



Las Vegas

Agenda Item No.: 5.

**AGENDA SUMMARY PAGE
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF: APRIL 9, 2007**

**DEPARTMENT: ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
DIRECTOR: CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT**

Consent Discussion

SUBJECT: Report and possible action regarding City staff's progress in implementation of Council's direction to balance internal communication efforts among the Mayor, City Council and staff - All Wards

Fiscal Impact

- No Impact Augmentation Required
- Budget Funds Available

Amount:
Funding Source:
Dept./Division:

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND:

During the December 11, 2006 Strategic Planning Session with City Council, city management was directed to consider the adoption of communication policies between council members, their staff and other city of Las Vegas employees. The City Council and Executive Team will consider the progress made regarding internal communication policies, and discuss a strategy for Ward Specific Briefings.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive presentation and direct staff accordingly.

BACKUP DOCUMENTATION:

None

Motion made by GARY REESE to Approve report as given

Passed For: 7; Against: 0; Abstain: 0; Did Not Vote: 0; Excused: 0
BRENDA J. WILLIAMS, LOIS TARKANIAN, LARRY BROWN, OSCAR B. GOODMAN,
GARY REESE, STEVE WOLFSON, STEVEN D. ROSS; (Against-None); (Abstain-None);
(Did Not Vote-None); (Excused-None)

Minutes:

CITY MANAGER SELBY began by highlighting the recent first annual Vegas Grand Prix by way of video clips from NBC. The success of the event compared very favorably to events held elsewhere. COUNCILMAN ROSS shared his experience with the event and stated that Downtown was full of activity from gamblers to race enthusiasts, mixing local families with tourists. He commended the City for hosting such an event that has proven to be beneficial for the entire Valley.

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CITY MANAGER SELBY summarized a series of items over a number of years involving a land issue that resulted in an investigation by the Attorney General. Although no criminal charges were brought, breaks in communication were identified between Council and staff and between staff and staff. In an effort to address and advance communication between the Council and staff, CITY MANAGER SELBY submitted a proposed communication policy that would be implemented by the City Auditor's Office, the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Office. The investigation also identified a need for improved record keeping and compliance with the public doctrine. The proposed policy would enhance clear and consistent information for elected officials while upholding City guidelines and ordinance. He invited feedback regarding the proposed policy. Staff has already implemented joint briefing sessions with Council, refined briefing sheets, improved record keeping standards, quarterly updates to Council, a public doctrine review process for negotiations with private parties and other procedures are under development.

COUNCILMAN ROSS confirmed with CITY MANAGER SELBY that the City Manager, City Auditor and City Attorney staff meet when necessary by teleconference. He expressed concern that while implementing the proposed policy would ensure information to be provided to the entire Council, it might affect a council member's ability to address legal staff. He has received advice that changed from day to day and emphasized that legal staff must be readily available as well. CITY ATTORNEY JARBIC responded that BRIAN ZUCOTA from his office is present at all zoning briefings and he or someone from legal staff is available on other occasions upon request. If the Council wanted to change that practice to a greater frequency, this would be a good time to do so. COUNCILMAN ROSS expressed his tremendous appreciation for CITY MANAGER SELBY'S guidance and the superb cooperation he receives with all department heads, without which he could not serve his constituents.

MAYOR GOODMAN requested CITY MANAGER SELBY outline the communication procedure. CITY MANAGER SELBY responded that the City Manager's Office meets every two weeks to discuss operational procedures in addition to the Agenda Review meetings. The City Attorney's Office and City Auditor's Office are invited to participate in all meetings in an effort to keep the Council well informed and up to date. MAYOR GOODMAN added that the foundation for the Council to effectively serve the community depends heavily upon communication. COUNCILMAN WOLFSON concurred with the desire to be informed as soon as possible about all matters.

MAYOR GOODMAN questioned how an elected official stepping over the line is dealt with. CITY MANAGER SELBY replied that while he and the City Attorney owe the elected official honest advice, the Mayor is the CEO for the City. In any instance, except those involving the Mayor himself, staff would bring the area of concern to the Mayor. Any areas of concern with the City Manager or City Manager's office could be investigated by the City Attorney's office.

COUNCILWOMAN TARKANIAN acknowledged previous issues that demonstrated the critical need for historical and current information. The City has an excellent administrative and non-administrative staff, but there is a staff concern that inhibits direct staff communication with the Council.

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COUNCILMAN REESE commented that he has found issues to be looked at by staff in a too-focused manner, without considering the real impact of the decision. Councilmembers must include the broader picture. He cited two examples involving a circus on a vacant lot and a project supported by the Queensridge residents. Council depends on staff, particularly with regard to necessary conditions. In regard to conditions, he has yet to receive the report requested on the imposed conditions and compliance therewith. Currently, there is no way to know if imposed conditions were met and whether such conditions turned out to be suitable and/or reasonable.

COUNCILMAN WOLFSON pointed out that a better procedure would be helpful since it would be extremely difficult to visit the site for all the items scheduled before the Council.

COUNCILWOMAN WILLIAMS concurred with the comments by COUNCILMAN REESE. She has experienced what appears to be a lack of communication, and that needs to be improved. COUNCILMAN BROWN thanked CITY MANAGER SELBY for his efforts to provide consistency. Because this is a political process, it is a time-re process. Sometimes it comes down to how the question is asked and not all seven councilmembers agree on every topic. Decisions are often influenced simply by the manner in which they were presented from different staff members. He commended the Planning Department for their endeavors based on given guidelines, even though the Council sometimes disagrees with their recommendations. COUNCILMAN BROWN suggested that communication with committees, boards and commissions who also influence the Council be included. CITY MANAGER SELBY answered that although those advisory entities were not incorporated into the policy, their members are appointed by the Council. COUNCILMAN BROWN also recommended that the City Attorney look into what can be done with a board of committee member with whom the Council, staff or a citizen has a problem.

MAYOR GOODMAN requested CITY MANAGER SELBY'S office contact the Attorney General to obtain the status of their report on the investigation previously discussed. COUNCILMAN WOLFSON noted that, according to the Attorney General's recent announcement, she is waiting for federal authorities to complete their inquiry and her actions would be based on those findings.

CITY MANAGER SELBY described problems with the public doctrine, appraisals and statutory requirements that arise when negotiations are not handled uniformly. Commitments can be made that cannot be met prior to the involvement of the City Manager's office or council briefings. CITY MANAGER SELBY also addressed a proposed procedure for the Mayor's staff to act as a clearing house for proclamations. MAYOR GOODMAN added that a list would be provided to the councilmembers to give them the ability to determine which proclamations they wish to participate in signing. DEPUTY CITY MANAGER FRETWELL assured MAYOR GOODMAN that the City Manager's office would formalize the process for his staff. MAYOR GOODMAN requested to be involved in those meetings.

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Lastly, CITY MANAGER SELBY announced his office is working on setting up the quarterly ward-specific briefings and future boundary-to-boundary briefings beginning September 2007. A handbook will also be created for Council liaisons and staff clarifying roles and ultimately improving the communication process

