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**AGENDA INFORMATION SHEET**

**DEPARTMENT:** City Manager's Office

**CM:** Sara Hensley

**DATE:** March 19, 2024

**SUBJECT**

Receive a report, hold a discussion, and give staff direction on pending City Council requests for:

- 1) Request for a work session to discuss restoration of the online vote record.
- 2) Request for Legal staff to research the best resolution(s) to the original IOOF Cemetery deed and contact IOOF representatives for them to participate in the process.

[Estimated Presentation/Discussion Time: 30 minutes]

**BACKGROUND**

On June 23 and 24, 2023, Council conducted its annual retreat where discussions focused on governance challenges and policy development. During the retreat, Council discussed options to improve the current 2-minute pitch process (as outlined in Section 2-30 of the Code of Ordinances), specifically focusing on the current allowance within the code for a policy recommendation to proceed directly from a pitch to consideration of a resolution or ordinance without first being discussed in a work session. Council gave direction to modify the pitch process so that a supermajority of the City Council must provide direction for any 2-minute policy pitch to proceed directly from a pitch to consideration of a resolution or ordinance. The attached ordinance reflects this change in Section 2-30(c)(3) (**Exhibit 2**).

Staff will review one outstanding request for information per elected official during each work session. The weekly work session process will include staff introducing the requested topic followed by the requesting elected official having up to two minutes to describe and justify their request. The remaining elected officials will then have up to one minute to provide feedback and indicate their support for the use of staff time to respond to the request. Staff will respond to all requests where a consensus of at least four elected officials is established. To the extent possible, responses will be provided in the requested format including Informal Staff Reports, Legal Status Reports, City Council work session topics, or ordinances and resolutions to be considered on future City Council agendas. The Agenda Committee will assist in scheduling items receiving consensus based upon priority offered by Council Members, work session availability, and readiness of the item depending upon the total number of staff hours needed to develop, and the departments involved.

As guidelines for Council Members to note and offer their priority while supporting an item, the following general categorization could indicate any Council Member's support to assist staff and the Agenda Committee. The following considers the item's perceived urgency, impact, and/or importance. It is a general framework only to help offer some prioritization, especially in consideration of other scheduled Council priorities, major goals and projects, and scheduled work.

- **High** – Time sensitivity of the item is significant; the item is critical to the community or organization; and/or the item is of such importance that it should take precedence over other scheduled priorities, projects, or items.
- **Moderate** – The item is somewhat time-sensitive; the item has a valuable impact to the community or organization; and/or the item is important but should be integrated into work plans accordingly.
- **Low** – The item is not time-sensitive; the item has an impact, but it is limited; and/or the item should be scheduled into work plans where possible but should not affect or delay other scheduled work.

The following items will be discussed during this work session:

**1.) Request for a work session to discuss restoration of the online vote record.**

**a. Requestor:** Mayor Pro Tem Beck

**b. Council Member Request:** “I am proposing we restore the practice of collecting and disseminating council voting records on our webpage. This issue gets at the heart of our commitment to organizational excellence, community engagement, and transparency.

As you are aware, this practice is not merely a matter of record-keeping. It reflects our dedication to one of the city's key priorities: to strengthen our community and surrounding region by engaging with stakeholders on critical issues. The initiation of this effort years ago, and the subsequent enhancement in 2021 to include more user-friendly data formats like Microsoft Excel, demonstrated our staff's alignment with these priorities. Our community, who are professional, engaged, and attentive, relies on this access to participate meaningfully in tracking our democratic process.

The discontinuation of this practice is a departure from our prior actions aimed at enhancing transparency and accessibility. Members of our community have noticed this absence and have voiced their concerns. They depend on these records, not for daily perusal, but for informed engagement during pivotal times such as election cycles and political reviews, much like how campaign finance disclosures are used.

Furthermore, a City-Secretary consultant's report underscores that the decision to maintain or cease this practice falls squarely within our council jurisdiction, emphasizing its nature as a political policy decision. It is also important to note that while our city charter only mandates vote tabulation be recorded in the minutes, these documents do not offer the clarity or ease of access that our constituents deserve, as well as being written before the modern information era. The extraction of meaningful data from minutes requires specialized skills beyond the reach of the average citizen.

I acknowledge the current staffing challenges in the City Secretary's office, which might necessitate a delay in processing and uploading these records. However, I believe a modest lag in updating these records is a reasonable compromise to ensure we continue to uphold our values of transparency and engagement.

Therefore, I propose we schedule a medium priority work session to discuss the restoration of this critical practice. However, should there be sufficient interest, I urge us to consider immediate action towards the practice's reinstatement, circumventing the need for an intermediary session.

Our commitment to transparency is not just about fulfilling a requirement; it's about fostering trust and facilitating engagement with the community we serve. Let's take this step to reaffirm our dedication to these ideals.”

- c. **Staff information:** In 2023, as part of ongoing efforts to improve operational efficiency, staff engaged a consultant to review key processes within the City Secretary's Office. One of the recommendations stemming from this review pertained to the online Vote Record. The consultant observed that the Vote Record site appeared redundant, as voting records were already documented within meeting minutes, ordinances, and resolutions. Furthermore, the City Charter stipulates that votes be recorded solely within the minutes. Consequently, the decision was made by our staff to discontinue the regular updates to the Vote Record webpage, which had been consuming approximately 2 hours per week of valuable office time. Due to recent staff transitions, shifts in responsibilities, and an ongoing recruitment effort to fill open positions, this decision was made to strategically prioritize other critical office tasks. Additionally, prior to its discontinuation, the site was averaging an estimated 15-17 clicks per year. Should council decide to move forward with this item, the City Secretary's Office will be best equipped to reinstate the process when the department is fully staffed.
- d. **Date Requested:** March 7, 2024
- e. **Format for response:** Work session

2.) **Request for Legal staff to research the best resolution(s) to the original IOOF Cemetery deed and contact IOOF representatives for them to participate in the process.**

- a. **Requestor:** Mayor Hudspeth
- b. **Council Member Request:** "Authorize the legal staff allocate more than 2 hours to research the best resolution(s) to the original IOOF Cemetery deed.

As staff knows, it prohibits black people from being buried there. I understand a previous council created a resolution to speak to the issue.

I would like legal to research changes in the law and see if any other options are available to address this issue. I would also like the legal department to contact the IOOF representatives (I am a member), to seek options for them to participate in this process.

The results of the work would be, legal working with the city manager to bring an action item and place it on the council agenda for a vote."

- c. **Staff information:** If City Council wishes to move forward with this request, staff will prepare an action item for a future council agenda.
- d. **Date Requested:** March 13, 2024
- e. **Format for response:** Ordinance

## **EXHIBITS**

Exhibit 1 – Agenda Information Sheet  
Exhibit 2 – Ordinance No. 23-1431  
Exhibit 3 – Presentation

Respectfully Submitted:  
Carlotta Cowan  
Assistant to the City Manager