



STAFF REPORT

City of Dripping Springs

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Submitted By: Michelle Fischer, City Administrator
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Council Meeting Date: September 15, 2026

Agenda Item Wording: Discuss and consider approval of a resolution adopting the City of Dripping Springs Legislative Communications Policy, including the legislative priorities incorporated in Attachment “A”; superseding Resolution 2015-03 and Resolution No. 2025-R03; authorizing implementation; and providing an effective date.

Agenda Item Sponsor: Mayor Bill Foulds, Jr.

A. Recommended Action

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the proposed resolution and adopt the Legislative Communications Policy, including Exhibit A—Legislative Priorities, as Attachment “A” to the resolution.

B. Summary

The proposed resolution creates one controlling Council action for the City’s legislative communications process and current legislative priorities. It adopts the updated Legislative Communications Policy as Attachment “A,” incorporates Exhibit A—Legislative Priorities into the policy, and supersedes Resolution 2015-03 and Resolution No. 2025-R03.

The policy preserves City Council control over official legislative positions and the Mayor’s role as legislative director. It establishes clearer procedures for legislative monitoring, departmental analysis, time-sensitive communications, post-session implementation, and reporting to City Council. Exhibit A consolidates recurring principles and positions reflected in the City’s prior priorities, testimony, advocacy, and legislative memoranda, while separately identifying matters on which the City ordinarily takes no position.

The policy also provides a limited, express delegation for staff to complete routine administrative and ministerial work without separate City Council authorization for each task. The delegation is intentionally bounded: it does not authorize staff to establish an official City position, engage in advocacy without the required authorization, amend City ordinances or policies, change fees or service levels, approve contracts, retain a lobbyist, or exceed existing budget or purchasing authority.

C. Background

The City Council adopted the existing Legislative Communications Policy through Resolution 2015-03. The existing policy directs City Administration to provide a report before each regular legislative session and status reports during the session; identifies the Mayor as the City's legislative director; requires City Council approval of official positions unless the Mayor determines the position is consistent with existing Council policy; and allows City officials to provide factual information to governmental representatives.

For the 89th Legislative Session, City Council adopted legislative priorities and authorized City officials to advocate the positions stated in the resolution in accordance with the City's legislative policy.

The City also maintained a bill-action tracker that assigned departments, identified affected City Code provisions or policies, recorded required actions, and tracked effective dates. The tracker reflected, among other items, the need to consider purchasing-policy changes for lobbying procurement, updates to public-information materials, zoning-ordinance updates, operational and training actions, and legislative implementation memoranda.

The City's 89th Session work also demonstrated the value of a shared tracker, structured legislative data, scheduled or real-time hearing alerts, automated reporting, and source-based analysis. The proposed policy permits City Administration to use approved information-management, automation, mapping, transcription, data-analysis, reporting, and internal collaboration tools while requiring human review and verification before technology-generated information is used for an official City position, testimony, public communication, legal analysis, or Council action.

The proposed resolution and Attachment "A" formalize these practices so the City can identify issues earlier, coordinate departmental review, track deadlines and effective dates, respond to time-sensitive requests within existing Council direction, and manage post-session implementation in a consistent manner. They also consolidate the City's legislative communications rules and current legislative priorities into a single, readily accessible Council reference document.

1. Proposed Policy Updates

The proposed resolution and Attachment "A":

1. Replace Resolution 2015-03 and Resolution No. 2025-R03 with one controlling legislative communications policy and incorporated legislative-priorities exhibit.
2. Retain City Council authority to establish official City positions and retain the Mayor's role as legislative director and the requirement that official advocacy be authorized in writing.
3. Incorporate Exhibit A, which identifies legislation and governmental actions the City supports, legislation and governmental actions the City opposes, and matters on which the City ordinarily takes no position.
4. Establish an annual and interim planning cycle, including priority solicitation from departments and City boards, commissions, and committees; a pre-session briefing; and monitoring of interim charges, agency proceedings, and hearing calendars.
5. Require a legislative tracker and impact assessment process that identifies affected departments, applicable City materials, recommended actions, responsible personnel, effective dates, and completion status.

6. Require a post-session implementation register for material enacted measures and reporting to City Council during and after legislative sessions.
7. Clarify the distinction among an official City position, authorized time-sensitive advocacy consistent with existing Council direction, and factual or technical information that does not represent an official City Council position.
8. Add public-purpose, budget, procurement, political-advertising, lobbying-registration, and outside-representative compliance safeguards, including the 2025 procurement treatment of lobbying and government-relations services.
9. Authorize use of approved internal tracking, alerting, automation, mapping, transcription, data-analysis, reporting, and collaboration tools, while requiring source documentation and human verification of material facts and citations before the City uses technology-generated work for an official action or communication.
10. Direct staff to prioritize limited City advocacy resources toward matters that uniquely or particularly affect Dripping Springs, require City-specific facts or perspectives, or present an anticipated gap in peer-municipality or allied-organization advocacy; and allow staff to coordinate with or rely on aligned Texas Municipal League and other association advocacy when it adequately advances the City's interests.

2. **Proactive Administrative Authorization**

The proposed policy authorizes City Administration, without additional City Council action for each routine item, to:

1. Monitor legislation, interim charges, agency rulemaking, hearing calendars, and related governmental matters.
2. Maintain the legislative tracker and implementation register; collect departmental impact assessments; and obtain factual or technical information from governmental entities, municipal associations, consultants, and other appropriate sources.
3. Prepare legislative reports, issue memoranda, draft testimony, written comments, correspondence, proposed priorities, proposed positions, and draft amendments for review or approval.
4. Provide factual, technical, and resource information in response to governmental inquiries, subject to the policy's notice and coordination requirements.
5. Attend or observe relevant legislative, agency, association, coalition, and stakeholder meetings; notify the Mayor and affected departments of relevant hearings and deadlines; and coordinate authorized participation.
6. Implement ministerial, non-discretionary changes required by state or federal law when the change does not require City Council action and does not change a City policy, ordinance, fee, contract, budget appropriation, or Council-approved service level.
7. Take other routine administrative steps needed to carry out the policy, subject to the adopted budget, purchasing requirements, personnel policies, and applicable law.

3. Actions Reserved for City Council or Existing Approval Processes

The policy does **not** delegate authority to staff to:

1. Establish or change an official City position, except that the Mayor may authorize a time-sensitive response consistent with existing Council policy or positions as specified in the policy.
2. Advocate, testify, or submit official written comments without the required authorization.
3. Adopt or amend an ordinance, fee, budget, contract, policy, or Council-approved level of service.
4. Expend funds beyond the adopted budget or delegated purchasing authority.
5. Retain a lobbyist or governmental-relations consultant.
6. Take any action reserved by applicable law, the Code of Ordinances, or City policy to City Council.

This framework allows staff to move quickly on monitoring, analysis, coordination, and non-discretionary implementation while preserving City Council’s policy-making and fiscal authority.

D. Fiscal Impact

Adoption of the resolution and Attachment “A” has no direct fiscal impact. Any future expenditure for outside governmental-relations services, legislative travel, contractual services, policy or ordinance amendments, technology, training, or implementation work remains subject to the adopted budget and applicable City approval and purchasing requirements.

E. Legal Considerations

The policy requires administration consistent with applicable open-meetings, public-information, procurement, ethics, lobbying-registration, records-retention, and public-resource requirements. It expressly requires City resources to serve a municipal public purpose and comply with budget and purchasing requirements. It also recognizes that lobbying, government-relations, and similar services intended to influence state or federal lawmakers are not treated as exempt professional services when Texas law requires competitive procurement. The policy does not expand the City’s authority or waive any approval required by law, the Code of Ordinances, or City policy.

F. Attachments

1. Slide Presentation
2. Proposed Resolution adopting Legislative Communications Policy.
 - Attachment “A” to Proposed Resolution: Legislative Communications Policy, including Exhibit A—Legislative Priorities
3. Existing Legislative Communications Policy (Resolution 2015-03)
4. Existing Legislative Priorities (Resolution No. 2025-R03)