



Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of the City Clerk

Date: May 17, 2006

To: Ways and Means Budget Committee

Subject: Blog Sites for Elected Officials

Recommendation: The City Clerk recommends that the Council reaffirm its commitment to expanding communication with the public and adopt the accompanying resolution establishing the public purpose of and authority for managing Blog Sites for elected officials.

Previous Directives

Electronic Communication Policy passed September 2, 2005

Guidelines for Elected Officials Web Sites implemented by the City Clerk in 1992

Prepared by: City Clerk Merry Keefe 673-3765

Presenters in Committee: City Clerk Merry Keefe and Council Member Aide Robin Garwood

Permanent Review Committee (PRC) Not Applicable

Policy Review Group (PRG) Not Applicable

Financial Impact No financial impact

Community Impact Promotes the goal of increasing citizen access to information and involvement in government.

Background Information

1. The resolution and guidelines were developed by Council and Clerk staff. In developing the resolution, legal and policy implications and options were sought from Assistant City Attorney Carol Bachun, Communications Director Gail Plewacki, Assistant Communications Director Sara Dietrich, City Web Site Manager Deb Parker, Ward Web pages assistant Ruth Sobcinski and City Records Manager Craig Steiner.
2. The purpose of the resolution and guidelines is to give elected officials an option for creating a blog site using city resources, and to insure that elected officials' blog sites that use their offices' staff or other city resources conform to state laws and city policies.
3. The resolution establishes that these blog sites serve a public purpose, that they will be used as a limited public forum to discuss city issues and that certain content is prohibited.
4. Elected officials and their staff are strongly advised to seek advice from the City Clerk, the Communications Department and/or the City Attorney before setting up a blog site in order to understand and avoid any legal issues or communication problems.
5. The City Clerk will review the use of, and issues related to, these blog sites. The Clerk and Council staff will modify procedures to meet any concerns as they arise.
6. Monitoring, evaluation and the report back to Council in six months will include the following issues:

Public purpose: Do the blog sites serve as a benefit to the community, directly related to the functions of government?

First Amendment Issues: Are there any problems related to censorship, access or free speech?

Ethics: Have there been any occurrences or perceptions of misuse of blog sites for personal or political purposes?

Communications: Were there problems with inaccurate information or confusion about distinctions between bloggers statements and city positions or information?

Records Retention: Are records being retained according to City approved records schedules? Is documentation on rejected blogs clear and complete?

Resources: What city resources have been expended to support elected officials' blog sites?