

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

TO: City Council

FROM: City Manager

Prepared by: Public Information Officer/Management Analyst II

SUBJECT: CITYWIDE GOVERNANCE BY DISTRICT ELECTED COUNCIL

RECOMMENDATION:

That the City Council adopt a resolution regarding its intention to continue its practice of governing with a Citywide perspective following the shift to elections of Councilmembers by Council districts.

BACKGROUND:

On February 12, 2018, the City Council held its biannual City Council Goal Setting Workshop. During the workshop, one of the items the Council discussed was the upcoming shift to elections of Councilmembers by district, which will be partially in place in November 2018 and fully in place in 2020. The conclusion reached by the City Council was that governing the City of Santa Maria should not change. All members of the City Council will continue to serve all of the people of Santa Maria.

On March 5, 2018, the City Council adopted the minutes from the Workshop and directed staff to return with a resolution establishing the principles of governance within the system of Councilmembers being elected by district.

The principles established were:

- The City Council will govern on an at-large basis, considering the needs and interests of the entire community. The City Council wishes to remain united in its service to the community.
- Any member of the City Council will help anyone in the community who calls or contacts them. Customer service is the priority.
- Professional management in a strong City Manager form of government will continue, with all of the best management practices that the City Council expects now. Resources will be allocated based on needs and expertise.
- Current practices regarding invitations to members of the City Council to events and activities, and appointments to committees and various bodies will remain in effect.

DISCUSSION:

On February 12, 2018, Jan Perkins, from Management Partners Consulting, assisted the City Council in formulating priorities for the next two (2) years in anticipation of the upcoming budget cycle. One area of discussion during the City Council's Workshop was governance after Councilmembers are elected by district and what, if anything, is expected to change. The City Council concluded that governing the City of Santa Maria should not change.

The City Council had a discussion that led to the conclusions and principles. The discussion included the following points:

- The City has always had a focus on customer service and that focus should remain regardless of how a Councilmember is elected. Constituents may wonder whom to contact once districts are in place and each Councilmember should help whomever calls. Maintain the customer service orientation and view that "I'm your Councilperson regardless of what district you are in";
- The City Council recognizes the value of governing at-large. At-large governance allows each of the views of the Councilmembers to be represented and for policy issues of Citywide concern to have input from each Councilmember with issues decided by Council majority. The City Council wants to govern at-large, as is currently done and concern themselves with the concerns of the whole community;
- Constituents and Councilmembers can both contact the City Manager for assistance with an issue. Just as a constituent may contact any of the members of the City Council to express their concern or to have an issue addressed, the City Manager can always be contacted to help with an issue, as it is done currently. Similarly, the City Council will continue to work through the City Manager for issues to be addressed, not only issues within their district;
- A Councilmember may be elected with a focus on a particular issue (i.e. a "single issue candidate") or with an agenda different than that of the constituents in the district. Recognizing that Councilmembers are to have a Citywide focus will provide further alignment between the Councilmember and the multiple issues facing the City, and between the Councilmember and various issues of concern of the electorate;
- There may be issues between districts just as there are currently between different areas of the City. This does not mean that there should be different sets of rules or approaches between the districts. If the City Council has conflicting issues between districts, Councilmembers need to discuss them, as is currently done, and conclude with a unified statement;
- Resources should be allocated based on the professional recommendations of staff and based on the highest and best need as measured Citywide. There

shall not be district by district plans, resource allocations, staffing models, or capital investment. Having such will lead to weakened governance, increased inefficiencies, and spending of resources on something other than the highest and best use. Remember, The City Council is a strong City Manager-type government and professional managers establish where resources are needed. The City Council needs to continue to allocate resources based on needs; and

- The City has been successful because it operates as a single entity serving the population as a whole. The City needs to continue to run as a whole.

Staff researched California cities with City Council districts for their practices and policies related to budgeting resources, such as for capital improvements. It appears that most California cities with City Council district elections are continuing to govern with a community-wide approach based on professional best practices in management, focusing on needs, services, and resources. They are not transitioning to a new governance system that factors in district boundaries as a criterion. They do not, for example, allocate funds for road projects specifically for each district. Cities contacted included Vista (population 101,793), Escondido (151,492), Tulare (64,661), Garden Grove (176,277), and others. Also, a survey of several dozen cities last year by Fremont staff found the same consensus.

Garden Grove successfully shifted to district elections in 2016, and chose at a 2017 City Council goal-setting retreat to continue its practice of governing with a Citywide perspective following the shift to elections of Councilmembers by Council districts. "This went very smoothly," said their Assistant City Manager, "in the view of Council, the public, and staff." Garden Grove does not use Council districts as a variable in policy-making because that is not cost-efficient. During its first year with districts, Councilmembers have been complimented by the community at public meetings on how well they work together. The focus remains on service delivery based on needs, customer focus, long-range plans, being informed of issues in all districts, data, and what makes sense economically. For comparison, its General Fund budget is about \$118 million.

Two cities that do factor Council districts into their budgeting practices are Fresno (525,832) and San Diego (1.4 million).

Fresno shifted to district elections decades ago, and carefully factors its seven (7) City Council districts into budgeting and scheduling for capital improvement projects such as road and sidewalk repair, its 16-year Public Works Director said. Staff tries its best to fairly distribute money for road repairs across the seven (7) districts based on needs such as pavement condition, "and that is a real challenge" because individual Councilmembers want money into their districts. The City's Neighborhood Street Improvement Program spends about \$3 million annually to address significantly deteriorated streets within neighborhoods in each of the Council districts. There have been times when staff presents a construction contract award to the City Council and a Councilmember in one or more districts provides commentary that their district has just as many needs.

Overall, Fresno spends about \$9 million per year on street maintenance out of a total capital improvement budget of \$317 million. Additionally, \$150,000 to \$300,000 is allocated annually per district for capital projects and it is required that the director "obtain concurrence" from each City Council district before committing those funds to a project(s). This proves challenging for staff to anticipate workload and schedule work. Additionally, Fresno annually allocates to each of its Councilmembers \$50,000 for an "Outside Agency Support" account line item. This funding has traditionally been allocated for special district infrastructure projects and other discretionary purposes. The Public Works Director said some Councilmembers will tell staff to spend it on sidewalk repairs in their district; others will ask staff for recommendations.

Similarly, San Diego's nine (9) City Council districts are not a criterion in the budget for its annual Capital Improvements Program (CIP) budget. But, per City Council policy, each Councilmember has a discretionary budget for "community projects, programs and services" that they can recommend for their priorities each fiscal year, and that variable can be considered by staff when drafting the CIP budget.

Trying to be proactive, Moreno Valley (206,750) public works staff, this year, initiated individual discussions with their Councilmembers representing four (4) districts. The Capital Project Division Manager said the City has 105 streets recommended for slurry seal that will be paid for using SB-1 funds. To ensure efficient application, the streets are grouped by proximity, but staff found a way that 25 to 30 streets will be in each Council district.

Most cities in California seek to utilize taxpayer funds effectively by allocating funding based on need or highest and best use, rather than by electoral boundaries. The policy statements by the City Council from this year's goal setting workshop, and as embodied in the attached resolution, are consistent with these best business practices.



MARK VAN DE KAMP
Public Information Manager



JASON STILWELL
City Manager