

MEMO

Date: June 9, 2016

To: City Manager

From: Jim B. Clarke, Mayor

Subj: PROPOSED POLICY REGARDING RESPONDING TO EMAILS FROM RESIDENTS

Background

From time to time, each of us on Council receive emails, either individually or as a group, from residents bringing a situation to our attention that may require a City response as opposed to emails asking us to vote a certain way on an issue before the Council. Generally, we are not aware as to whether the email has been directed just to one member of the Council or all members. We are also not aware who, if anyone, has responded to the email. As such, there may be a tendency to respond to the resident, as well as to answer the question or address the issue. This can lead to situations where a resident could receive up to five responses and, if any attempt is made by us to address the inquiry, to receive five different and potentially conflicting responses. There is also the issue that if the Council member forwards the email to City staff, to whom should it be sent.

Action

It would be the policy of the Council that emails to Council members, either individually or collectively, from residents pertaining to situations that require a City response:

1. The Councilmember should feel free to acknowledge the receipt of the email and inform the sender that the email has been forwarded to an appropriate City staff person to respond. The Council members should not attempt to explain a City policy nor to make any commitment on behalf of staff. The Council member may also state that he or she has been asked to be copied on any response from the City staff to ensure the issue is being dealt with in a timely and complete manner.
2. The Council member should forward the email to the appropriate City department head and copy the City Manager. Council members should not forward emails to division heads or lower-level staff even if he or she thinks that person is the best staffer to respond to the email. Let the department head determine who is the appropriate person on staff to handle the issue. If the Council member is in doubt as to which department head to forward the email to, he or she can send it to Shelly Wolfberg in the City Manager's office and she will make the determination.