

# CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA CITY COUNCIL AGENDA



<b>Agenda Date:</b>	October 20, 2014
<b>Action Required:</b>	Approval of Council Procedures
<b>Presenter:</b>	Maurice Jones, City Manager
<b>Staff Contacts:</b>	Maurice Jones, City Manager
<b>Title:</b>	<b>City Council Policies and Procedures</b>

## **Background:**

At their annual retreat on August 29, 2014, the City Council met to discuss the accomplishments of the past year, how they interact with one another and as a team, and the roles and responsibilities of the Council and the City staff. During the retreat, the Council developed a draft of operating guidelines and procedures for consideration this evening.

## **Discussion:**

The Council created five subject areas – Effective Policy Making, Council Communications/Citizen Interaction, Effective City Council/Staff Roles, Agenda/Meeting Management, and Role/Operation of Council-Appointed Committees. The associated policies and guidelines listed below were developed by the Council and staff in attendance at the retreat. They are presented for discussion and approval by the Council.

### **Effective Policy Making**

1. Council will be provided with good information in a timely fashion in order to enable good decision-making. Good information sharing by staff includes:
  - Recognizing that Councilors often have significant preparation to do, thus facilitating this by presenting information clearly and efficiently
  - Presenting and formatting information so that it facilitates easy comprehension and high quality decision-making (i.e. being concise; using tables or other graphics to illustrate data points; providing summaries, geographic information, or links to supporting information, etc.)

- Providing good policy analysis when appropriate (i.e. pros and cons, alternatives, potential consequences of each alternative, etc.)
  - Providing staff's professional recommendations where appropriate
  - Sharing history, background, best practices, and trend data where appropriate
  - Recognizing that more lead time may be needed when the policy issue is complex
2. Council will take responsibility to prepare for effective policy making by:
    - Reading all material and preparing for the meeting
    - Exercising discretion in asking questions and indicating when questions need to be answered (i.e. asking, "Do I need this information in order to make a decision?")
    - Trying to enable adequate staff preparation and response time
    - Saying in the meeting, "I don't have enough information to make an effective decision" when the situation warrants it
    - Recognizing that many questions from the Council may indicate that the policy decision should be deferred
  3. The successful implementation of Council's policy making will be measured and evaluated through P3 (the City's Performance Management System), reporting on strategic plan progress, and other mechanisms.

### **Council Communication/Citizen Interaction**

1. Individual Councilors will not purport to speak for Council unless it is a decision on which the Council has taken a position. Councilors will avoid making promises regarding what Council or staff members will do to respond to issues and concerns.
2. Councilors will copy all responses to residents to the Mayor and City Manager.
3. Councilors will inform the City Manager when there is a legitimate concern from a citizen or employee, especially a major policy, customer service, or personnel issue, and avoid dealing with the matter alone.

### **Effective Council/Staff Role**

1. When Councilors meet with staff members, they will inform the City Manager.
2. Councilors may ask for clarification from staff members but will avoid giving staff direction or asking for a response that uses considerable staff time.
3. Councilor requests for staff work (i.e. research or analysis) that requires considerable staff effort or time will be requested and supported by a majority of the Council or the City Manager.
4. Councilors will stay at the policy level and avoid over-involvement in the daily operation of government.

5. If a Councilor has concerns with a staff member and his or her job performance, the Councilor will speak to the City Manager in private and allow him to manage the issue.
6. When Councilors hear or have a concern regarding staff performance, they avoid taking a public position on the situation or an individual's competence and ensure that they have all the facts and history on the matter.

### **Agenda/Meeting Management**

1. Councilors will seek to have efficient meetings by:
  - Limiting the number of items on the agenda
  - Putting similar items on the same agenda when possible to avoid duplication of background information
  - Accepting written reports whenever possible (i.e. in cases where items are information only and action is not needed)
  - Limiting the time for outside oral reports and recognizing that Councilor questions will lengthen the presentation time
  - Balancing needs effectively, including recognition that a lengthy discussion of topics in order to inform the public may reduce the time that is needed for effective policy dialogue and decision-making on the issues
  - Taking personal responsibility for not making redundant comments and limiting the time spent on responses
  - Asking the City Manager to provide a written report to the Council at a subsequent meeting on any items to which the Council has asked him to respond (the goal is to implement this process in January of 2015)
2. When Councilors disagree with one another, they will avoid personal attacks and negative characterizations.
3. After Council reaches a consensus or the vote is taken, Councilors will support the decision and avoid undermining the decision or attempting to undo it through subsequent actions.

### **Role/Operation of Council-Appointed Committees**

Two basic types of Council committees include those that are ongoing and those that operate on an *ad hoc* basis (for a limited time to accomplish a specific project).

The Council will appoint and use committees in circumstances such as the following:

1. When it is helpful to call upon people that are in the business who can offer expertise, especially where expertise is lacking (examples: Towing Advisory Board, PLACE, Tree Commission, etc.)

2. When legally required (examples: Planning Commission, Social Services Advisory Board, Community Development and Block Grant program, Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority, Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, MPO, etc.)
3. When there are many deep issues to be explored and resolved through information gathering, research, analysis, best practices research, or the provision of recommendations (examples: Water Resources Program, Blue Ribbon Task Force, etc.)
4. When Council wants specific citizen input (examples: West Main Street, Belmont Bridge, etc.)
5. When Council desires to have or support an ongoing collaboration (examples: CAT, TJACH, PACC, etc.)

Questions and role clarification issues that should be addressed before forming a committee in order to avoid challenges include the following:

1. How do we make the committee's work transparent to the public and report on its activities and progress?
2. How do we effectively inform Council of the committee's activities and progress?
3. When there is a Councilor on a committee, what is his or her role?
4. How does the Councilor represent the Council's position when a vote is required? How should the Councilor ensure that he or she knows the direction in which the Council wants to go?
5. How do we balance representation when one Councilor has a very large role on a Committee, thus having the potential for significant influence on policy decisions?
6. How should committees be staffed to ensure that staff resources are used effectively?

The Councilor/Committee role would be most effective if we observe these guidelines:

- Councilors should give a report of the committee work at a regular interval (to begin in February in February of 2015)
- Develop a City website format for Council committee structure that provides consistent information (where appropriate) to include purpose, charge, membership information, contact information, products, agendas, and minutes (recognizing that there are variations in the types of committees and resources that are available to them)
- Ensure that committee websites are up to date (develop a process and procedure)
- When voting, if a Council position is not clear, check in with the Council
- Make it clear to the committee when you cannot speak for the Council
- Make your role as a liaison of the Council clear and ensure that you do not represent your individual viewpoint (though you may have personal expertise in that area)
- Represent the Council on the committee and not your own interests. When expressing a personal opinion, ensure that you qualify it as such.
- The purpose of some of the outside boards is to provide expertise; we will use good judgment in managing their efforts productively

- Committees should be invited to present to Council when the Council would benefit from hearing information directly from them versus the Council liaison
- Council will be mindful of the time that Council committee volunteers provide to the City and treat the members with respect
- Council may revisit issues with any committee that appears to be working ineffectively and may make adjustments as needed
- Avoid making assumptions regarding committee work and enable Councilors to inform and educate regarding their status
- The City Manager may bring committee and staffing-related issues to the Council in order to provide awareness and to effectively manage them

**Community Engagement:**

There has been no direct community engagement on this issue. However some of the guidelines were developed in response to suggestions from members of the public.

**Alignment with City Council's Vision and Priority Areas:**

***Smart, Citizen-Focused Government***

The delivery of quality services is at the heart of Charlottesville's social compact with its citizens. Charlottesville's approach to customer service ensures that we have safe neighborhoods, strong schools, and a clean environment. We continually work to employ the optimal means of delivering services, and our decisions are informed at every stage by effective communication and active citizen involvement. Citizens feel listened to and are easily able to find an appropriate forum to respectfully express their concerns.

**Budgetary Impact:**

None

**Alternatives:**

Council could choose not to adopt the policies and procedures.

**Attachments:**

None