

COUNCIL POLICY MANUAL

Policy 7.4.1 Provision of Staff/Administrative Support to Councilmembers

POLICY PURPOSE:

It is the purpose of this policy to establish guidelines and standards regarding City resources and support for Councilmembers, including administrative support and supplies.

POLICY STATEMENT:

In order to effectively discharge the responsibilities of elected officials, the Mayor and Councilmembers are entitled to receive administrative services. The City Manager shall assign a person or persons to provide these administrative services and shall so advise the City Council. The various kinds of staff/administrative support provided to Council are outlined in Chapter 7, Section 4 of the Council Policy Manual.

- I. Council Equipment, Materials, and Supplies. Certain supplies and materials are required by Councilmembers to discharge their functions. The City Manager shall make available to Councilmembers the following materials and supplies, which shall be used predominantly for City business and only incidentally for personal use.
 - A. The means to access City Hall – the Office of the City Manager administrative suite, the Council Office, the Council Chambers, and City Conference Rooms.
 - B. Customary office supplies and business cards for official City use. Items will be standardized. Business cards shall be initially provided to newly elected Councilmembers and when a title changes. At all other times, business cards and office supplies shall only be furnished upon request. Councilmembers shall not use business cards that do not reflect their official position (Mayor, Vice Mayor, or Councilmember) at the time of use.
 - C. Newly elected Councilmembers shall be provided a City lapel pin and a City name badge. Name badges shall also be provided when a title changes. Councilmembers shall not use name badges that do not reflect their official position (Mayor, Vice Mayor, or Councilmember) at the time of use.
 - D. Councilmembers may receive one City logo branded piece of clothing per Council term year, in a style to be chosen by individual Councilmembers from standard choices available. Apparel will be ordered in the first quarter of the calendar year, following certification of election results if the preceding year was an election year. The Executive Assistant to Council will send a request for apparel preference to City Council and order the items.
 - E. The City shall offer Councilmembers a standard City device (laptop or tablet and cell phone) for use during their term(s). The device will be managed by the City and replaced according to the City's replacement schedule. Any device issued will be returned to the City when a Councilmember leaves office. The Executive Assistant to Council shall, in conjunction with the Information Technology Department (ITD), maintain a log of all issued equipment and returns.
 1. The Mayor's Office in City Hall will be furnished with a laptop and other

equipment to facilitate meetings in much the same manner as other City Hall Conference rooms and offices.

2. Public Records Act and Brown Act issues are associated with the use of this type of equipment. The data contained in the equipment is public property and considered a public record and therefore subject to all Public Records Act and Brown Act policies.
3. Technical support to maintain and facilitate the use of equipment is limited to City devices and official duties, and only at the same level as is provided to City employees. Councilmembers must bring equipment to City facilities for repair or on-site maintenance. The Executive Assistant to Mayor and Council coordinates equipment services with ITD staff.

II. Meetings: Scheduling and the Use of City Facilities. The Executive Assistant to Mayor and Council shall provide assistance to Councilmembers in making arrangements for meetings held in City facilities. Councilmembers shall advise the Executive Assistant to Council of their request in advance of any meeting or use of City facilities, excepting the Council and Mayor offices. Normal scheduling methods shall be used. This provision does not apply to regular or special City Council meetings, which are scheduled through the City Clerk's Office. Neither Councilmembers nor City staff shall use any City resources for political campaigns.

III. Ceremonial Events. Requests for a City representative at ceremonial events will be handled by City staff. The Mayor serves as the designated City representative. If the Mayor is unavailable, then City staff will determine whether event organizers would like another representative. If yes, the Mayor will recommend which Councilmember should be asked to serve as substitute.

- A. Invitations received at City Hall or to the Council AnswerPoint are presumed to be for official City representation. Invitations addressed to Councilmembers at their homes are presumed to be for unofficial, personal consideration.
- B. This provision does not apply to ticketed events, for which Councilmembers may choose to their travel funds if the event qualifies as an approved use of funds (see Council Policy 7.4.4 "Council Travel and Conferences").

IV. Council Announcements and Speeches.

- A. Council Announcements are prepared and scheduled by the Executive Assistant to Council. Departments should forward their request for a Council Announcement to the Executive Assistant to Council at least one week prior to their requested regular Council meeting. Copies of announcements shall be provided to the Mayor, Reading Councilmember, and City Clerk in advance of the Council meeting.
- B. Council-Initiated Speeches. Councilmembers are entitled to staff assistance for speech preparation for apolitical, City-related events and programs or to support Council-approved actions or advocacy positions. Such assistance shall be requested of the City Manager for purposes of assigning appropriate staff assistance. Requests should be made at least two weeks in advance. An outline of issues to be covered as well as available supporting material is to be provided by the requesting Councilmember. A draft of the speech will be provided to the Councilmember for final review at least three days prior to the event.
- C. Department-Initiated Speeches. Departments initiating the preparation of

speeches for Councilmembers shall first obtain direction and approval from the City Manager. Departments shall either prepare the speeches themselves, or submit a request to the Communications Office at least two weeks prior to the scheduled event.

V. Council Correspondence. Preparation of correspondence relating to official City business will be provided upon request within the resource constraints of the adopted budget.

A. The Mayor or their designee shall sign all correspondence on behalf of the entire Council. All correspondence in which the City takes a position on a piece of legislation or issue shall be signed by the Mayor, and a copy shared with all of Council. Before routing to the Mayor for signature, all correspondence in which the City takes a position on a piece of legislation or issue must be approved by the Department Director. City Manager approval is required in cases when it is unclear if an official City policy supports performing advocacy. The originating Department Director, City Manager, and OCM Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) Liaison shall be copied on all IGR-related correspondence.

1. The City Manager shall assign appropriate staff to assist the City Council in the preparation of correspondence. Assigned staff prepares correspondence and coordinates with the Executive Assistant to Council for Mayor or Councilmember signature.

B. All correspondence conveying thanks or appreciation on behalf of the entire City Council shall be signed by the Mayor. This does not preclude individual Councilmembers from creating their own personal correspondence. However, a Councilmember may not request nor use City resources in the preparation of personal correspondence or correspondence in support or pursuit of political office either for themselves or for someone else.

C. Staff will not prepare correspondence representing a Councilmember's personal point of view or dissenting point of view from an official City policy or Council position. If Councilmembers use their title, position, or City letterhead to express a personal opinion, the official City position must be stated clearly so the audience understands the difference between the official City position and the viewpoint of the Councilmember (see Code of Conduct for Elected Officials for more information). A copy of any and all correspondence developed by or for a Councilmember on City letterhead shall be provided to the Office of the City Manager for filing. A copy of correspondence representing a Councilmember's personal point of view shall be shared with all of Council.

D. Copies of all correspondence are retained in accordance with the City's adopted Records Retention Schedule and available to the public as part of the Public Records Act request process. Copies shall be also furnished to Councilmembers upon request to the Executive Assistant to Mayor Council (see Council Policy 7.3.13 "Staff-Council Communications and Requests for Information and Records").

VI. Mayor and Council Mail and Meeting Packets

A. Mayor and Council Mail. Mail delivered to City Hall for Council and the Mayor is reviewed by staff. Unless marked confidential, the mail is date-stamped, opened, and reviewed. If pertaining to City business, the Executive Assistant to Council shall scan a copy of the letter and route via e-mail to Council, City Management, and appropriate Department Director(s) (see Administrative Policy Chapter 1, Article 17 "Customer Inquiries and Concerns" and section VII below).

The originals shall be retained in accordance with the City's adopted Records Retention Schedule and available to the public as part of the Public Records Act request process. Invitations and correspondence not related to City business shall be placed in Council mailboxes. Councilmembers shall pick up their own mail. Any mail not picked up shall be placed at their dais seat at the next Council meeting.

- B. Council Meeting Packets. Council meeting packets are sent electronically to Council in advance of the Council meeting by the City Clerk's Office (see Council Policy 7.3.19 "Council Meetings").

VII. Community Member Inquiries and Concerns. Emails, letters, phone calls, and online service requests sent to the Mayor and Council AnswerPoints are reviewed by the Executive Assistant to Council. Staff shall make every effort to confirm receipt of customer contacts the same business day they are received.

- A. Inquiries Relating to Administrative or Operational Issues. All non-emergency community member inquiries and concerns dealing with the administrative or operational affairs of the City shall be routed to the appropriate Department Director(s) for information and follow-up, copying City Management. Any community concern initially directed to Council shall be tracked by the Executive Assistant to Council. Staff shall respond to the inquiry or complaint, most often in the same form it was received and copy their resolution to the Executive Assistant to Council. A copy of the staff response shall be retained and made available to Councilmembers for review upon request.

1. Staff shall follow the City's Service Level Agreements for customer service and response (see Administrative Policy Manual Chapter 1, Article 17 "Customer Inquiries and Concerns").
2. Inquiries concerning any City incident or operation shall not be answered until it is safe and practical to do so, and at such time as it will not jeopardize staff response to the incident or operation.
3. Inquiries related to City records or documents shall be handled as a Public Records Act Request, in accordance with the process established by the City Clerk's Office.

- B. Inquiries Relating to Council Policy. All community member concerns or inquiries dealing with Council policy shall be routed to the Mayor and Council, copying City Management and appropriate Department Head(s). Copies of communications related to items on upcoming Council agendas shall be copied to the City Clerk's Office and included, whenever possible, in the supplemental meeting materials.

VIII. Implementation.

The City Manager shall monitor the provisions of this policy, and all policies found in Chapter 7, Section 4 of the Council Policy Manual, within the City Manager's Charter responsibilities. Disagreement in interpretation shall be resolved by the City Council. The City Manager shall institute administrative policy to implement these policies. At the time a new Councilmember is seated, the Mayor and City Manager should review these policies with them.

Annually, the City Manager shall review the resource requirements necessary to support the level of service specified in this policy, and recommend as a part of the proposed budget necessary changes of budget resources.

(Adopted: Council Policy Update, RTC #14-0061 (November 25, 2014); Amended RTC #15-0317 (April 7, 2015); Amended RTC 25-0912 (11/18/2025))

Lead Department: Office of the City Manager

For reference, see also:

- A. Council Policy 7.3.13 *Policy 7.3.13 Staff-Council Communications and Requests for Information and Records*
- B. City Charter, Section 807, *Prohibition Against Councilmanic Interference*
- C. Code of Ethics and Conduct for Elected Officials