

# Memo

Date: December 15, 2020  
To: Marissa Madrigal, Chief Operating Officer  
From: Lynn Peterson, Council President-elect  
Subject: Direction for Council Operations

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## **Requested Action**

To focus the Metro Council on clear policy making and direction, bring greater transparency and shared understanding to our work, and use staff and council member time efficiently and effectively, I am requesting that we modify the way in which business is brought before Councilors.

It is my hope that this change will be an iterative process based on staff and Councilor input so that we can modify and clarify implementation to best meet Council needs over time. Below you will find direction on this adjustment.

## **Work Sessions**

All Councilors should be provided with timely and sufficient information to allow them to confidently make policy decisions and give staff direction to move forward Metro's strategic plan and vision.

While Councilors have different priorities and portfolios of specialized work, they require a similar level of information for the decisions they make as a Council. This information should be provided as a part of their work sessions.

## **Staff Reports**

Staff reports should be provided to the Council Office on a timeline that allows the Council to receive it no later than one week prior to work sessions and council meetings. The information provided in these reports should follow the prescribed staff report memo template found on MetroNet. This template will change periodically so staff should be reminded to check the Council Tools section of MetroNet to ensure they are using the most current documents, and to work with Council Office staff for guidance during this process.

When providing a description on the policy issue being addressed and history or context setting, please be brief and include it at the end of the memo.

Options or recommendations for Council to consider in addressing the issues will be important after a policy discussion has taken place and the Council has considered outcomes that are desired first – Staff should not lead with a solution.

Please ensure that staff include key facts or findings that will aid in deliberations, such as information on community feedback, our Strategic Plan to Advance Racial Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, and climate change impacts to inform a decision and any immediate next steps or follow-up issues that relate to the matter.

Work session materials should include the relationship between the policy issue being discussed and Metro's strategic plan.

## 2021 Council Operations Memo

### **Retreats**

Moving forward, to ensure we are in compliance with Oregon public meeting laws, we will no longer be using the term “retreat” except when focusing on team-building, decision making principles, and personal interaction of Councilors. These retreats will NOT include anything related to deliberation towards, or information gathering about, issues which will later be decided, nor will they include any decisions on Council business.

### **Individual Briefings**

Individual Councilor requests for briefings should always be a top priority for staff and completed in a timely manner. These briefings require no prior approval from the Office of the Council President.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The Council President’s role in this work is to:

- Set the work plan for Council meetings, work sessions, and carry out the agency’s adopted policy agenda;
- Guide the discussion towards the objective outcomes during the work sessions;
- Ensure that Councilors have the information they need prior to decision-making through their Policy Advisors;
- Give direction to the COO for additional information; and
- Provide oversight on development of products coming to the Council, especially during the transition to the new memo format.

The Deputy Council President’s role in this work is to:

- Support the Council President in setting the Council work plan; and
- Facilitate the work sessions and business meetings in the absence of the Council President.

The Chief of Staff’s role in this work is to:

- Ensure that Councilors have the information they need prior to decision making through their Policy Advisors;
- Oversee the Council policy workflow;
- Manage the appointment of any Council appointed committees (in consultation with Council and staff);
- Provide direct management of the Council President’s office staff and make sure the Council Policy Advisors are working to support their Council members.
- Work with the COO and staff prior to work sessions and Council business meetings on the preparation of documents that will be used by Council in decision-making.

The COO’s role in this work is to:

- Inform Council of any organizational matters that policy decisions may impact;
- Support and supervise staff in getting the Council the appropriate materials in the correct format;
- Support the Council President in providing information to Council; and
- Request operational items be scheduled for work session.

Council Policy Advisor’s role in this work should be to:

- Make sure their Councilor has the information they need to make a well informed decision, prepare for a policy discussion or prepare to propose policy development;

## 2021 Council Operations Memo

- Prepare their Councilor for discussion in work sessions and council meetings;
- Alert the Council President, the Chief of Staff and the COO of any issues that the Councilor may have with proposed policy language prior to work sessions and Council business meetings; and
- Work to quickly resolve any questions prior to the work session and communicate so they can be addressed by staff during work sessions.

### **Research on new or developing Council policy**

Councilors who wish to pursue development of a new policy or program that will require more than 2 hours of agency work time (not including Council Office staff) will need to receive approval from Council at a work session before pursuing.

### **Council interaction with Staff**

Council staff will assist Councilors in preparing for a discussion with their colleagues about whether the new idea should become a Council priority by providing information in the new staff report format, including the nexus with Metro's strategic plan and explanations of any potential impacts to the agency that the policy may create.

The Council shall respect and support the day-to-day work of operational departments by:

1. Attempting to work together with the staff as a team in a spirit of mutual confidence and support.
2. Limiting inquiries and requests for information from staff to those questions that may be answered readily or with only the most minimal of research. Questions of a more complex nature should be addressed in a manner consistent with the Council Policy Development document.
3. Limiting individual contacts with staff so as not to influence staff decisions or recommendations, to interfere with their work performance, to affect the authority of supervisors or to prevent the full Council from having the benefit of any information received.
4. Respecting roles and responsibilities of staff when and if expressing criticism in a public meeting or through public electronic mail messages.