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MEMORANDUM

May 8, 2026

To: City Council Members

CC: Shane Pace, CAO
Dustin Fratto, Council Executive Director

From: Council Member Marci Houseman, District 4

Subject: Proposal to Codify the Functions and Duties of the Division of Communications

Overview

As our city continues to change and the landscape of digital media evolves, it is essential that we codify a clear and accountable framework for our municipal communications. I am proposing amendments to the Administrative Code, which serve to establish and define the specific functions and duties of the Division of Communications. This ordinance provides the structure necessary to ensure our city's messaging remains highly coordinated and transparent to the public, the administration, and the City Council.

Key Benefits to the City

Evidence-Based Decision Making

To ensure our communication strategies are grounded in measurable results, this ordinance mandates an Annual Strategic Communications Plan. This plan must be presented to the Council in a public meeting every May and must be rooted in evidence-based decision-making. Specifically, it requires:

- **Data-Driven Objectives:** The plan must include specific, measurable goals for the upcoming fiscal year, justified by previous performance outcomes or identified community needs.
- **Audience Segmentation:** An analysis of city demographics and a description of the specific communication channels proven to most effectively reach those segments.
- **Evidence of Efficacy:** For any new major initiative or significant shift in strategy, the Division must provide supporting evidence, such as industry best practices, pilot program data, or resident survey results, to justify the proposed approach.

Fiscal Oversight and Resource Allocation

This ordinance strengthens our "power of the purse" by requiring a Resource Allocation proposal that directly aligns expenditures with the high-priority goals identified in the Data-Driven Objectives. Furthermore, the required Regular Performance Reporting will include a summary of the total number

of hours spent providing inter-departmental support, delineated by department. This transparency allows the Council to see exactly where staff time and taxpayer dollars are being utilized.

Improved Situational Awareness

To ensure the Council is never caught off-guard by media inquiries or city announcements, the ordinance includes a Notification to Council clause. The Division will be required to provide the Council with written notification at least two hours prior to:

- The distribution of any press release or official statements of significance from the City or a department.
- Any press conference or media briefing organized by the City or by a department.

Elevating the Legislative Voice

One of the primary strengths of this ordinance is the formalization of Legislative Support. While our staff will primarily handle these items for us, in situations where they are unable or we have a vacancy, the Division will provide its assistance. This code explicitly requires the Division to provide equitable support to the City Council for:

- Communicating legislative actions and media relations.
- Managing Council webpages and producing multimedia content.
- Promoting Council-sponsored events, publishing council newsletters, and assisting with Council-specific communications initiatives.

Conclusion

This ordinance creates a clear path for defining our communication standards while protecting the Council's role in oversight and policymaking. Most importantly, it ensures that the leadership of this division is a collaborative choice, as the Director of Communications must be appointed with the advice and consent of the City Council.

I believe this structure will foster a more informed electorate and a more collaborative relationship between the executive and legislative branches. I look forward to discussing this proposal with you further.