



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Tadd Wille, Deputy City Manager; Jim Sant, Deputy Utility Director; Latasha Ware, City Management Fellow
COPY: Government, Performance and Finance Committee; Andy Cherullo, Finance Director
PRESENTER: Tadd Wille, Deputy City Manager; Latasha Ware, City Management Fellow; James Kauffman, Public Records Manager; Martha Lantz, Deputy City Attorney
SUBJECT: Public Records Compliance
DATE: November 19, 2019

PRESENTATION TYPE:

Informational Briefing

SUMMARY:

The City currently lacks specific rules or policy to help guide staff and residents on the public disclosure records request process. As it stands, residents are able to request records through any form of communication with any city employee – increasing opportunities for misplacement of request.

The City will benefit from the City Manager establishing rules of procedure relating to public records requests, including mechanisms to make requests, categories of requests, and prioritization of requests in order to reduce risk of non-compliance and to increase the efficiency, consistency and transparency of the records request process.

BACKGROUND:

RCW 42.56 mandates “Agencies shall adopt and enforce reasonable rules and regulations...to provide full public access to public records, to protect public records from damage or disorganization, and to prevent excessive interference with other essential functions of the agency.... Such rules and regulations shall provide for the fullest assistance to inquirers and the most timely possible action on requests for information...” whilst ensuring that PDR do not “...unreasonably disrupt the operations of the agency.” (Washington State, RCW 42.56).

The City is mandated by Federal and State law to commit reasonable levels of service to assisting our residents in accessing public records. The city manager establishing firmer rules to help guide staff in the process of doing so, will ultimately improve the overall quality of service for our residents and lead to increased government transparency.

ISSUE:

The City does not currently have standard compliance rules set to ensure compliance of the Public Records Act. The absence of rules creates increased opportunities for mishandling of records request. The City Manager will establish rules and procedures related to the making of and responding to public records requests including guidance to requesters for use of an online tool and a framework for response priority.

ALTERNATIVES:

Continue with current operating procedures.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Minimal. Any potential cost increases will be absorbed within current budgets.



RECOMMENDATION:

N/A.