



CITY COUNCIL POLICY: WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Reaffirmed January 2, 2024

California law prohibits the use of public resources for personal or political gain. Chapter 1.04 of the Lake Forest Municipal Code prohibits the use of the city logo for commercial purposes. The City Council has determined that correspondence paid for with public funds or on City stationery or letterhead must relate to actual and authentic City business and must not purport to advance or advocate a policy not previously approved by the City Council. This policy establishes guidelines for City Council and use of City of Lake Forest stationery and letterhead by City Council Members.

1 Definitions.

1.1 City Council Correspondence.

City Council Correspondence is any written communication, including communications in facsimile or electronic format (e-mail), which is addressed to a City Council Member or authored by a City Council Member(s). Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a) Correspondence addressed to the City Council, individual Council Members or the Mayor sent to a City facility or to City of Lake Forest e-mail accounts not clearly marked or identified as “personal” or “confidential,”
- b) Correspondence sent by the City Council, individual Council Members or the Mayor regarding City business,
- c) Correspondence, except purely social or salutory correspondence, that identifies the author as a Council Member, elected official, or includes a City Council Members’ City of Lake Forest business card.

1.2 Social and Salutory Correspondence.

Any Correspondence written by City Council Members or the Mayor conveying greetings, congratulations, gratitude or other similar sentiments to residents, business owners, government agencies or other persons or entities.

1.3 Letters of Recommendation.

Any Correspondence written by City Council Members or the Mayor recommending employment or admission to educational institutions, the United States Military, Peace Corps, or other service program.



1.4 Campaign Literature.

Any information delivered to the public designated to either further or injure a political campaign.

1.5 Official City Representation.

Any statement made by the City Council, Individual Council Members, or the Mayor which states, or which could reasonably be interpreted to state, a City policy, position, or commitment to action.

1.6 Declaration Letter.

A formal acknowledgement or a statement about a particular stance or opinion written on an official letterhead by no more than two Council Members.

1.7 City Council Letterhead

Each member of the City Council shall have their own individual letterhead containing their name, title and official photograph. Letterhead layout including name, title and the size of the photograph shall be uniform among all elected officials. City Council letterhead is ordered by and shall remain in the possession of the City Clerk's Office.

2 Policy.

2.1 City Council Correspondence.

With the exception of e-mail, all outgoing City Council Correspondence shall be on City of Lake Forest stationery or letterhead maintained exclusively at City Hall and shall be signed by City Council Members or the Mayor. Copies of all City Council Correspondence shall be provided to the City Clerk for retention pursuant to the City's Records and Retention Policy as authorized by State law. All City Council Correspondence sent to or from City of Lake Forest e-mail accounts shall be automatically retained by the City's e-mail archive software pursuant to the City's Records and Retention Policy.

2.2 Social and Salutory Correspondence.

The use of City stationery, including informal note cards or memo pads, by City Council Members or the Mayor is authorized for the purpose of social and/or salutory correspondence, subject to the limitations of state law relative to mass mailings and/or campaign related communication. No copies of such correspondence are retained in the ordinary course of business and are not subject to the City's Records and Retention Policy.



2.3 Campaign Literature.

No City of Lake Forest stationery, letterhead, or informal note cards or memo pads shall be used for Campaign Literature.

2.4 Official City Representations/Declaration Letters.

No individual City Council Member or the Mayor shall transmit any Correspondence containing an Official City Representation without authorization from the City Council to serve as spokesperson for this purpose. When otherwise presenting their individual opinions and positions, members of the City Council shall explicitly state they do not represent the City and will not allow the inference that they do.

Individual letterhead may be used to express the individual position of the Mayor or a City Council Member (i.e. Declaration Letter), subject to the limitations of state law relative to mass mailings and/or campaign related communication. Such correspondence shall be submitted to the City Clerk's Office for review and placed on individual letterhead with footer language specifically noting the position or opinion set forth in the correspondence is solely that of the author and not that of the City or City Council. ~~Individual letterhead shall remain in the possession of the City Clerk's Office.~~

2.5 Letters of Recommendation.

Any letters of recommendation written by individual City Council Members or the Mayor shall be on City of Lake Forest stationery or letterhead maintained exclusively at City Hall and shall be signed by City Council Members or the Mayor. Copies of any letters of recommendation shall be provided to the City Clerk for retention pursuant to the City's Records and Retention Policy as authorized by State law.



3. Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) Compliance

When city staff or other city resources are used to prepare letters or other writings, those writings are deemed an official communication from the City. Letters composed, copied, distributed, mailed or otherwise distributed by the City may not violate any FPPC regulations. In order to comply with FPPC mass mailing rules, the following rules shall apply to such letters or writings. In general, 200 or more letters featuring the name, photo and/or signature of an elected official shall not be mailed or distributed by the City, per Council Member, per month. In a case where a letter is signed by all five members of the City Council, names of all elected officials in a roster where each name is the same size and font type is appropriate. See FPPC Reg. 18901 for more details or contact the City Clerk to review prior to composition and distribution of such letter.

4. Letters or Writing by Council Members at their Own Expense

Nothing in this policy shall prevent any individual member of the City Council from sending a letter that is created, composed, printed, copied and distributed entirely at his or her own expense regardless of the number pieces distributed or mailed. No City staff or resources may be used in connection with such writings. The City logo may not be used however the writing may include the sender's title such as "Mayor _____" or Council Member _____"