



**Department:** Administration  
**Cost Center:** 1002  
**For Agenda of:** 9/17/2024  
**Placement:** Consent  
**Estimated Time:** N/A

**FROM:** Greg Hermann, Deputy City Manager  
**Prepared By:** Natalie Harnett, Policy and Project Manager

**SUBJECT:** AMEND THE COUNCIL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL TO INCLUDE A SECTION REGARDING INTERNS/VOLUNTEERS

## RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Draft Resolution entitled, "A Resolution of the City Council of the City of San Luis Obispo, California, amending its Council Policies and Procedures Manual," regarding the use of Council Member Interns/Volunteers.

## POLICY CONTEXT

City Council has adopted a manual entitled "Council Policies and Procedures" (Attachment A) to define and ensure the proper conduct of the City's business by the City Council. The Council periodically revises its Council Policies and Procedures Manual ("Manual") to ensure clarity, consistency with State law, and conformity with the City Charter and Ordinances.

Under City Charter section 701, the only employees appointed under the Council are the City Manager and the City Attorney; therefore, Council Members do not have other paid employees working directly for them. Council Members can, however, select volunteers to help with various tasks related to Council Member activities.

## DISCUSSION

On October 24, 2023, the Council held a special meeting to discuss the topic of Council Member internships. Historically, Council Members have used interns in different capacities. This item seeks to create a section within the Manual to address Council Members' ability to select interns. In order to comply with the City Charter, Council Member Interns are volunteers and not paid or considered City employees. The recommended amendment to the Manual does not provide explicit procedures for Council Member internships, but rather formalizes Council Members' discretion to select interns/volunteers and establishes general guidelines.

Unpaid internships can be mutually beneficial and may lead to paid internships or even full-time positions with the City or another public agency. The internships allow students to learn about civic engagement, participate in valuable learning opportunities, and make a tangible impact on the community.

Generally, the interns are high school, Cal Poly or Cuesta students who are looking to gain some experience in local government. Although Council Member Interns are volunteers, Council Members have the discretion to show appreciation to them through letters of recommendation, gift cards, or in some cases educational credits through their school.

### *General Guidelines for Council Member Interns*

- Council Member Interns can engage in various tasks related to Council activities, including but not limited to research, constituent outreach, and administrative support.
- Council Member Interns cannot be used for any campaign-related activities<sup>1</sup>.
- The Council Member Intern program aims to provide valuable learning experiences for students interested in local government while contributing to the council's City business.
- Volunteers should not be doing work that is under the umbrella of an existing City job description. General administrative work or research beyond one to two hours of one-time work is not included in any City job description<sup>2</sup>
- The Council Member Interns shall not have access to Council members' city email inboxes or other confidential or privileged communications.

The duration of an internship can be determined based on the academic requirements of the intern and the needs of the Council Member. Interested candidates should reach out directly to Council Members. The selection process is up to the discretion of the Council Member and based on their needs.

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<sup>1</sup> A campaign volunteer is any person that actively contributes to a candidate's campaign for an elected position, including but not limited to: printing and putting up posters, assisting with tabling and assisting with social media advertising.

<sup>2</sup> Council Policies and Procedures – Section 5.3.1 Timely Response: City staff will make every effort to respond in a timely and professional manner to all requests made by individual Council Members for information or assistance, provided that, in the judgment of the City Manager the request is not of a magnitude, either in terms of workload or policy, which would require that it more appropriately be assigned to staff through the collective direction of the City Council. In terms of making this judgment, the following guidelines should be considered: The request should be specific and limited in scope so that staff can respond without altering other priorities and with only minimal delay to other assignments; the request should only impose a "one-time" work requirement, as opposed to an on-going work requirement; the response to the request should not require a significant allocation of staff resources (generally defined as consisting of more than one staff person, or a single staff person working on the issue in excess of 1-2 hours).

*Recommended Language Amendment to the Council Policies and Procedures*

Staff recommends adding the following sub-section to Section 2.5 – General Procedures and Limitations of the Council Compensation Chapter:

2.5.6 Council Volunteers

Council members may use interns/volunteers to help with various tasks related to council activities, including but not limited to research, constituent outreach, and administrative support. Interns/volunteers should not be used for any campaign-related activities. Council members have the discretion to show appreciation to their volunteers through letters of recommendation, gift cards, or through other means of supporting their professional development. Any City funds spent on intern/volunteer support will be funded through the council member’s allocated professional development budget.

**Previous Council or Advisory Body Action**

The Council met on October 24, 2023, to discuss the concept of Council interns and share amongst each other how they have historically utilized interns. The Council provided direction at that meeting to formalize the use of interns through an update to the Manual.

**Public Engagement**

Public comment can be provided to the City Council through written correspondence prior to the meeting and through public testimony at the meeting.

**CONCURRENCE**

The City Attorney’s Office has reviewed and approved the proposed amendments to the Manual (Attachment B).

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) does not apply to the recommended action in this report, because the action does not constitute a “Project” under CEQA Guidelines Sec. 15378.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

Budgeted: Yes

Funding Identified: Yes

Budget Year: 2023-24

**Fiscal Analysis:**

<b>Funding Sources</b>	<b>Total Budget Available</b>	<b>Current Funding Request</b>	<b>Remaining Balance</b>	<b>Annual Ongoing Cost</b>
General Fund	\$ N/A	\$	\$	\$
State				
Federal				
Fees				
Other:				
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ N/A</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>

There is no new fiscal impact associated with the recommendation. Per the Council Policies and Procedures Section 2.3.1, allowances are budgeted for the Mayor and Council Members for the costs of professional development and educational conferences designed to improve the understanding of and proficiency in municipal affairs. In the 2023-25 Financial Plan, the annual budget is \$3,600 for the Mayor and \$2,700 for the other Council members. It is at the Council Member’s discretion how they spend their allowance throughout the year as long as the expenditures are in accordance with the City’s Purchasing Policy.

**ALTERNATIVES**

***Council could decide not to amend the Council Policies and Procedures to include a section on Council interns.*** This action is not recommended by staff because this administrative change that will help clarify how interns should be used for current and future councils.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- A - Council Policies and Procedures Manual
- B - Draft Resolution Amending Council Policies and Procedures related to Council interns.