



Staff Report

City Council

Item No. {{section.number}}.C

Meeting Date: September 25, 2024

From: Tracey Hermosillo, City Clerk

Title: Discussion Regarding the Implementation of an Administrative Policy Related to the Handling of Public Comments Received via Email, Letter, or Other Forms of Communication for City Council, Commission and Committee meetings.

RECOMMENDATION:

To provide Staff with direction on whether or not there is support to implement an Administrative Policy related to the handling of public comments received via email, letter, or other forms of communication for City Council, Commission and Committee meetings.

BACKGROUND:

Staff was directed to evaluate our practices related to the handling of reading comments into the record at Council, Commission and Committee meetings that were received via email, letter or other forms of communication.

Current Practices

Currently, the City follows these procedures for handling public comments submitted via email, letter or other forms of communication:

Comment Submission:

- Comments are accepted until 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting.

Reading of Comments:

- If requested, the Clerk reads these comments into the record during the meeting.

Distribution of Comments:

- All communications received by 2:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting are provided to each member of the Council, Commission or Committee members via email.
- Hard copies are also provided to Council/Commission members at the meeting.
- Comments are made part of the record.

Survey of Local Practices

The City Clerk conducted a survey of local cities in the Coachella Valley regarding their practices for handling public comments. The cities of Palm Desert, Desert Hot Springs,

Indian Wells, Indio and La Quinta responded as follows:

Reading Comments:

- All surveyed cities do not read comments into the record, with the exception of one City that will do so as an ADA accommodation when requested.

Distribution:

- All surveyed cities provide written comments if received prior to an established deadline.
- Public Access: Some cities provide counter copies of written communications for the general public in a binder.

Record Keeping:

- All surveyed cities make comments part of the record by including them in the minutes. One city additionally states for the record that a comment was received by "the name of the person" and whether they support or oppose a specific item.

DISCUSSION:

After discussion with the City Attorney and staff and receiving responses from local cities in the Coachella Valley, it was decided to consider implementing an Administrative Policy related to the handling of public comments received via email, letter, or other forms of communication. This policy will apply to City Council and all Council-appointed Commissions and Committees.

The following are the recommendations that will be incorporated into the Administrative Policy, this policy will be signed-off by the City Manager, distributed to staff and available on the City's website:

Proposed Policy Details

Comment Submission Deadline:

- Staff will continue to receive public comments until 2:00 p.m. on the day of the relevant meeting.
- Instructions for the submission of comments will be provided on each agenda for the City Council, Commissions and Committees respectively.

Distribution of Comments:

- Hard copies of comments will be provided to Council, Commission, and Committee members (continuing current practice).
- Copies will also be made available for the general public to review (new practice).

Record Keeping:

- Comments will be made part of the official record.
- The minutes will include:
 - a. The name of the individual submitting the comment.
 - b. A brief statement summarizing the content of the comment.

Reading of Comments:

- Comments will not be read into the record during the meeting (change from current
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practice).

Having an Administrative Policy in place for the handling of public comments received via email, letter, or other forms of communication will ensure the following:

- Ensures transparency in the public comment process.
- Provides a standardized approach across all City Council and appointed bodies.
- Allows sufficient time for staff to process and distribute comments before meetings.
- Maintains a clear record of public input for future reference.
- Aligns with common practices of other cities in the Coachella Valley.
- Improves meeting efficiency by not reading all comments aloud.

The Administrative Policy is provided for your review and comments only, no formal action is required of the City Council.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no Fiscal Impact with this item.

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:

None

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Administrative Policy