

May 6, 2014

Dear _____:

You recently inquired about a successful way to manage the agenda preparation process. As I understand it, presently any member of council can place an item on the agenda for consideration of the full board. As I further understand it, no policy has been established to guide this important matter in the city.

Please be advised that Section 2(f)(1) of the city charter authorizes the city council to “determine its rules of procedures and provide for their enforcement.”

Accordingly, a best practice worth consideration is to formalize the process for agenda preparation and distribution through the adoption of a policy via resolution. The following suggested policy should assist in the management of the agenda development process upon its adoption by the city council:

Agenda Preparation and Distribution

1. The agenda will be prepared by the city manager. The finished agenda with associated material for council meetings and work sessions will be placed in each council member's mailbox in City Hall at least three days in advance of the scheduled meeting day. A copy of the agenda packet shall be made available to the news media at the same time.
2. If a member of city council desires that an item be placed on the agenda for formal consideration, such matter shall be first presented in concept to the full council under the City Council Comments section of the agenda, or at a work session, with the council to direct the city manager to include the requested item on the next or a future meeting agenda for formal consideration.
3. Agenda materials concerning emergency items shall be furnished council members at the earliest time possible.

The adoption of such a policy has the following benefits:

1. The responsibility for agenda preparation is centralized in the chief administrative officer that is best positioned to prepare full and complete background information to assist council in the deliberation of the matter;
2. An orderly process is established for the conduct of the people's business without the surprise factor of having items “show-up” at the last minute for discussion and formal consideration;

3. The council does not waste its important time discussing an item that the council, as a body, has no interest in pursuing.

Please be advised that such a policy is not designed to discourage council discussion or thwart council discourse on an unpopular or limited-view policy proposal; rather, it's purpose is to formalize how such matters advance (or not) following city council discussion on the merits of the suggestion.

Please let me know if you have further questions regarding this matter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeffrey J. Broughton
Municipal Management Consultant