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|  | **OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL** |  |
| ANNA LOPEZ BROSCHEPRESIDENTJACKSONVILLE CITY COUNCIL |  | SUITE 425, CITY HALL117 WEST DUVAL STREETJACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202 |
| OFFICE (904) 630-1452 |  | E-MAIL: CLBROWN@COJ.NET |
| FAX (904) 630-2906 |  |  |
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May 24, 2018

(1:00 P.M.)

**TASK FORCE ON OPEN GOVERNMENT**

**MEETING MINUTES**

(PRELIMINARY)

**CHAIRS:** Hank Coxe, Esq. and Dr. Sherry Magill

**MEMBERS:** Ywana Allen

Rachael Fortune

 The Honorable Alberta Hipps

 Ron Littlepage

 Michael Lockamy

 Audrey Moran

 The Honorable Jim Overton

 Sabeen Perwaiz

 Cleve Warren

**Also:** Colleen Hampsey- Council Research; Thomas Carter-Council Auditor’s Office; Jon Phillips-Office

of General Counsel

For all other attendees, please see sign in sheet.

**Meeting convened:** 1:05 pm  **Meeting Adjourned:** 4:04 pm

**Introductions**

The Co-Chairs, Hank Coxe and Sherry Magill, called the meeting to order. The Task Force members agreed to a proposed edit in the May 17, 2018 meeting minutes, to reflect that Craig Feiser reviews all email records requests, but not those of JSO. With that amendment, the minutes from the May 17, 2018 meeting were approved.

**Public Access to Government**

Brian Hughes-Mayor’s Office Chief of Staff and Marsha Oliver-Director of Public Affairs were in

attendance to discuss public access to government, from the Administration’s perspective. The Task

Force members thanked Mr. Hughes for taking the time to attend the meeting. Mr. Hughes began by

affirming Mayor Curry’s support for transparency.

Chairman Coxe inquired about the CPAC process, which was discussed in a previous meeting. Mr.

Hughes said that the Mayor attended some CPAC meetings as a candidate and that the Mayor holds the

position that CPACs are vital to community involvement, which in turn improves neighborhoods. Ms.

Oliver mentioned the improvements in the Neighborhoods Department under the Curry Administration,

which includes an active services manager and staff tasked with coordinating neighborhood outreach. Mr.

Hughes also noted that the new Director for Intergovernmental Affairs, Jordan Elsbury, may be an asset

to attracting participation of a younger demographic in community groups, due to Mr. Elsbury’s age.

When asked about access to public records and any political review of the Administration’s emails prior

to release, Mr. Hughes said that the release of public records by the Administration is in compliance with

state law. Any political review before release is not conducted to delay the release of records, but to

prepare the Mayor’s staff of any potential news that may arise as a result, according to Mr. Hughes. Mr.

Hughes emphasized that media record requests are fulfilled in a timely manner and in accordance

with state law, even if it is not at the pace some in the media may prefer.

When asked about the lack of interdepartmental emails posted publically by the Mayor’s Office, Mr.

Hughes said that it is the personal preference of this particular Mayor to conduct business through

telephone and face to face meetings, and not through email exchanges; and that any blank slots on the

Mayor’s public calendar are for dedicated work time with staff. Ms. Oliver was asked about the official

document retention policy, and she indicated that she would find it and distribute to the members.

When asked about why the Mayor or his staff does not hold regular press briefings, Ms. Oliver said that it

is the policy of this administration to put the Mayor out in public only as needed to enhance the urgency

of whatever statement he may make. Ms. Oliver was also asked about why department directors are not

encouraged to speak directly with the media, which is due to the Administration’s policy to cultivate a

unified message that flows from the Office of Public Affairs and not piecemeal from department heads.

**Presentation on Technology and Municipal Government**

Greg Bugbee- Chief Technology Officer Novus Insight, Inc. gave a presentation about various methods to

connect the public to local government through technology, which accentuate access and usability. Mr.

Bugbee demonstrated the features used by other cities, such as Boston, which are more user-centric and

San Diego, which has a searchable public records database.

**Closing Comments**

After the presentation, the Task Force members talked about possible recommendations for the final

report: the creation of a data specialist for the City, improvements for public engagement, changes in the

public comment period during the legislative process to allow for more public interaction, and the use of

an explanatory video in council chambers to inform the public of the legislative process. Ms. Moran noted

that transparency cannot happen without support from the administration and council, with someone to be

a champion for such a cause. Mr. Warren shared a quote from Thomas Jefferson, to be included in the

record, “wherever the people are well informed they can be trusted with their own government.”

Before adjourning the meeting, the Task Force members discussed all of the topics that had been

covered and potential planning ideas for future meetings. It was suggested that Council President-elect

Bowman and Vice President –elect Wilson be invited to discuss their perspectives about public access to

government for the upcoming leadership term. It was also suggested that a JSO representative attend to

discuss their public records practices, and Pat Gleason, Special Counsel for Open Government for the

State of Florida, be invited as well.

**Public Comment**

John Nooney advocated for more opportunities for public comment in meetings, particularly at

the Waterways Commission. Mr. Nooney said that at some Waterways meetings, there is no public

comment period noted on the agenda.

Conrad Markle spoke about the need for the public to have access to public records.

Both comment cards are on file.

With no further business, the Co-Chairs adjourned the meeting at 4:04 pm.

**The next Task Force Meeting will be Tuesday, May 29, 2018 at 1:00 pm in the Lynwood Roberts Room, 117 West Duval Street, First Floor.**

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

Posted 5.29.18 5:00 pm