



DRIPPING SPRINGS
Texas

LEGISLATIVE COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

Effective Date: [Insert Date]

Adopted by: City Council Resolution No. [Insert Resolution Number]

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1. Purpose, Scope, and Construction

1.1. Purpose

1. This policy establishes a coordinated, transparent, and timely process for the City's interactions with the Texas Legislature, the United States Congress, state and federal agencies, and other governmental bodies (collectively, **governmental entities**). The policy governs the development, approval, communication, tracking, implementation, and reporting of the City's legislative positions and related governmental-affairs activities.
2. The City adopts this policy to ensure that communications made on its behalf are consistent with City Council direction, responsive to matters affecting the City and its extraterritorial jurisdiction, and supported by accurate operational, legal, fiscal, and community-impact information.

1.2. Scope

This policy applies to legislative sessions, special sessions, interim legislative activity, agency rulemaking, regulatory matters, and requests for information or testimony from governmental entities. It does not prohibit any elected or appointed official or employee from expressing a personal view, provided the person does not represent that view as the City's official position.

1.3. Construction and Compliance

This policy must be administered consistently with applicable law, including laws governing open meetings, public information, procurement, ethics, lobbying registration, records retention, and use of public resources. Nothing in this policy authorizes an action that otherwise requires City Council approval, public notice, competitive procurement, or compliance with another applicable legal requirement.

1.4. Adoption, Legislative Priorities, and Supersession

1. The City Council shall adopt this policy by resolution. The adopting resolution may incorporate the City's legislative priorities for the applicable regular session, special session, interim period, or other stated period as an exhibit to this policy. The incorporated priorities are part of this policy for that stated period and constitute the City Council's current policy direction and official positions on the matters they address.

2. The City Council may amend this policy, including any incorporated legislative priorities, by subsequent resolution. A resolution adopting an updated policy and incorporated priorities supersedes the preceding Legislative Communications Policy and all prior legislative-priorities resolutions, unless the newer resolution expressly preserves a prior action, authorization, obligation, or position.
3. Upon City Council adoption, this policy supersedes the City's prior Legislative Communications Policy adopted by Resolution 2015-03 and, unless expressly preserved in the adopting resolution, Resolution No. 2025-R03.

2. Guiding Principles

The City's governmental-affairs activities shall be guided by the following principles:

1. **Council direction.** The City speaks through positions approved by the City Council or through positions that the Mayor determines are consistent with an existing Council-approved policy, priority, or position.
2. **Local impact.** The City will give particular attention to matters affecting local control; land use and development; extraterritorial jurisdiction; infrastructure; transportation; water; public safety; municipal finance and taxation; elections; public information and open government; and the City's authority to provide services.
3. **Early identification and coordination.** The City will monitor legislation, interim charges, agency activity, and hearing calendars early enough to evaluate impacts and determine whether advocacy or implementation action is warranted.
4. **Accurate and useful information.** Communications on the City's behalf will be factually supported, concise, and tailored to the City's actual operational, fiscal, legal, and community interests.
5. **Implementation readiness.** The City will identify enacted measures that require changes to City policies, ordinances, contracts, forms, notices, websites, fees, training, or operations, and will assign and monitor completion of the required work.

6. **Strategic use of City resources.** In allocating limited City resources for legislative monitoring and advocacy, the City will prioritize matters that uniquely or particularly affect the City, its residents, businesses, property, infrastructure, operations, or extraterritorial jurisdiction; matters for which the City can provide material local facts or perspectives not likely to be advanced by other municipalities or allied organizations; and matters requiring prompt City-specific action. The City may coordinate with, rely on, or support advocacy by the Texas Municipal League and other municipal, regional, or professional associations in which the City participates when their anticipated positions adequately advance the City's interests.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1. City Council

The City Council shall:

1. Adopt legislative priorities and formal positions on legislation, classifications of legislation, agency matters, and other governmental affairs issues as appropriate.
2. Provide policy direction on matters of significant City impact, including matters that materially affect municipal authority, City finances, service delivery, infrastructure, land use, water, public safety, or the City's legal obligations.
3. Consider legislative reports before each regular legislative session and receive status reports during a session and after adjournment.
4. Approve the retention of a professional lobbyist or governmental-relations consultant and any related contract or expenditure when required by law or City policy.
5. Direct staff to pursue, modify, withdraw, or refrain from advocacy on a particular matter.

3.2. Mayor

1. The Mayor is the City's legislative director and shall:
 - (a) Oversee the presentation of legislative briefings and reports to the City Council.
 - (b) Prioritize the City's legislative positions and coordinate communications with legislators, governmental entities, municipal associations, coalitions, and other stakeholders.

- (c) Approve time-sensitive communications, testimony, or other advocacy that is consistent with existing City Council policy or positions when waiting for formal City Council action is impracticable.
 - (d) Ensure that a time-sensitive action is reported to the City Council at the earliest practicable opportunity.
 - (e) Authorize, in writing, persons who may communicate or advocate on behalf of the City, subject to Section 5 of this policy.
- 2. In the Mayor's absence, the Mayor Pro Tem may perform these responsibilities. The Mayor may also delegate discrete responsibilities to the City Administrator, Deputy City Administrator, City Attorney, or another City officer or employee in writing.

3.3. City Administration and City Attorney

- 1. City Administration and the City Attorney shall:
 - (a) Maintain a coordinated legislative-monitoring process and keep the Mayor and City Council informed of material legislative, agency, and governmental-affairs developments.
 - (b) Prepare pre-session, in-session, interim, and post-session reports as described in this policy.
 - (c) Coordinate with department directors to assess proposed and enacted measures and to identify operational, legal, fiscal, staffing, technology, training, procurement, and public-communications impacts.
 - (d) Maintain the City's legislative tracker and implementation register under Section 4.
 - (e) Prepare or coordinate draft positions, testimony, letters, issue memoranda, ordinance or policy amendments, and other materials needed to carry out City Council direction.
 - (f) Consult with the City Attorney before the City takes a position or makes a representation on a matter that presents a significant legal issue, litigation risk, procurement issue, ethics issue, or uncertainty regarding the City's authority.
- 2. Routine communications concerning ordinary City business need not be reported as legislative matters unless they present a material policy, legal, financial, or operational issue.

3.4. Department Directors

Each department director shall promptly provide requested subject-matter input and shall:

1. Identify proposed and enacted measures that may affect the department's programs, personnel, contracts, fees, forms, procedures, enforcement authority, public notices, or technology systems.
2. Provide an impact assessment and recommended City action by the deadline established by City Administration.
3. Complete, or designate a responsible employee to complete, implementation tasks assigned through the legislative tracker or implementation register.
4. Report implementation status, barriers, and resource needs to City Administration.

3.5. Boards, Commissions, and Committees

1. A City board, commission, or committee may recommend a legislative position to the City Council, Mayor, or City Administration.
2. A board, commission, or committee may not advocate a position on the City's behalf unless the position has been approved or authorized under this policy.

4. Legislative Monitoring, Analysis, and Implementation

4.1. Annual and Interim Planning Cycle

1. **Priority development and policy update.** Before a regular legislative session, City Administration shall solicit proposed priorities and issues from department directors and, as appropriate, City boards, commissions, and committees. City Administration shall compile the input, consult with the Mayor and City Attorney, and present for City Council consideration a resolution adopting an updated Legislative Communications Policy with the proposed legislative priorities attached as an exhibit.
2. **Effect of incorporated priorities.** Legislative priorities incorporated into this policy by resolution constitute the City's current official positions for the session or other period identified in the adopting resolution. The City Council may amend, supplement, clarify, or rescind an incorporated priority by subsequently amending this policy by resolution.

3. **Pre-session briefing.** Before each regular legislative session, City Administration shall present a legislative briefing that identifies the incorporated priorities, anticipated issues, significant interim charges or agency matters, and the monitoring and reporting process.
4. **Interim activity.** During the interim, City Administration shall monitor relevant legislative hearings, interim charges, agency proceedings, and requests for City input. The City may communicate factual information, submit authorized comments, or seek guidance from the Texas Municipal League or other appropriate municipal associations consistent with this policy.
5. **Hearing calendar.** City Administration shall monitor hearings and other time-sensitive events affecting the City's interests and shall promptly notify the Mayor and affected departments when an issue may require attendance, testimony, written comments, or other action.

4.2. Legislative Tracker and Impact Assessment

1. City Administration shall maintain a legislative tracker for material bills, agency matters, and other governmental actions. For each tracked item, the tracker should identify, as applicable:
 - (a) The bill, rulemaking, hearing, or other matter and its current status;
 - (b) The affected City department or departments;
 - (c) The subject category and a concise description;
 - (d) The City's adopted position, if any, and the authority for that position;
 - (e) The operational, legal, fiscal, and policy impact on the City;
 - (f) Relevant City Code provisions, policies, contracts, forms, websites, notices, fees, procedures, or training materials that may require review or revision;
 - (g) A recommended action, responsible person or department, target completion date, and applicable effective date;
 - (h) Completion status, follow-up needs, and any action requiring City Council consideration;

- (i) The source or sources used for the entry, the date the entry was last reviewed, and any material uncertainty or verification needed before the City relies on the information for an official action or communication; and
 - (j) The recommended level of City engagement, including whether City-specific advocacy or testimony is warranted because of a unique or particular City impact or an anticipated gap in allied or peer-municipality advocacy, or whether the City's interests may be adequately advanced through monitoring, coordination with, or support for an allied organization's position.
- 2. The tracker is an internal management and reporting tool and should serve as a shared source of truth for the City's legislative monitoring and implementation work. Its inclusion of a bill or issue does not itself establish an official City position.

4.3. Post-Session Implementation Register

- 1. Following adjournment of a legislative session, City Administration shall prepare an implementation register for enacted measures that materially affect the City. The register shall prioritize measures by effective date, legal risk, service-delivery impact, fiscal impact, and the time needed for implementation.
- 2. For each material enacted measure, City Administration shall coordinate with the responsible department and City Attorney to determine whether the City needs to:
 - (a) Amend an ordinance, policy, procedure, form, contract, fee schedule, notice, website content, or other City record;
 - (b) Change an operational practice, enforcement practice, reporting process, or public-facing service;
 - (c) Provide training, internal guidance, or public education;
 - (d) Seek funding, grants, technical assistance, or intergovernmental coordination; or
 - (e) Place an item on a City Council agenda for policy direction or formal action.

4.4. Reports to City Council

1. City Administration shall provide status reports to the City Council throughout each regular or special session as circumstances warrant. The reports should identify significant tracked matters, City positions or recommended positions, pending hearings or deadlines, major enacted measures, and implementation tasks requiring City Council attention.
2. Within a reasonable time after adjournment, City Administration shall provide a post-session report addressing material outcomes, actions taken on the City's behalf, implementation assignments, significant effective dates, and matters to be monitored during the interim.

4.5. Administrative Authority

1. To implement this policy, and without further City Council authorization for each routine action, City Administration is authorized to:
 - (a) Monitor legislation, interim charges, agency rulemaking, hearing calendars, and other governmental matters affecting the City;
 - (b) Maintain the legislative tracker and implementation register; request and compile departmental impact assessments; and obtain factual or technical information from municipal associations, governmental entities, consultants, and other appropriate sources;
 - (c) Prepare legislative reports, issue memoranda, draft testimony, written comments, correspondence, proposed priorities, proposed positions, and draft amendments to City ordinances, policies, procedures, forms, contracts, notices, fee schedules, website content, and training materials for appropriate review or approval;
 - (d) Provide factual, technical, and resource information in response to governmental inquiries, subject to Section 5.5;
 - (e) Attend or observe legislative, agency, association, coalition, and stakeholder meetings; provide written notice of relevant hearings or deadlines to the Mayor and affected departments; and coordinate City participation when authorized under this policy;

- (f) Implement ministerial, non-discretionary changes required by state or federal law when the change does not require a City Council action and does not alter an existing City policy, ordinance, fee, contract, budget appropriation, or Council-approved level of service; and
 - (g) Use approved information-management, data-analysis, automation, alerting, mapping, transcription, reporting, and internal collaboration tools to collect, organize, filter, analyze, and communicate legislative information, subject to the City's budget, purchasing requirements, information-security requirements, records-retention requirements, and applicable law; and
 - (h) Take other administrative actions reasonably necessary to carry out this policy that are consistent with the City's budget, purchasing requirements, personnel policies, and applicable law.
- 2. Before the City relies on automated, artificial-intelligence-assisted, or other technology-generated output for an official position, testimony, written advocacy, legal analysis, public communication, or Council action, the responsible City employee shall review and verify the material information, source materials, factual assertions, and citations. City Administration shall not enter confidential, privileged, personally identifiable, or other protected information into a third-party system unless its use is authorized under applicable law and City information-security and confidentiality requirements.
- 3. This delegation does not authorize City Administration to establish or change an official City position; advocate a position without the authorization required by Section 5; adopt or amend an ordinance, fee, budget, contract, policy, or Council-approved service level; expend funds beyond an approved budget or delegated purchasing authority; retain a lobbyist or governmental-relations consultant; or take an action otherwise reserved by law, the Code of Ordinances, or City policy to the City Council.

5. City Positions and Authorized Advocacy

5.1. Official Positions

- 1. The City may take a formal position on a specific bill, proposed legislation, classification of legislation, agency rulemaking, regulatory issue, or other governmental matter. A formal position may include support, opposition, neutrality, support if amended, opposition unless amended, monitoring, or another clearly defined stance.

2. An official position must be approved by the City Council, including through legislative priorities incorporated into this policy by resolution, unless the Mayor determines in good faith that the position is consistent with an existing City Council-approved policy, incorporated priority, or position. The basis for any Mayor-authorized position shall be documented in the legislative tracker or related record.

5.2. Authorized Representatives

1. Only a person expressly authorized in writing by the Mayor or City Council may advocate, testify, submit written comments, or otherwise convey an official City position to a governmental entity on the City's behalf.
2. Unless the City Council provides otherwise, the Mayor is responsible for presenting official City positions. In the Mayor's absence or upon authorization, the Mayor Pro Tem, City Administrator, Deputy City Administrator, City Attorney, a designated City employee, or an authorized professional lobbyist or governmental-relations consultant may convey an official City position.
3. The City may work with municipal coalitions, professional associations, and governmental entities, including the Texas Municipal League, when the activity is consistent with an authorized City position and applicable law.

5.3. Time-Sensitive Matters

1. When a quickly developing matter requires City action before the City Council can reasonably consider a formal position, the Mayor may authorize a response that is consistent with existing City Council policy or positions. City Administration shall document the action and present the matter to the City Council at the earliest practicable opportunity.
2. If no official position can be formulated in time, an authorized representative may provide factual information or explain the City's operational concerns only if the communication clearly states that it does not represent an official City Council position.

5.4. Testimony and Written Submissions

Formal testimony or written advocacy on the City's behalf must be approved by the Mayor in coordination with City Administration and, when appropriate, the City Attorney. Testimony and written submissions should identify the City, the matter addressed, the official position or limited purpose of the communication, and the authorized representative.

5.5. Factual and Technical Information

City officials and employees may provide factual, technical, or resource information to governmental entities in the ordinary course of City business. The person providing the information shall promptly inform the Mayor and City Administration when the communication concerns a material legislative, agency, policy, or enforcement issue.

6. Personal Views and Disclaimers

1. This policy does not limit the constitutional rights of elected or appointed officials or City employees to express personal views on legislative or governmental matters. A person who is not authorized to speak on the City's behalf shall make clear that the person is speaking only in an individual capacity.
2. The following statement, or substantially similar language, is sufficient:

"The views I express are my personal views and do not represent the official position or policy of the City of Dripping Springs or its City Council."

7. Records

City Administration shall retain records of official positions, written advocacy, testimony, material legislative analyses, authorizations, procurement records, and post-session implementation actions in accordance with the City's records-retention requirements.

8. Public Funds, Procurement, and Compliance

8.1. Public Purpose and Budget Authority

An expenditure, reimbursement, contract, or use of City resources under this policy must serve an identified municipal public purpose; be reasonably related to an approved City legislative priority, operational need, or legal-compliance activity; and be authorized by the City's adopted budget and applicable purchasing and approval requirements.

8.2. Lobbying and Government-Relations Services

1. Before the City solicits, retains, renews, or materially amends a contract for lobbying, government-relations, or similar services intended to directly or indirectly influence state or federal lawmakers on the City's behalf, City Administration shall coordinate with Purchasing and the City Attorney to identify and follow the procurement method required by applicable law and City purchasing policy.
2. Lobbying, government-relations, and similar services intended to directly or indirectly influence state or federal lawmakers on the City's behalf may not be treated as exempt personal, professional, or planning services when applicable law requires a competitive procurement process. Any procurement for these services must comply with Texas Local Government Code Chapter 252 and other applicable purchasing requirements.
3. A professional retained by the City may advocate only the City's authorized positions and shall coordinate with the Mayor, City Administration, and City Attorney as directed.

8.3. Political Advertising

No City officer or employee may spend or authorize the spending of public funds for political advertising. City-funded communications concerning a ballot measure must be limited to factual information permitted by applicable law and must not advocate the measure's passage or defeat.

8.4. Outside Representative Compliance

A retained lobbyist, government-relations consultant, or similar outside representative shall comply with applicable lobbying-registration, reporting, ethics, procurement, and conflict-of-interest requirements. Before performing services, the representative shall provide any registration information, certifications, and disclosures reasonably requested by the City.

8.5. No Independent Commitment

Nothing in this policy authorizes a City officer, employee, or outside representative to make a financial commitment, offer a thing of value, create a contractual obligation, or take a position on behalf of the City except as authorized by the City Council, the adopted budget, applicable procurement requirements, and this policy.

9. Administration and Enforcement

1. City Administration and the City Attorney may develop internal procedures, forms, and reporting formats that are consistent with this policy. Such administrative materials may include a standardized legislative-impact assessment, authorization record, testimony-review process, procurement compliance checklist, and post-session implementation register.
2. Failure by a City official or employee to comply with this policy may result in corrective action or a public or private reprimand by the City Council, as applicable and consistent with law and City personnel policies.

10. Review

The City Council shall review this policy periodically and may amend it as needed to reflect changes in law, City organization, legislative practices, or the City's governmental-affairs needs.

EXHIBIT A

Legislative Priorities

The following legislative priorities are incorporated into the Legislative Communications Policy for the regular session, special session, interim period, or other period identified in the resolution adopting this policy.

These priorities provide City Council direction for authorized City advocacy under this policy. They are intended to guide positions on legislation, agency rules, and governmental actions that substantially affect the City, and do not require the City to take a position on every matter within a listed subject area.

A. Legislation and Governmental Actions the City Supports

1. Local Control and Municipal Authority.

Legislation and governmental action that preserve or strengthen the lawful authority of the City and other municipalities to address local public health, safety, welfare, infrastructure, environmental protection, community character, and growth-management needs.

2. Water Supply, Conservation, and Reuse.

Legislation that improves the City's ability to plan for drought resilience; implement water-conservation and irrigation restrictions; establish locally appropriate recovery periods following drought restrictions; collaborate with water providers; expand water reuse; and secure funding for water and wastewater infrastructure.

3. Responsible Growth and Water Availability.

Legislation that supports meaningful water- and wastewater-availability review before development entitlements are approved and preserves municipal authority to address impervious cover, drainage, watershed protection, and other infrastructure needs created by growth.

4. Extraterritorial Jurisdiction.

Legislation that protects the City’s extraterritorial jurisdiction and municipal authority to regulate development affecting water availability, wastewater availability, impervious cover, drainage, transportation, and other public infrastructure.

5. Land Use and Neighborhood Compatibility.

Legislation that preserves municipal zoning, subdivision, and development-review authority; allows locally tailored regulation of accessory dwelling units, setbacks, placement, and neighborhood compatibility; and provides reasonable procedures for platting, site-plan review, zoning, and public notice.

6. Infrastructure and Transportation.

Legislation that provides municipal tools, funding, intergovernmental coordination, and efficient permitting or property-acquisition processes for transportation, parks, utilities, and other public infrastructure.

7. Municipal Finance and Debt Capacity.

Legislation that protects municipal flexibility to finance public infrastructure, parks, and other capital projects; preserves appropriate use of tax-backed debt and certificates of obligation; and avoids debt limits, election requirements, or project restrictions that impair the City’s ability to meet demonstrated infrastructure needs.

8. Water-Conservation Compatibility.

Legislation that ensures municipal or water-provider drought restrictions and water-conservation requirements prevail over conflicting property owners’ association or homeowners’ association requirements concerning landscaping, turf, and irrigation.

9. Open Government and Protected Information.

Legislation that improves the clarity, efficiency, and transparency of municipal public-information and public-notice requirements while protecting confidential governmental information, including attorney-client communications, fraud-detection information, cybersecurity information, and other information whose disclosure would impair the City’s legal interests or operations.

10. Municipal Employees and Utility Workers.

Legislation that protects municipal employees, public servants, and utility workers from assault, harassment, interference, and other risks arising from the performance of official duties.

11. Tourism and Economic Development.

Legislation that supports the City's tourism economy, including continuation or renewal of the City's designation as the Wedding Capital of Texas.

12. Litigation Fairness and Taxpayer Protection.

Legislation that preserves local governments' ability to obtain appellate review of jurisdictional rulings and protects taxpayers from one-sided attorney-fee provisions, unnecessary litigation costs, and litigation incentives that undermine responsible municipal decision-making.

B. Legislation and Governmental Actions the City Opposes

1. Preemption of Local Authority.

Legislation that broadly preempts or materially erodes municipal authority to adopt and enforce local regulations reasonably related to public health, safety, welfare, infrastructure, environmental protection, land use, and community character.

2. ETJ and Growth-Management Limits.

Legislation that abolishes, reduces, or materially limits the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction or its authority to regulate development-related water, wastewater, drainage, impervious cover, transportation, or other infrastructure impacts.

3. Land-Use Preemption.

Legislation that unduly limits municipal zoning, subdivision, site-plan, platting, development-review, annexation, accessory-dwelling-unit, lighting, sign, tree-preservation, or other land-use authority, including legislation that prevents the City from applying locally appropriate public-health and safety standards.

4. Restrictions on Infrastructure Finance.

Legislation that imposes arbitrary or inflexible debt caps; restricts the City's ability to issue tax-backed debt or certificates of obligation for public infrastructure, parks, or capital projects; requires unnecessary elections; or otherwise delays or impairs the City's ability to finance public facilities and services.

5. Restrictions on Environmental and Water Protections.

Legislation that limits the City's ability to implement water-conservation measures, regulate impervious cover or drainage, protect water quality and watersheds, preserve trees and scenic landscapes, or align development approvals with available water and wastewater infrastructure.

6. Erosion of Municipal Legal Protections.

Legislation that weakens the confidentiality of municipal attorney-client communications, removes or impairs governmental appellate rights, imposes one-sided fee shifting against local governments, or creates disproportionate litigation exposure for municipal taxpayers.

7. Unfunded or Duplicative Mandates.

Legislation that imposes unreasonable local spending caps, duplicative reporting requirements, unfunded mandates, or other administrative requirements that divert City resources from essential services and infrastructure without a demonstrated public benefit.

C. Matters on Which the City Ordinarily Takes No Position

The City ordinarily will not take a position on legislation, agency rules, or other governmental actions that do not materially affect the City's municipal operations, finances, property, employees, legal authority, residents, businesses, infrastructure, public health and safety, or adopted legislative priorities. This includes matters that are primarily private, partisan, statewide in nature without a material municipal impact, or outside the City's operational expertise or responsibility.

This section does not limit the City Council's authority to take a position when a specific matter otherwise covered by this section materially affects the City or when City Council determines that an official position serves a legitimate municipal purpose. City Administration may continue to monitor these matters and provide factual information as authorized by this policy.

D. Implementation and Advocacy Direction

City officials and authorized representatives may advocate the priorities in this exhibit in accordance with this policy.

City Administration shall use the legislative tracker and impact-assessment process to identify bills, agency rules, and other governmental actions that materially affect these priorities; recommend an official position when necessary; and identify resulting implementation work.

Nothing in this exhibit authorizes advocacy or expenditure inconsistent with Sections **Error! Reference source not found.** *[Error! Reference source not found.]* and **Error! Reference source not found.** *[Error! Reference source not found.]* of this policy or other applicable law.