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|  | **OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL** |  |
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June 12, 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-EXCUSED

 Audrey Moran-EXCUSED

 The Honorable Jim Overton

 Sabeen Perwaiz

 Cleve Warren-EXCUSED

**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:** 1:06 pm  **Meeting Adjourned:** 3:22 pm

**Introductions**

The Co-Chairs, Hank Coxe and Sherry Magill, called the meeting to order. The Task Force members approved the minutes from the June 6, 2018 meeting.

**State Attorney’s Office-Public Records**

State Attorney Melissa Nelson spoke about public records, an area of focused improvement for the State

Attorney’s Office. Melissa Nelson took office as State Attorney for Florida’s Fourth Judicial Circuit in

January 2017. Soon afterwards, Mary Kelli Palka, Editor of *The Florida Times-Union*, discussed the

delays and existing backlog of requested records with Ms. Nelson. After reviewing the process, Ms.

Nelson implemented multiple changes to make it better: appointing a Public Records Administrator,

workflow analysis, performance metrics, updated policies and procedures and extensive staff training.

Ms. Nelson also distributed a staff-wide memo which designated a 24 hour turnaround time for attorneys

to provide records/files to the Public Records Division, previously, because the attorneys may have been

using the files for current work, took longer. Ms. Nelson said the improvements were put in place to

benefit the public and to minimize legal liabilities which may stem from lengthy timelines for record

requests.

Miriam Nelson, SAO Public Records Administrator, gave a PowerPoint presentation about the SAO Public Records Division improvements and webpage demonstration. The Public Records Division has three full time staff, one part time employee and one volunteer (there are 330 total employees at the SAO). One area of focus has been to improve customer service, as applicable to those requesting public records. For better service, the Records Division now has more communication with requestors and a FAQ section and feedback button have been added to the SAO webpage. Fees for public records are uniform and posted, and estimates are provided prior to work conducted. Mandatory training sessions have occurred for SAO attorneys and staff, which have enhanced a culture shift towards transparency that is reflected in SAO leadership. Redaction software is utilized to assist in the redaction of confidential information within records, and in the near future credit card payments, and monthly media billing, will be accepted for public record request fees. While no formal method for text message retention is in place at this time, an affordable system is being sought and attorneys are instructed to save all text messages as public records. SAO records are prioritized in the order received and are not subject to political review prior to release. Overall, the Public Records Division improvements have doubled departmental efficiencies.

**City gift disclosure policies**

Ethics Director Carla Miller took questions from the Task Force members about the City gift policies.

Ms. Miller noted that Jacksonville’s policies, which prohibit gifts valued more than $100 with annual

limits, are more evolved than many other cities. Gifts to the Mayor and City Council members are posted

on the City website and the distribution of “gifts to the City” are intended to be transparent. Some gifts,

like Jaguars tickets given to the City through contractual terms, are not posted. When asked about the City

travel policy, Ms. Miller said that all city-related trips must be approved. When asked about Mayor

Curry’s flight on Jaguars Owner Shad Khan’s plane last year to review development projects in three

other cities, Ms. Miller said it was her understanding that that trip was dual purposed in nature was paid

for in part by PAC funds which fall under state election laws. When asked about the Mayor’s recent trip

to Dallas, which coincided with the NFL Draft, Ms. Miller explained that the trip was city related for

economic development purposes and as such was approved by the Ethics Office and OGC and was City-

funded.

**Discussion**

The Task Force members discussed what they heard from both presentations. The consensus was that the SAO should serve as a model to other agencies, for the efforts towards improvements and cultural shift towards transparency. Regarding the gift disclosure policies, the group mentioned that gifts distributed through contracts (like Jags tickets) should also be publically disclosed.

There was also some discussion about the final report draft. Sabeen agreed to work on the CPAC portion, Rachael will address culture and leadership, and Ron Littlepage will copyedit the document. Sections identified for the report include: public records, public access, communication (emails/text messages), the City website, and the City budget.

For the next meeting, Pat Gleason Attorney General-Special Counsel for Open Government will attend. Some of the Task Force members offered specific questions to be sent in advance to Ms. Gleason in preparation for the meeting. It was also requested that Peggy Sidman, Managing Deputy and Deputy General Counsel Legislative Affairs Department, attend to explain the differences between public hearings, public comment and public participation in Council meetings. The incoming Council leadership, Councilmen Bowman and Wilson, have thus far been unable to attend any Task Force meetings. Chairman Coxe will reach out to them for a third time to see if they can come to one of the two remaining meetings for a brief discussion about their visions for transparency in the upcoming term.

**Public Comment**

Conrad Markle submitted a comment card for the record.

With no further business, the Co-Chairs adjourned the meeting at 3:22 pm.

**The next Task Force Meeting will be Tuesday, June 19, 2018 at 1:00 pm in the Don Davis Room, 117 West Duval Street, First Floor.**

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

Posted 6.13.18 5:00 pm