointed as deemed appropriate by the City Council. Alternate members have full membership and voting privileges.

OATH:

The Office of City Secretary will schedule appointee's oath of office for a City Council meeting in October; December and vacancy appointee's oath will be prior to the first meeting.

ANNUAL APPRECIATION RECOGNITION:

City Council recognizes the valuable input and contributions of boards, commissions, committees and task force members and hosts an annual recognition activity to acknowledge all members and their contributions to the governance process.

The Office of City Secretary is responsible for coordinating and hosting the annual event and for an appreciation gift to each member. Department Directors and Staff liaisons receive advance notification of event details in order to remain informed and answer questions from members, should they arise.

STAFF SUPPORT:

Staff support is available to the board, commission, committee and task force through the responsible staff liaison assigned to support each board, commission, committee or task force.

It is the responsibility of the staff liaison to ensure the board, commission, committee or task force has adequate and reasonable support staff. Staff liaisons and staff support will not be members of the board, commission, committee or task force to which they are assigned.

ORIENTATION:

Upon member appointment, staff liaisons will notify the appointee regarding orientation for new members.

New members are encouraged to attend meetings before their term begins and established board members are encouraged to share their experience and knowledge with new members.

Staff liaisons will hold an annual orientation workshop as part of a meeting of the full board. The workshop will address:

- Introduction of new appointees;
- Authority, limitations, responsibilities under State Statutes, City Charter and City Codes;
- Policies and rules of order;
- Open meetings, conflicts of interest, and disclosures;
- Ethics training by City Attorney;
- Roles, responsibility and attendance;
- Materials or topics relevant to the work of the board or commission, including statutes, ordinances, resolutions, bylaws, and this policy and procedure.

CONTINUING EDUCATION:

It is the City Council policy that the City budget funding for relevant training, continuing education and reference materials for members of City boards and commissions.

Planning and Zoning Commission:

Staff liaison responsible for board support will provide an annual program for board training and education to include:

- (a) Attending the annual Texas Chapter American Planning Association Conference and Planning Commissioner's Short Course; or,
- (b) Annually attending a conference and training program of comparable length, and sponsored by the Urban Land Institute; or,
- (c) Attending a comparable program of city planning, land development or related study presented by an accredited college or university, extension service, agency or professional association.

The Staff liaison and support staff will prepare and present a formal annual program for Commission orientation and training to include:

- Commission roles in preparing, amending and implementing the Comprehensive Plan;
- Commission roles in various development review processes;
- Role and function of the Airport Commission; and
- Other topics as necessary for or relevant to the work of the Commission.

Zoning Board of Adjustment and Building Standards Commission:

Staff liaison responsible for board support will provide an annual program for board training and education to include:

- (a) An annual board orientation workshop as part of a meeting of the full board. Workshop topics will include:
 - Standards of review for consideration of board agenda items;
 - Appeals of board decisions;
 - Staff role and review procedures in bringing matters before the board;
 - Sample prior board cases and decisions.
- (b) To ensure boards are prepared and can serve effectively when called to meet, a second annual workshop/training will be held as part of a meeting of the full board to review:
 - Summary of key concepts covered in board orientation;
 - Recent/pending code amendments;
 - New legislative or judicial impacts on the business of the board; and,
 - Reference materials relevant to board education and effectiveness.

Sugar Land 4B Corporation:

Each year, all SL4B Corporation board members will attend training provided by the City Economic Development staff based on a required training program established by the Texas Economic Development Council and related City programs and plans.

The purpose of the training is to ensure that corporation board members are thoroughly familiar with City goals and objectives as they relate to the SL4B Corporation and are properly informed on legal requirements to operate the corporation and administer the sales tax imposed for the benefit of the corporation.

DUTIES/ROLES:

All boards, commissions, committees, and task forces are required to meet at least one (1) time per year.

BUILDING STANDARDS COMMISSION:

The commission is comprised of members and alternates who have knowledge of the property maintenance codes, and are qualified by experience and training to decide matters related to building construction and property maintenance. The commission must be cognizant of protecting the unbiased quasi-judicial nature of the commission and the formal hearings. Activities of the commission are limited to those authorities granted by state statute. Decisions of the commission are the final city step for an applicant; further action, by an applicant is to a court of law.

The commission may, in addition to the duties provided by law:

- (1) Hear and decide appeals that allege an error in an order, requirement, decision or determination made by an administrative officer or employee in the application or enforcement of any building code adopted by the city.
- (2) Hear and decide appeals that allege an error in a decision or determination made by an administrative officer or employee related to the denial or revocation of a Residential Rental Property License.
- (3) Authorize a variance from the terms of any building code adopted by the city.

As a result of the infrequency of meetings, all members and alternates attend all scheduled meetings. This ensures alternates are familiar with relevant issues and prepared to hear and vote on a rotating basis.

ANIMAL CONTROL ADVISORY BOARD:

The Animal Advisory Board is created by state law with appointments being made pursuant to membership requirements and qualifications as provided by state law. The membership of three must include one member being a licensed veterinarian; one member being a representative from an animal shelter welfare organization; and one member being a citizen of the city that actively volunteers with the animal services division.

The purpose of the board is to review and recommend procedures for the care and maintenance of animal shelter facilities and impounded animals to ensure compliance with state law; and to periodically review the City animal control ordinances and make recommendations for revisions. State law requires that the board meet at least three (3) times a year.

PARCS ADVISORY BOARD:

The City Council vision for the PARCS Board is to create a board to provide input, feedback and advice on projects and programs to enrich the visual and aesthetic environment of the City and to advise on other matters relating to long term goals and objectives for parks, recreation and cultural activities, streetscape and urban forestry programs, to enrich the visual and aesthetic environment of the City.

The nine member board focus is on providing collaborative leadership in the cultural arts sector, building cultural arts programs and related parks and facilities, and understanding user needs to enhance the overall quality of life by providing leisure and cultural services while preserving and promoting natural resources.

Members should possess skills and qualifications useful to parks, art, recreation, culture, and streetscapes; represent various community sectors; and have professional expertise in one or more of the following backgrounds:

- Parks, Arts or Recreation User/Advocate;
- Landscape Architect, Architect, Interior Designer, or Urban Planner;
- Fine Arts Professional or Educator;
- Arts or Architecture Historian, Administrator, or Curator;
- Business or Education Leader/Philanthropist

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION:

The Commission is authorized under city charter and state law for two types of roles; 1) recommendations concerning the *use* of land; and 2) decisions on the *division* of land. Types of cases the Commission hears include:

- Rezoning (land use)
- Conditional Use Permits (land use)
- Zoning Regulation Amendments (land use)
- General Plans (land use and division of land)
- Preliminary Plats (division of land)
- Final Plats (division of land)

On land use cases the Commission makes a recommendation to City Council for final approval. Commission recommendations assist the City Council in reaching decisions that are reasonable and beneficial to the City.

State law authorizes the Commission to make final decisions on plats, but limits discretion, authority and actions.

ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT:

The board is a quasi-judicial body authorized under state law and city regulations. The Board hears three types of cases: Zoning Variances, Special Exceptions, and Appeals. An appeal may occur when a staff member has made a decision regarding a regulation and the applicant believes the interpretation or application of the standard was made incorrectly. Decisions of the Board are the final city step for an applicant; if an applicant chooses to further appeal a decision, it is to a court of law; decisions are not subject to review by City Council.

SUGAR LAND 4B CORPORATION:

The Corporation is managed by a seven member Board of Directors authorized to exercise the powers set forth by the Development Corporation Act and the Bylaws of the Corporation. The board serves at the pleasure of City Council. The purpose of the Corporation is to promote, assist, and enhance economic development activities; and quality of life opportunities within the City that promote economic development.

The bylaws prescribe that a director be a resident of the City and that no director serve more than three consecutive two-year terms (6 years). By state law, three members of the board must not be city officials or employees. The city council and city manager serve as ex-officio members of the board. The Board annually elects from the membership the president and vice-president to serve a one-year term.

SUGAR LAND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION:

The Development Corporation is a Section 4A Corporation authorized to levy an economic development sales tax to promote industrial and manufacturing enterprises. In 1993 the electorate approved establishing Sugar Land Development Corporation as a non-profit development corporation to administer economic sales taxes collected.

The purpose of the Corporation is to promote, assist, and enhance economic development activities in the City. The Corporation is managed by a Board of Directors, which is authorized to exercise the powers authorized by the Act and pursuant to Corporation Bylaws.

The statute governing the Corporation provides that the board of directors be appointed by the governing body of the municipality. Pursuant to the Bylaws, City of Sugar Land City Council serves as the board of directors; terms run concurrent with the city council member term of office.

SUGAR LAND LEGACY FOUNDATION:

The Foundation is organized exclusively for charitable purposes as allowed by law, including supporting the City in the acquisition, ownership, construction, development, improvement, operation, or maintenance of land and facilities owned or controlled by the City including land, facilities, and activities for recreation, entertainment, sports, the arts, and similar activities that benefit the citizens of the City of Sugar Land.

The Foundation focuses its efforts on encouraging persons, businesses, and corporations, to make contributions of funds or donations of real estate or other property of value, to the Foundation.

Foundation bylaws provide for a board of directors between five and fifteen appointed by the City Council to serve staggered two year terms that begin October 1 and end on September 30. To qualify to serve as a director, a person must be committed to achieving the purpose of the Foundation and have the financial skills, knowledge, experience or resources necessary to achieve those purposes.

City Council appoints a director to serve as president, who serves at the pleasure of the City Council and may be removed at any time. The Board elects directors from the membership to serve as vice-president, secretary, and treasurer; officers serve one-year terms.

SUGAR LAND HERITAGE FOUNDATION:

Sugar Land Heritage Foundation is a 501c3 organization for the purpose of preserving the history of Sugar Land and the historical structures, records and artifacts.

The bylaws provide for a Board of Directors of sixteen consisting of both appointed directors and elected directors. The number of directors may be between six (6) and nineteen (19), but not fewer than six (6) or more than nineteen (19). Currently there are fourteen (14) directors.

The bylaws provide that, *"...the City of Sugar Land, Texas will appoint two (2) directors; Imperial Sugar Company will appoint two (2) directors; Cherokee Investments or its successors will appoint one (1) director; and Fort Bend County Museum Association will appoint one (1) director. These six (6) directors are referred to herein as the Appointed Directors."*

A City Council Member fills one of the City positions; and a member of City Staff is appointed to fill one position; directors serve three year terms.

IMPERIAL REDEVELOPMENT DISTRICT:

The District has the powers provided for in Chapters 49 and 54 of the Water Code.

The District is governed by a five member Board of Directors, appointed by the City Council to serve four year terms.

Board members govern the district and have the authority to act on issues of:

- Implementing or contracting with other entities to implement a Tax Increment Financing District Project Plan.
- Developer requests for infrastructure reimbursement pursuant to the Statutes and the City Development Agreement with Cherokee.
- Issuing bonds to finance eligible project costs.
- Establishing District ad valorem tax rates.

TAX INCREMENT REINVESTMENT ZONE ONE:

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone One is the Board for Sugar Land Town Square comprised of nine members. The Board is a recommending body to City Council for administration and implementation of the zone project plan and the reinvestment zone financing plan for public improvements in Town Square. Annually the Board adopts a budget for the current fiscal year, and has the authority to enter into contracts and agreements within such budget allocation. The board meets quarterly or as needed to further the development of Town Square.

Members serve two-year terms; pursuant to provisions of State law, Position Three serves as Board Chairman.

TAX INCREMENT REINVESTMENT ZONE THREE:

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone Three is a special district for redevelopment of the Imperial Project. The board is comprised of five members; City Council annually appoints members who serve staggered two-year terms which begin on January 1st of each year. Position Two and Four terms expire in December 31st of even number years; Position One, Three and Five terms expire December 31st of odd number years.

Annually City Council appoints from any position on the board a member to serve as chair for a term of one year beginning on January 1st of each year. The Board of Directors elect from the members a vice chairman, secretary, and such other officers as the directors see fit.

TAX INCREMENT REINVESTMENT ZONE FOUR:

Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone Four is a geographic area identified as the Entertainment District to facilitate a program of public improvements for various types of entertainment venues, theaters, plazas, stadiums, parks and associated projects within the district.

The Board of Directors consists of eight (8) members appointed to two year terms. The City Council appoints four directors to fill Positions One through Four, Position Five is appointed by Fort Bend County Commissioners Court and Position Six represents the Drainage District; Positions Eight and Nine are appointed by Fort Bend County Municipal Utility Districts No. 138 and 139 respectively; there is not a Position Seven.

Directors appointed to odd-numbered positions terms expire December 31st of even number years; even-numbered positions terms expire December 31st of odd number years.

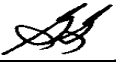
City Council annually appoints, from any position, a member to serve as chair for a term of one year beginning January 1st. The Board of Directors elect from the members a vice chairman, secretary, and such other officers as the board of directors see fit.

Section 2. That Resolution No. 13-38 is repealed.

APPROVED on September 15, 2015.

/s/
James A. Thompson, Mayor

ATTEST:





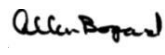
Glenda Gundermann, City Secretary

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA REQUEST

AGENDA OF:	09-15-15	AGENDA REQUEST NO:	III-D
INITIATED BY:	GLENDAGUNDERMANN CITY SECRETARY	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT:	CITY SECRETARY
PRESENTED BY:	GLENDAGUNDERMANN CITY SECRETARY	DIRECTOR:	GLENDAGUNDERMANN  CITY SECRETARY
		ADDITIONAL DIRECTOR (S):	N/A
SUBJECT / PROCEEDING:	RESOLUTION NO. 15-24 REPEALING RESOLUTION 13-38 AND ADOPTING AMENDED CITY COUNCIL POLICY 3000-09 POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES		
EXHIBITS:	RESOLUTION NO. 15-24		
CLEARANCES		APPROVAL	
LEGAL:	MEREDITH RIEDE,  CITY ATTORNEY	ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER:	N/A
PURCHASING:	N/A	ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER:	N/A
BUDGET:	N/A	CITY MANAGER:	ALLEN BOGARD 
BUDGET			
EXPENDITURE REQUIRED: \$		N/A	
CURRENT BUDGET: \$		N/A	
ADDITIONAL FUNDING: \$		N/A	
RECOMMENDED ACTION			
Approve Resolution No. 15-24 providing for a policy and procedure to appoint citizens to serve on various boards, commissions and committees; and repealing Resolution 13-38.			

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The policy of City Council is to annually appoint citizens to serve on various boards and commissions. Each board and commission exercises a number of advisory and quasi-judicial powers and functions essential or useful to the operation of city government.

Boards and commissions are a vital part of city government, providing an opportunity for citizen involvement in the governing processes of the City and providing City Council with input, ideas, feedback and suggestions on public policy.

City Council Policy 3000-09 is amended to state the intent of City Council to manage the appointment process to keep boards and commissions strong and viable through the appointment of qualified members who have a basic understanding of roles and responsibilities and an understanding of the time commitment; to include City Council involvement in direct recruitment by discussing the application process with constituents; to provide for open vacancy recruitment on city web site and through media publications; to maintain low turnover rate for quasi-judicial boards and commissions and advisory boards with specific criteria set by City Council; to obtain input from Chairs of selected board and commissions; provide for City Council interview of selected applicants for selected positions; and to give strong consideration to both the reappointment of incumbents and new appointees.

The policy has been reorganized for better flow; all appointed boards and/or commissions have been redefined and respective roles and responsibilities restated inclusive of continuing education requirements.

EXHIBITS