



Legislation Text

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Staff Report for Rules Committee Discussion of City Council Participation in Legislative Advocacy Work in Washington, DC

Per City Council direction at the February 6, 2017 Council meeting, staff provides the following information for the Rules Committee's consideration regarding the selection process for City Council members who wish to travel to Washington DC to attend annual conferences or conduct legislative advocacy work.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

Each year, the Mayor and/or some members of the City Council may choose to travel to Washington, D.C. to attend the U.S. Conference of Mayors Winter meeting in January, or the National League of Cities - Congressional Cities Conference in March. While in the Capitol, they may have the opportunity to meet with San Leandro's elected representatives or staff in Congress, or with federal agency staff. These interactions allow the Mayor and members of the City Council to learn more about various grant opportunities, and to advocate San Leandro's needs and interests at the federal level. These interactions are coordinated by the City's federal advocacy representative Len Simon, with the support of City staff, and may include the presentation of written material in support of city projects, or advocacy efforts related to various policy areas that are of direct relevance to the City. These efforts have proven successful in recent years, as demonstrated by various federal grant awards that the City received. Examples include two grants from the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) office (a \$250,000 award for two school resource officers, and an approximately \$75,000 award for engagement efforts with Chinese-speaking community residents), as well as a \$2.1 million grant from the US Department of Commerce - Economic Development Administration for the expansion of the Lit San Leandro fiber optic loop.

Currently, there is no formal process for determining which members of the City Council participate in these efforts, and the decision to travel to Washington DC is made on an individual basis by each City Council member. Factors that inform such decisions include whether the City anticipates submitting any federal grant applications in the upcoming year, or whether the speakers or policy issues scheduled for discussion are germane to City business or a particular Council Member's interests. In some cases, a member or members of the City Council also may be serving on a policy committee or other leadership position within these national organizations, which necessitate their attendance at a particular conference or event.

The decision to travel to Washington DC for such purposes is also informed by whether or not the Council member has sufficient funds available within their annual "Meetings and Memberships" budget to cover the costs associated with this travel.

To the extent several Council Members decide to make the trip to Washington DC, a City staff

member or members may also be called upon to accompany them on the trip in order to support their advocacy efforts and assist in preparing relevant documents, materials, messaging points, or to provide technical expertise.

Generally speaking, the current process whereby each member of the Council self-selects whether to travel to the nation's capital for such events has worked efficiently. However, if more than three members of the City Council decide to attend such meetings or events, there are additional administrative challenges that can arise. For example, when a quorum of the City Council attends a meeting in the capitol where City business is discussed or City policy could be formulated, then the meetings must comply with all relevant provisions of the Brown Act. Such provisions include a requirement for 72-hour public noticing of the meeting (including a written notification posted to the exterior of the building or room where the meeting will take place), as well as an opportunity for members of the public to be present at the meeting and/or provide comments.

These meetings often take place in secure federal facilities with extensive security and access requirements which makes compliance with the Brown Act administratively challenging. As such, ensuring that such meetings include less than a quorum of the City Council is beneficial to the City.

Staff Recommendation

Based on the above factors, staff recommends that the City Council Rules Committee consider the following procedural guidelines for future trips to Washington DC:

- Each year, City staff will contact the Mayor and City Council to solicit feedback regarding who may be interested in attending a particular conference or event. If less than a quorum of the Council members are interested in attending such an event and they have sufficient funds available in their District budget, then they should proceed with arranging for such travel.
- If more than three members of the Council express interest in attending the same meetings where City business could be conducted or policy could be formulated, then the Mayor will determine who among the Council should attend the meetings. Factors that should be considered by the Mayor in making such a determination could include:
 - Whether the councilmember serves on a relevant committee or leadership role that requires their attendance;
 - Whether the Council members has already had the opportunity to attend such meetings or events in recent years; and
 - Whether or not some of the interested members of the Council would have the opportunity to attend such an event the following year.

Next Steps

Staff will prepare a summary of the outcome of the Rules Committee discussion on this topic, which will be provided to the full City Council at a future meeting.