



**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
RESEARCH DIVISION**

117 WEST DUVAL STREET, SUITE 425  
4<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR, CITY HALL  
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202  
904-255-5137

**COUNCIL MEMBER HOWLAND NOTICED MEETING ON  
CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATION WITH EXECUTIVE BRANCH STAFF**

**Meeting Minutes**

**February 3, 2025  
3:00 p.m.**

**Location:** Lynwood Roberts Room, 1<sup>st</sup> floor, City Hall

**In attendance:** Council Members Nick Howland, Randy White, Kevin Carrico, Reggie Gaffney Jr., Raul Arias, Michael Boylan, Ju’Coby Pittman, Rahman Johnson, Chris Miller, Joe Carlucci, Mike Gay

**Also:** Mike Weinstein – Mayor’s Chief of Staff; Jason Teal – Office of General Counsel; Yvonne Mitchell – Administrative Services Division; Maritza Sanchez – Legislative Services Division; Scott Wilson, Carla Miller – Mayor’s Office

**Meeting Convened:** 12:08 p.m.

Council Member Howland convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. Mr. Howland reviewed the email recently received by council members from the Mayor’s Office outlining a new policy regarding communication between the council and the administration regarding service requests and reporting of issues or problems.

Mayor’s Chief of Staff Mike Weinstein said the policy is intended to capture council members’ requests and needs to be sure they are received, answered promptly, and results tracked, and for no other reason. They are trying to be more responsive and efficient and avoid having 38 council members and ECAs making calls to departmental personnel where they could get lost. Council staff are requested to call the MyJax issue line at 630-CITY where a council member-specific reporting line will be established. He said the policy is not intended to stop council members from making informal contacts, asking easy questions and making simple information requests, but to capture and track requests that will require substantial time, resources and personnel to address. The administration recognizes that communication between the administration and council are not ideal at the moment, and they are working on making improvements.

Mr. Weinstein noted that a recently passed state law prohibits governments from accepting anonymous complaints, such as neighbors making code violation complaints against neighbors. He recommended that

council members not convey anonymous complaints to the City on behalf of citizens trying to avoid the law because those complaints will be notated as the council member's issue and responsibility in the tracking system. He said public safety requests will always be prioritized and handled quickly. The policy will enable more efficient use of departmental employees and resources if council members aren't constantly calling departments with requests for priority action diverting them from their normal work. He requested that requests and issues be reported through 630-CITY and said the system will evolve and improve as we get experience and as changes need to be made. The mayor's council liaisons will facilitate communications with the council to ease the burden on the department heads and division chiefs.

Monica Cichowlas, Customer Service Manager with the MyJax system, said the council-specific contact address is [CouncilMyJax@coj.net](mailto:CouncilMyJax@coj.net). Reports/requests to that address will be handled by experienced call center employees who know where to refer issues for action. Progress reports will be available through the tracking system.

Council Member Gaffney Jr. asked why the new policy wasn't personally communicated to council members before it went out via email; there should have had advance warning and a meeting on the subject before the policy went into effect. Mr. Weinstein apologized for not briefing the council in advance. He had intended to address a council meeting but that didn't come to pass. Mr. Gaffney asked how department heads and division chiefs feel about this policy. Mr. Weinstein said they would prefer not to be responsible for tracking informal calls to their office and would prefer a better input and tracking system.

Council Member Joe Carlucci said a policy intended to improve communication was poorly communicated and that seems to be a trend in this administration. Council members aren't a distraction; they have to deal with many more calls from constituents than the administration would get from 38 council members and ECAs. He said this policy is a terrible solution and would have been avoided with prior communication. Mr. Weinstein said the department heads and division chiefs work for the administration, not the council. Mr. Carlucci said the problem seems to be in the mayor's office, not the departments. The departments work for the Chief Administrative Officer, not Mr. Weinstein as the Chief of Staff.

Council Member Johnson said he is very disappointed by Mr. Weinstein's attitude of disrespect toward the council. The administration should have talked to the end users (the City Council) about what they need and what would work rather than just announcing a policy change. He recommended putting the policy change on hold pending further discussion about better communication. The MyJax system just doesn't work effectively in his experience; lots of times nothing happens but the ticket is closed as if the issue is resolved. He feels like he has had good relations with the departments about work that needs to be done in his district.

President White asked if department directors have complained to the mayor's office about council member calls; Mr. Weinstein said yes, in the sense that those direct requests for action make prioritization of their work difficult. It puts the departments in the position of having to decide what to do first when a council member makes a request on top of their normal work priorities. Mr. White suggested revoking the policy and said he will appoint a council committee to address better communication with the administration.

Council Member Arias said this could be a good policy if implemented correctly, but it's been badly communicated. Communication is a problem in general. For example, no notice was given to the council that the Black History Month event scheduled for today at City Hall was cancelled. He suggested the need to work on internal communications on the administrative side of the government and not with council. 630-CITY is improving but it's not what it needs to be. He questioned who would look at issues put into

the Council-specific email address – a specially designated employee or any employee in the call center. He said everybody – council and mayor – works for the taxpayers. Council members call departments looking for action because 630-CITY takes so long for anything to happen. He asked what the mayor's council liaisons are doing if not communicating the council's needs to the administration? There is too much red tape if council members can't go directly to department officials to try and get things done.

Council Member Boylan asked about item 3(e) on the new policy, specifically whether he or his ECA can follow up on an issue through the MyJax system using a citizen's ticket number? Ms. Cichowlas said they could.

Council Member Carrico said he met with Mr. Weinstein late last year about the potential for this policy, so he was aware that it was under consideration. The 19 council members are elected to represent the people and be a conduit between them and the administration to get things done. He worries about the possibility of the complaint response process being politicized based on who the council member is and their relationship with the mayor. A natural part of running a big organization is delegating and prioritizing issues and workload.

Council Member Pittman said she feels the council is being micromanaged by the administration. It's cumbersome to get executive branch administrators invited to council members' district meetings and requests for action take too long. Previous administrations were better at communicating with the council and this policy is not the answer to what's wrong.

Council Member Gay echoed the previously expressed concerns. He and his ECA try hard to communicate with their constituents and try to get things done quickly where possible.

Council Member Miller said leaders set the tone and climate for their organization and that impacts how an organization runs, and he's concerned that things aren't right in city government now. We all need to get along and cooperate. He's not had any bad experiences with departments. Mutual respect is needed on all sides. There seems to be an adversarial relationship and not enough cooperation on the front end of issues. He agrees with having a special committee to work on communication and cooperation.

Council Member Howland said he has 2 concerns: 1) that the policy limits accessibility for the council and constituents; and 2) it opens the door for retaliation against employees who don't follow the process.

Council Member Howland invited Executive Council Assistants to address the group.

ECA Roshanda Jackson said the policy will slow down the process and create inefficiencies. It undermines role of council members and ECAs and weakens their ability to advocate directly for their needs. It may also violate constituents' right to free speech by deterring open communication with recordkeeping requirements. The policy adds an additional roadblock when the normal system doesn't work to begin with. The end result is that it makes it look like council members can't do their jobs and undermines confidence in the entire system.

ECA Joe Johnson said ECAs process issues with professionalism and he feels insulted by the new policy. The 630-CITY complaint line doesn't work, with tickets being closed out with problems not resolved. He urged keeping the current system as-is.

Mike Weinstein said he appreciates the comments and sentiments expressed today. The administration needs to create a system that accurately and timely captures all issues so they can be tracked, completed and reported for everyone's benefit. He urged that this not be made into a personal issue. He will rescind

the policy if the council will create a special committee to find ways to make improvements in the communication process.

**Meeting adjourned: 1:00 p.m.**

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

[jeffc@coj.net](mailto:jeffc@coj.net) 904-255-5137

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