

Priority Procedures
for the
Mayor and City Council
Laredo, Texas

2001-2002
Second Edition
updated: 2011

The City of Laredo Mayor and City Council



Introduction

True Laredo leaders function enthusiastically at all levels, ranging from addressing the loftiest and most critical goals to performing administrative details required to pass ordinances. Equally important, they must communicate effectively not only with their constituents, but also with their colleagues. Typically that communication includes receiving advice from appointed officials, facilitating interaction at meetings, disseminating targeted public information and receiving timely internal information.

The Laredo Mayor and City Council comprise a strong, united leadership team truly committed to public service through customer service. Their legislative authority to pass ordinances, resolutions and motions is as important as their responsibility to work with their appointees to advisory committees and with City personnel. Cumulatively, their goal is to meet the needs and interests of their constituents, with a primary focus on providing cost-effective City services.

Priority Procedures for the Mayor and City Council is intended to facilitate the leadership and communication processes that are imperative for customer service. It delineates specific policies and procedures in the following four priority areas:

- Priority I. Commissions, Boards and Committees
- Priority II. Council Meetings
- Priority III. Public Information
- Priority IV. Communication with City Staff

These procedures will be helpful to leaders interested in consistency and efficiency as well as in accessibility and accountability. They also will serve as a source of information about procedures for accomplishing important responsibilities such as appointing members of advisory committees, placing items on Council agendas, scheduling workshops and meetings and disseminating internal and public information.

Instead of merely adapting and adopting another city's handbook, the Laredo Mayor and City Council, through its Protocol, Procedures and Customer Service Committee, developed a customized, tailored set of priority procedures. Early in the process, while scrutinizing a vast collection of handbooks developed for other Texas cities, Committee members realized they needed their own manual that was developed from the perspective of the Mayor and Council Members, rather than of City staff. Their primary purpose was to enhance their united efforts to respond more efficiently and

effectively to their constituents, the families of Laredo. The result is an original collection of guidelines that are as timely and appropriate as they are practical and precise, especially because they are targeted for the purpose at hand and the persons who interact in public service.

This second edition includes four appendices that can be helpful independently. Appendix A is the official list of the City of Laredo's Commissions, Boards and Committees as of May, 2011. To facilitate the responsibility of developing and submitting timely the reports and records required herein, Appendix B includes templates that save time and eliminate guesswork. Appendix C is the City of Laredo's Comprehensive Public Information Plan, while Appendix D reflects Fair Rules for Political Forums, including forms for program agendas and order of presentation.

Every effort was made to research relevant legislation and ordinances and to modify proposed procedures for compliance and consistency. To ensure their longevity, procedures were written to identify their historical sources as the basis from which to define current and projected directives. What's more, the Charter of the City of Laredo was scrutinized.

Developing this handbook of priority procedures for the Laredo Mayor and City Council required building consensus and combining the expertise of City leaders and personnel. It served the purpose of defining a set of practical procedures to streamline the process of working together for the public good. Such unity of purpose is reflected throughout this work in progress that was written with constituents in mind, first, foremost and always.

Priority I. Commissions, Boards and Committees

The City of Laredo's commissions, boards and committees advise and assist the Mayor and City Council to meet their responsibilities. While the City Charter calls for the creation of a Charter Commission, Districting Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission and a Board of Adjustment, the Mayor and Council Members serve on committees and boards with other elected and appointed officials and create standing and ad hoc advisory committees.

Laredoans who accept the challenge of serving on the City's commissions, boards and committees will be held to the highest standards of performance, ethics and accountability and will be charged with specific responsibilities. Generally, they are advisers to the Mayor and Council, but do not speak or act for them. Their valuable leadership, service and generosity of time are an appreciated community service.

The extensive research conducted regarding this important subject is reflected in the "References" section. It is enriched by the consensus-building interaction that resulted in the procedures defined herein.

This chapter of the *Priority Procedures for the Laredo Mayor and City Council* focuses on the procedures related to creating appointed bodies, nominating and confirming their members, defining their enabling and operational authority, delineating their requirements and benefitting from their advice. It is intended to enhance efficiency and effectiveness and to empower City elected and appointed officials to do an even better job for Laredoans.

I. Commissions and board created by Charter, City of Laredo

A. City Charter Revision Commission (Charter, 12.09, 44, 45)

1. Creation: The Council shall appoint a City Charter Commission every 10 years, as directed by the Charter. (Charter, 44)
2. General powers and duties: The Charter Revision Commission is an ad hoc advisory committee that shall review the Laredo City Charter and make recommendations for amendments to the Mayor and City Council. (Charter, 44)
3. Membership: The Mayor and each Council Member shall appoint one member to the nine-member commission.
4. Terms: Generally, commissioners shall serve two-year terms.
5. Chair and Vice Chair: The Chair and Vice Chair of the Charter Revision Commission shall be nominated by the Mayor from among its members and confirmed by a two-thirds vote of Council Members (minimum six ayes).
 - a. The Chair and Vice Chair shall serve for the term of the commission.
 - b. The Mayor and Council shall fill vacancies by the same procedure or may delegate the duty to the commission.
 - c. Officers elected to fill vacancies shall serve for the unexpired term.
6. Duration: The Laredo Charter Revision Commission shall expire two years after its creation, unless it completes its task sooner.
 - a. If the commission submits its written report of Charter revision recommendations to the Mayor and Council before two years, its task is considered completed and its term automatically expired.
 - b. Under no circumstances, however, shall the commission's term be longer than two years.
7. Reports: The commission shall submit the following written reports to the Mayor and Council via the City Secretary or the City Secretary's designee:
 - a. Minutes of all meetings.

- b. Biannual reports by January 1 and July 1.
 - (1) The commission may by majority vote of members present propose a schedule with earlier, but not later, report deadlines.
 - (2) A proposed revised schedule must be approved by a two-thirds vote of the Council (minimum six ayes).
8. Charter amendments: The City Charter Revision Commission shall recommend Charter amendments for consideration by the Mayor and Council, who may amend the recommendations and/or propose additional amendments. (Charter, 44)
- a. “Amendments to this Charter may be framed and submitted to the voters of the City in the manner provided by Chapter 13, of Title 28 of the Revised Civil Statutes of Texas 1925, as now or hereafter amended.” (Charter, 44)
 - b. The Council may call an election to provide an opportunity for qualified City voters to amend the Charter by a majority of votes cast for each amendment. (Texas Constitution, Art. 11, Sec. 5; Local Government Code, Chapter 9)
 - c. The Charter shall not be amended more frequently than every two years. (Texas Constitution, Art. 11, Sec. 5)
 - d. Charter amendments are subject to such limitations as may be prescribed by the Texas Legislature and shall be consistent with the Texas Constitution and general laws enacted by the Legislature. (Texas Constitution, Art. 11, Sec. 5)
 - e. The Council also “on its own motion may submit a proposed charter amendment to the municipality’s qualified voters for their approval at an election.” (Local Government Code, Chapter 9, Sec. 9.004)
 - f. Charter amendments shall be handled in the same manner as an ordinance introduced by a Council Member, following the same process for adopting ordinances before submitting them to the voters for their consideration.
 - g. Charter amendments proposed by the Mayor and Council must be presented at two public hearings and must be adopted by a two-thirds vote of Council (minimum six ayes) before being submitted to the voters for their consideration.
 - h. Voters shall consider Charter amendments by ballot title. (Charter, 34)
 - (1) Charter amendments “to be voted on by the voters of the City shall be presented for voting by ballot title,” which “may differ from its legal title and shall be a clear, concise statement describing the substance of the measure without

argument or prejudice.” (Charter, 34)

- (2) “Below the ballot title shall appear the following question: ‘Shall the above described amendment be adopted?’ Immediately below such question shall appear in the following order, the words ‘yes’ and ‘no’ and to the left of each a square in which by making a cross (X) the voter casts his vote.” (Charter, 34)
- (3) Ballots used in Charter amendment elections shall be translated into and be available in Spanish.

B. Redistricting Commission (Charter, 10.06.B., 35-36)

1. Creation: The Council shall appoint a Redistricting Commission every 10 years, as directed by the Charter. (Charter, 35)
 - a. Because the federal census was conducted in 2000 and data was released by April 15, 2001, but the Redistricting Commission’s report deadline seems to be set by the Charter on Jan. 1, 2001, the Council shall appoint Commissioners by Feb. 1, 2000, and every 10 years thereafter.
2. General powers and duties: The Redistricting Commission is an ad hoc advisory committee that shall review the Laredo City Council districts and federal census data, then submit a recommended plan for adjusting Council district boundaries to the Mayor and City Council for their consideration.
3. Membership: Each Council Member shall appoint two members to the 16-member commission. (Charter, 35)
4. Terms: Generally, commissioners shall serve two-year terms.
5. Chair and Vice Chair: The Chair and Vice Chair of the Redistricting Commission shall be nominated by the Mayor from among its members and confirmed by a two-thirds vote of Council (minimum six ayes).
 - a. The Chair and Vice Chair shall serve for the term of the commission.
 - b. The Mayor and Council shall fill vacancies by the same procedure or may delegate the duty to the commission.
 - c. Officers elected to fill vacancies shall serve for the unexpired term.
6. Duration: The Laredo Redistricting Commission shall expire two years after its creation, unless it completes its task sooner.
 - a. If the commission submits its written report of redistricting

- recommendations to the Mayor and Council before two years, its task is considered completed and its term automatically expired.
- b. Under no circumstances shall the commission's term be longer than two years and two months.
7. Reports: The commission shall submit the following written reports to the Mayor and Council via the City Secretary or the City Secretary's designee, but submitted by the Planning Department Director or the Director's designee:
- a. Minutes of all meetings.
 - b. Monthly reports from the time the commission organizes, receives data and submits its final report.
 - c. First draft of final report of redistricting recommendations by July 1, 2001; second draft by September 1, 2001; and final report by December 1, 2001.
 - (1) This deadline schedule is intended to ensure compliance with Charter provisions and to provide sufficient time for the Mayor and Council to take timely action at least 90 days before the next regular City election. (Charter, 35-36)
 - (2) The commission may by majority vote of members present propose a schedule with earlier report deadlines.
 - (3) A proposed revised schedule must be approved by a two-thirds vote of Council (minimum six ayes).
 - d. The December 1, 2001, report shall be considered the commission's annual report.
 - e. Report deadlines shall apply to the 2000-2001 redistricting process and adapted every 10 years thereafter.
8. Redistricting recommendations: By January 1 after every federal census, or as soon as feasible after the U.S. Census Bureau releases certifiable population figures, the Redistricting Commission shall submit a report that includes a recommended plan for adjusting Council district boundaries. (Charter, 35)
- a. The report shall be submitted to the City Secretary and shall be drafted as a proposed ordinance. (Charter, 35)
 - b. The report shall include a map and a description of each Council district. (Charter, 35)
 - (1) Each district shall be formed of compact, contiguous territory and shall be as nearly rectangular as possible. (Charter, 35)

- (2) Each district's boundary lines shall follow the center lines of streets. (Charter, 35)
 - (3) Each district shall include as nearly as possible the same number of people and shall not differ in population by more than 10 percent from the population in the smallest district created. (Charter, 35)
- c. The report may include recommendations for new polling places that may be more accessible to voters in the redrawn districts.
 - d. After it is filed with the City Secretary, the Redistricting Commission's report shall be treated as an ordinance introduced by a Council Member. (Charter, 35)
 - (1) The procedure for the Council's consideration of the report, including Council amendments, shall be the same as procedures followed for other ordinances. (Charter, 35)
 - (2) If a summary of the ordinances is published pursuant to Section 2.09 of the Charter, which details the mechanics of passing ordinances, it must include the map and the description of the recommended Council districts. (Charter, 35)
 - e. The Council shall adopt the ordinance at least 90 days before the next regular City election, or it shall be deemed to have been adopted and shall have the force of law. (Charter, 35)
 - (1) Effective the date of enactment, the new Council districts and boundaries shall supersede previous Council district boundaries for all purposes of the next regular City election. (Charter, 36)
 - (2) Effective the date on which all Council Members elected at that regular City election take office, the new districts and boundaries shall supersede previous districts and boundaries for all other purposes. (Charter, 36)
 - f. As required by law, the Council shall review anew the location of polling places in the redrawn districts and shall work with other governmental process to enhance efficiency and to ensure accessibility for voters.

C. Planning and Zoning Commission (Charter, IX., 31-32)

- 1. Creation: The Mayor and Council shall appoint members of the Planning

and Zoning Commission, as directed by the Charter. (Charter, 31)

2. General powers and duties: The Planning and Zoning Commission is a standing advisory committee that shall make recommendations to the Council and to the City Manager regarding the physical development of the City, including the “Comprehensive Plan of Laredo” and its implementation.
3. Membership: The Mayor and each Council Member shall appoint one member to the nine-member commission. (Charter, 31)
4. Terms: Generally, commissioners serve terms concurrent with those of their respective appointing officials. (Charter, 31) A commissioner may be reappointed; however, no person shall serve as a planning and zoning commissioner for more than two (2) four-year terms of office, or eight (8) consecutive years. This provision does not preclude the reappointment of persons appointed to serve out an unexpired term. (Section 24.1.1.1 Code of Ordinances)
5. Chair and Vice Chair: Commissioners shall elect their Chair and Vice Chair from among their membership.
 - a. The Chair and Vice Chair shall serve one-year terms and may be reelected.
 - b. The commission shall fill vacancies in these offices by the same procedure.
 - c. Officers elected to fill vacancies shall serve for the unexpired term and may be reelected.
6. Duration: The Laredo Planning and Zoning Commission is created by Charter directive and shall exist until the Charter is amended to the contrary.
7. Reports: The commission shall submit copies of the minutes of all meetings to the Mayor and Council via the City Secretary or the City Secretary’s designee.
8. Planning and Zoning recommendations: The commission shall make recommendations to the Council and to the City Manager regarding all matters affecting the physical development of the City, shall be consulted regarding the City’s comprehensive plan and its implementation and shall exercise all other responsibilities provided by law. (Charter, 31)
 - a. Before adopting the annual budget, the Council shall forward to the Planning and Zoning Commission the City Manager’s “Comprehensive Plan of Laredo” that sets forth in graphic and textual form the proposed policies to govern the City’s future

- development. (Charter, 32)
- b. The plan shall serve as a guide for all future Council actions regarding land use and development regulations, urban renewal programs and expenditures for capital improvements. (Charter, 32)
- (1) The plan may cover the entire City and all of its functions or specific geographic areas that cumulatively cover the entire City and all of its functions and services. (Charter, 32)
 - (2) Within the time specified by the Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission shall review the City Manager's proposed comprehensive plan and shall submit related recommendations to the Council. (Charter, 32)
 - (3) After receiving the commission's recommendations, the Council shall conduct a public hearing regarding the proposed comprehensive plan or modification thereof and shall thereafter adopt it by ordinance, with or without amendment. (Charter, 32)
- c. The Council shall implement the "Comprehensive Plan of Laredo" as specified by the Charter:
- (1) Land use and development regulations: "The Council may by ordinance adopt land use and development regulations including but not limited to an official map and zoning and subdivision regulation." (Charter, 32)
 - (2) Urban renewal: The Council may by ordinance provide for redevelopment, rehabilitation, conservation and renewal programs for:
 - (a) the alleviation or prevention of slums, obsolescence, blight, or other conditions or deterioration and
 - (b) the achievement of the most appropriate use of land. (Charter, 32)
- d. Before acting on a proposed ordinance that relates to the comprehensive plan and/or concerns land use and development regulations, urban renewal or expenditures for capital improvements, the Council shall refer the proposal to the Planning and Zoning Commission. (Charter, 32)
- (1) The commission shall review the proposal within the time specified by the Council and shall report its related recommendations. (Charter, 32)

(2) Upon adopting such an ordinance, the Council shall make findings and shall report the relationship between the ordinance and the comprehensive plan. (Charter, 32)

e. If an adopted ordinance is inconsistent with the comprehensive plan, the plan shall be deemed to be amended in accordance with the Council's findings and report. (Charter, 32)

D. Board of Adjustment (Charter, 9.05, 32)

1. Creation: The Mayor and Council shall appoint the Board of Adjustment established by ordinance, as directed by the Charter. (Charter, 32-33)
2. General powers and duties: The Board of Adjustment is a standing quasi-judicial board that shall hear and determine appeals from administrative decisions, petitions for variances in the case of peculiar and unusual circumstances and other subjects permitted for its consideration as authorized by state statutes.
3. Membership: The Mayor and Council shall select five regular and four alternate Board Members by the following process:
 - a. The Mayor and each Council Member shall nominate one member each.
 - b. By lottery the first five nominees selected shall be regular members and the remaining four shall be alternate members for a two year term. (Land Development Code Section 24.1.3.1)
4. Terms: The terms of members shall run concurrently with those of their respective nominators. (Charter 33) No member shall serve more than four years. (Land Development Code Section 24.1.3.1)
5. Chair and Vice Chair: Board members shall elect their Chair and Vice Chair from among their membership.
 - a. The Chair and Vice Chair shall serve one-year terms and may be reelected.
 - b. The Board shall fill vacancies in these offices by the same procedure.
 - c. Officers elected to fill vacancies shall serve for the unexpired term and may be reelected.
6. Duration: The Board of Adjustment was created by ordinance, as per Charter directive, and shall exist until the Charter is amended to the contrary.

7. Reports: The board shall submit copies of the minutes of all meetings to the Mayor and Council via the City Secretary or the City Secretary's designee.
 8. Hearing appeals: The Board of Adjustment shall honor the standards and procedures established by the Council in hearing and determining appeals where it is alleged that there is an error in any order, requirement, or zoning use interpretation by the building official, or other city officer. Also the board will hear appeals to grant special variances in the following instances:
 - a. Permitting the reconstruction of a damaged, nonconforming building.
 - b. Varying the building setback, height, distance and area requirements in peculiar and unusual circumstances which would prevent the reasonable use of the land.
 - c. The board shall have no authority to grant variances to the specific performance standards relating to off-street parking and loading, signs and outdoor advertising, fencing, landscaping, or development standards except as specifically provided.
 - d. The Board shall act by motion in which not less than four (4) concurring votes are required to reverse an administrative decision or to grant a variance. (Land Development Code Section 24.1.3.1)
- E. Across-the-board requirements for members of the commissions and board created by Charter.
1. Qualifications: At the time of their appointment and during their terms, members shall reflect the following qualifications:
 - a. shall be American citizens,
 - b. shall have resided within the Laredo city limits for at least the last twelve months,
 - c. shall be qualified City registered voters,
 - d. shall not be employed by the City in any capacity nor hold any other City office and,
 - e. shall have a police background check.
 2. Compensation: Members shall serve without pay but may be reimbursed for business expenses incurred in relation to their duties, if budgeted and in accordance with City policies and procedures.
 3. Texas Open Meetings Act: Members shall comply with all provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act.
 4. Additional requirements: Unless exceptions are stated herein to the contrary, members also shall comply with the across-the-board requirements established by the Mayor and Council for commissions,

boards and committees created and/or appointed by the Mayor and Council.

II. Commissions and boards created by other governmental bodies

A. Metropolitan Planning Organization

1. Creation: Consistent with federal and state laws, the City shall be represented and serve with state and county officials on the Metropolitan Planning Organization designated by the Laredo Urban Transportation Study.
2. General powers and duties: The Metropolitan Planning Organization shall be responsible for identifying local transportation needs in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation and for proposing and recommending projects for all modes of urban transportation to governmental bodies that are responsible for program development and project implementation.
3. Membership: Consistent with the bylaws of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Mayor and three Council Members shall serve with county and state members on the nine-member board, provided the Council Members are nominated by the Mayor, subject to Council confirmation.
4. Qualifications: Council Members shall be nominated by the Mayor, subject to Council confirmation.
5. Terms: Consistent with the bylaws of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, members shall be appointed for two-year terms that begin with the election of the Mayor and may be reappointed.
6. Duration: The Metropolitan Planning Organization shall exist as long as it is required by federal and state laws or regulations and/or by local initiatives of the Mayor and Council, whether independently or in cooperation with other governmental bodies.
7. Reports: Activities shall be reported regularly to the Mayor and Council by the City Planning Director who, consistent with the bylaws of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, serves as its Transportation Planning Director.

B. Laredo Housing Authority

1. Creation: Consistent with state law, the Mayor and Council by resolution declared a need for the Laredo Housing Authority.
2. General powers and duties: The Laredo Housing Authority is a standing advisory committee that “exercises public and essential governmental

functions and has the powers necessary or convenient to accomplish the purposes and provisions” related to the establishment, maintenance and administration of housing projects, consistent with the Texas Housing Authorities Law.

3. Membership: The Mayor shall appoint the five-member Laredo Housing Authority, including at least one housing project tenant. (Local Government Code, Sec. 392.0331)
 - a. Council confirmation is not required by state law, but is allowed by procedures adopted by the Mayor and Council in this handbook.
 - b. The Mayor may seek Council confirmation for Laredo Housing Authority members as a courtesy, for consistency and as an efficient means of making a public record.
4. Qualifications: At the time of their appointment, members shall reflect the following qualifications:
 - a. shall be American citizens,
 - b. shall have resided within the Laredo city limits for at least the last twelve months,
 - c. shall be qualified City registered voters,
 - d. shall not be employed by the City in any capacity nor hold any other City office and,
 - e. if a tenant of a public project over which the housing authority has jurisdiction, shall not have served a previous term. (Local Government Code, Sec. 392.0331.f)
 - f. shall have a police background check.
5. Terms: Generally, members shall serve two-year terms and may be reappointed, provided they are not otherwise prohibited by the qualifications stated above.
6. Duration: The Laredo Housing Authority shall be authorized by the City of Laredo as long as there is a need to remedy the conditions described in the Texas Housing Authorities Law.
7. Reports: Consistent with state law, at least once a year, the Laredo Housing Authority shall file a report of its activities for the preceding year and shall make recommendations for additional legislation or other action it considers necessary to carry out the purposes of state law. (Local

Government Code, Sec. 392.062)

- a. The Authority shall submit reports to the Mayor and Council via the City Secretary or the City Secretary's designee.
- b. The annual report required by state law shall be the annual report required herein by January 1 and shall be consistent with reporting requirements, deadlines and procedures defined by the Mayor and Council.

C. South Texas Development Council

1. Creation: Consistent with state law, the City shall be represented on the South Texas Development Council.
2. General powers and duties: The South Texas Development Council is a standing regional planning commission that shall "make studies and plans to guide the unified, far-reaching development of a region, eliminate duplication, and promote economy and efficiency in the coordinated development" of Webb, Jim Hogg, Starr and Zapata counties. (Local Government Code, Sec. 391.001)
3. Membership: Consistent with the bylaws of the South Texas Development Council, the Mayor shall nominate five members of the 19-member commission, subject to Council confirmation.
 - a. Other members shall represent Webb, Jim Hogg, Starr and Zapata counties and the cities of La Grulla, Rio Bravo, Rio Grande and Roma.
 - b. Consistent with the bylaws, which authorize members to appoint alternate representatives, and to ensure the City's representation, each member shall appoint two City staff members as alternate representatives, either of whom shall attend meetings.
4. Qualifications: Consistent with the bylaws of the South Texas Development Council, three members shall be City elected officials, and two shall be "non-governmental members representing the general interest groups of "Business" and "Community-based Organizations" who also must meet the following qualifications:
 - a. shall be American citizens,
 - b. shall have resided within the Laredo city limits for at least the last twelve months,
 - c. shall be qualified City registered voters and

- d. shall not be employed by the City in any capacity nor hold any other City office, unless they are alternate representatives who must be City staff members; and
 - e. shall have a police background check.
5. Terms: Consistent with the bylaws of the South Texas Development Council, members shall serve one-year terms.
 6. Duration: The City shall participate in the South Texas Development Council as long as there is a need for a regional planning commission, consistent with state and local laws.
 7. Reports: By January 1 City representatives shall submit an annual report to the Mayor and Council via the City Secretary or the City Secretary's designee.

D. Webb County Community Action Agency Advisory Board

1. Creation: Consistent with the action of the Webb County Commissioners Court, the City shall be represented on the Webb County Community Action Agency Advisory Board.
2. General powers and duties: Consistent with its bylaws, the Board's purpose shall be to identify the causes of poverty in Webb County, to provide services to program participants, to mobilize resources to address the causes of poverty, to increase the participation of the poor in programs and in solving their own problems, to involve other human services delivery organizations in common efforts to address poverty problems in the county and to get involved in all efforts to eradicate poverty. (Bylaws, Art. II)
3. Membership: Consistent with the Board's bylaws, the Mayor shall nominate, subject to confirmation by Council, then to appointment by the Webb County Commissioners Court, three Council Members to serve on the 24-member Advisory Board.
4. Qualifications: Board members nominated by the Mayor must be Council Members.
5. Terms: Consistent with their bylaws, Board members shall serve two-year terms and "will be rotated with each City Council election." (Emphasis theirs)
6. Duration: The City shall participate on the Webb County Community Action Agency Advisory Board as long as there is a perceived need to assist and work with Webb County in this important program.

7. Reports: City representatives shall submit annual reports to the Mayor and Council via the City Secretary or the City Secretary's designee by January 1.
8. Across-the-board requirements for commissions and boards created by other governmental bodies
9. Officers: Commissions and boards shall elect officers according to their respective bylaws, but should include at least a Chair and Vice Chair.
10. Compensation: Members shall serve without pay but may be reimbursed for business expenses incurred, if budgeted and in accordance with City policies and procedures.
11. Bylaws: Members appointed to governmental bodies that develop their own bylaws and rules shall make every effort to ensure that they are timely and consistent with the City's standards and practices.
12. Additional requirements: Unless exceptions are stated herein to the contrary, members also shall comply with the across-the-board requirements established by the Mayor and Council for commissions, boards and committees created and/or appointed by the Mayor and Council.
13. Additional requirements passed by City Council (6/19/2009 and 5/16/2011):
 - a. shall be American citizens,
 - b. shall have resided within the Laredo city limits for at least the last twelve months,
 - c. shall be qualified City registered voters,
 - d. shall not be employed by the City in any capacity nor hold any other City office, unless they are alternate representatives who must be City staff members; and
 - e. shall have a police background check.

III. Committees composed of Mayor and Council Members

A. Standing and ad hoc committees

1. The Mayor and Council may by ordinance, resolution or motion create and dissolve standing and ad hoc committees composed of the Mayor and

Council Members or of only Council Members.

- a. The composition, terms, duties and timetable shall be specified in the enabling authority, whether authorized by ordinance, resolution or motion.
 - b. In effect, committees composed of the Mayor and Council Members or of only Council Members are advisory subcommittees of the Council.
2. Committees composed of the Mayor and Council Members or only of Council Members should have a membership that is less than a quorum of the Council.
- a. Example: Generally, a standing committee composed of the Mayor and Council Members should be limited to the Mayor and no more than three Council Members.
 - b. Example: Generally, a standing subcommittee composed of only Council Members should be limited to no more than four Council Members.

B. Texas Open Meetings Act

1. Committees composed of the Mayor and Council Members or of only Council Members shall be subject to the notice, openness and other requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act. (Attorney General's Opinion H-238 (1974), H-823 (1976))
 - a. Although not always required explicitly by the statute, this policy is intended to ensure accessibility and accountability.
 - b. In light of Attorney General Opinions H-3 (1973) and H-238 (1974), this policy also provides a safeguard, should questions be raised about whether these committees indeed performed "advisory" duties as they discussed public business, especially if recommendations are adopted unanimously by the Council.
 - c. If a quorum is not established or is lost temporarily or permanently, other members may engage in informal discussions, provided there is no intent to circumvent the Texas Open Meetings Act and no votes or final actions are taken during the temporary or permanent absence of a quorum.
 - (1) The following examples are based on experience and were researched carefully, including conversations with the Texas Attorney General's staff, who confirmed that the examples reflect correct interpretations of the Texas Open Meeting

Act and who noted the similarities that are described herein after the examples:

- (a) Example: If two members of a three-member advisory committee establish a quorum at a duly posted meeting and one steps out with the intention of returning, discussions regarding subjects identified in the posting notice may continue with those present, provided there is no intent to circumvent the purposes of the Texas Open Meetings Act and no votes or final actions are taken during the temporary or permanent absence of a quorum.
 - (b) Example: If only one member of an advisory committee arrives timely for a duly posted meeting and a consultant and/or several staff members are present, those present may engage in informal discussions of subjects identified in the posting notice, provided there is no intent to circumvent the purposes of the Texas Open Meetings Act and no votes or final actions are taken during the temporary or permanent absence of a quorum.
 - (c) Example: If no members of an advisory committee arrive timely for a duly posted meeting but a consultant and/or several staff members are present, those present may discuss the subjects identified in the posting notice. A member who arrives late may participate in the informal discussion, provided there is no intent to circumvent the purposes of the Texas Open Meetings Act and no votes or final actions are taken during the temporary or permanent absence of a quorum.
- (2) The examples above are provided in good faith and under the presumption that there is no attempt to circumvent provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act. Note that in these examples:
- (a) All meetings were duly posted.
 - (b) All meetings were open to the public.
 - (c) The committee's role was advisory to the Council.
 - (d) There was no intent to circumvent the purposes of

the Texas Open Meetings Act.

- (e) No votes or final actions were taken during the temporary or permanent absence of a quorum.
- 2. The Mayor and Council Members who are not members of a Council committee and ex-officio committee members may participate in the committee's duly posted open meetings, but shall not vote or be counted to establish or to maintain a quorum of the committee.
- 3. If a quorum of the Council is expected to participate in a committee meeting, it should be posted as a joint meeting of the Council and the committee.
- 4. The Mayor and Council Members shall be responsible for understanding the requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act as it pertains to all standing and ad hoc committees, regardless of their authority or advisory status, composition or enabling authority.

IV. Committees created and/or appointed by Mayor and Council

A. Authority to create and appoint standing, ad hoc advisory committees

1. Mayor's authority

- a. The Mayor may create and appoint ad hoc mayoral advisory committees.
- b. The Mayor shall make appointments, including self-appointments, to standing and to ad hoc mayoral and other advisory committees, consistent with the related enabling authority, whether authorized by statutes, Charter, ordinances, resolutions or motions of the Council.
- c. The Mayor shall adopt standards, requirements and goals for ad hoc mayoral advisory committees.

2. Council's authority

- a. The Council shall create standing and ad hoc advisory committees by Charter amendment or by ordinance, resolution or motion.
- b. The Council shall make appointments, including self-appointments, to standing and to ad hoc advisory committees, consistent with the related enabling authority, whether authorized by statutes, Charter, ordinances, resolutions or motions of the Council.

- c. The Council shall adopt standards, requirements and goals for standing and ad hoc advisory committees that it creates or appoints, regardless of their enabling authority.
- B. Names, definition of standing, ad hoc advisory committees
1. The Mayor and Council shall use consistent terminology in naming the City's standing and ad hoc advisory committees.
 - a. Generally, appointed bodies shall be named "advisory committees" rather than "boards," "commissions" or "councils," unless the term is required by legal authority.
 - b. When necessary to ensure consistency in names and terminology usage, the City Secretary shall recommend names and name changes to the Mayor and Council.
 - c. The correct and official names of advisory committees are reflected in Appendix A.
 2. Regardless of the enabling authority, a standing committee is a permanent appointed advisory body that will exist until abolished by statute, Charter amendment, ordinance, resolution or motion.
 - a. Membership and terms shall be defined by the enabling authority.
 - b. Members must meet minimum standards set by Council to qualify for and to maintain membership.
 3. Regardless of the enabling authority, an ad hoc committee is a temporary appointed advisory committee that will exist only for a specified period, not to exceed two years, or until its defined task is completed, whichever occurs first.
 - a. Membership and terms shall be defined by the enabling authority.
 - b. Members must meet minimum standards set by Council to qualify for and to maintain membership.
 4. All standing and ad hoc committees are advisory to the Mayor and Council, regardless of their enabling authority.
 - a. Advisory committees shall submit recommendations and reports to the Mayor and Council for their consideration.
 - b. Under no circumstance should advisory committees expect the Mayor and Council to regularly or automatically simply "rubberstamp" their recommendations.

- C. Report regarding commissions, boards, committees
1. By July 1 of each year, the City Secretary, assisted by designated staff liaisons, shall submit to the Mayor and Council a comprehensive report that identifies the City's commissions, boards and committees, regardless of their enabling authorities.
 - a. The report shall reflect the following divisions, sub-divided into standing and ad hoc categories:
 - (1) Commissions and board created by Charter
 - (2) Commissions and boards created by other governmental bodies
 - (3) Committees composed of Mayor and Council Members or of only Council Members
 - (4) Commissions, boards and committees created by the Mayor and/or Council.
 - b. The report shall include the following information for each commission, board and committee:
 - (1) Name of the commission, board and standing/ad hoc advisory committee and its enabling authority
 - (2) General powers and duties
 - (3) Names of members, related required directory information and their respective appointing officials
 - (4) Terms of members
 - (5) Record of meeting goals and minimum meeting, attendance and training requirements
 - (6) Membership composition and requirements
 - (7) Related appointment duties of Mayor and each Council Member.
 - c. The report shall include forms for the Mayor and Council to submit names of their nominees for confirmation, consistent with procedures. (Appendix B, Templates 1, 3, 5, 6, 7)
 2. The report shall be maintained and updated continually by designated City

staff liaisons and the City Secretary, who shall make it available immediately to every newly elected Mayor or Council Member.

- a. It shall be the duty of City department directors and designated staff liaisons who work with all commissions, boards and committees, however, to submit biannual reports to the City Manager and City Secretary by January 1 and July 1.
 - (1) The report shall include a record of attendance and absences of appointees at training sessions and meetings.
 - (2) This report shall be the basis for initially determining whether members forfeited their respective offices for failure to meet attendance requirements at training sessions or meetings.
 - b. The City Secretary shall collect and compile staff reports for presentation to the Mayor and Council.
3. The City Secretary also shall maintain the abbreviated report titled, “City of Laredo Commissions, Boards and Committees” in Priority Procedures for the Mayor and Council. (Appendix A)
- a. The abbreviated report shall reflect the official names of appointed bodies and shall serve as the source for appointees and City staff members whenever they use the names of the City’s appointed commissions, boards and committees.
 - b. The abbreviated report shall be divided into the four divisions and sub-divisions required for the annual report and shall include the following information:
 - (1) Official names of appointed bodies
 - (2) Appointing officials
 - (3) Number of members
 - (4) Descriptions of members (elected or public members)
 - (5) Staff liaison (by City department).
 - c. The abbreviated report incorporated herein reflects the City’s appointed commissions, boards and committees on Oct. 4, 1999, its revisions effective January, 2001, and is subject to change by Council ordinance, resolution or motion. (Appendix A)

D. Authority to dissolve standing, ad hoc advisory committees

1. Just as the commissions and board created by the Charter can be dissolved by Charter amendment, so can the Mayor and Council implement the “equal dignities rule” to dissolve standing and ad hoc advisory committees by appropriate counter actions or as specified in their respective enabling authorities.
2. Ad hoc advisory committees are dissolved automatically at the end of the specified period for their duration or upon completion of the specified task that they were created to accomplish, whichever occurs first.
 - a. No action by Council is required to dissolve ad hoc advisory committees that meet their time or task requirements.
 - b. The designated City staff liaisons shall inform the Mayor and Council via the City Secretary when an ad hoc advisory committee has met its time and/or task requirements and will be dissolved automatically.
 - c. Council may continue an ad hoc advisory committee by redefining its specified period and/or task by ordinance, resolution or motion adopted by majority vote of the Council (minimum five ayes).

V. Across-the-board requirements for commissions, boards, committees

A. Intended impact and authority

1. The requirements defined herein shall apply to all commissions, boards and committees created and/or appointed by the Mayor and Council, unless directives to the contrary are specified.
2. The intent is to empower City appointed officials to be more effective and efficient in meeting their responsibilities while enhancing their accessibility and accountability to the public and to the Mayor and Council.

B. Charge from Mayor and Council

1. The Mayor and Council shall adopt a “charge” for every appointed commission, board or committee. (Appendix B, Template 2)
2. The charge shall be recommended by the appropriate City staff liaison designated by the City Manager.
3. The charge by definition establishes the direction, boundaries and intended accomplishments of a commission, board or committee and includes appropriate elements, such as the following:

- a. General powers and duties
 - b. Vision and/or mission statements
 - c. Goals, responsibilities
 - d. Officers, members
 - e. Qualifications
 - f. Ethics and standards of performance
 - g. Training requirements
 - h. Timeline, schedule, reporting dates
 - i. Meeting requirements
 - j. Accountability to Mayor and Council
 - k. Accessibility and accountability to public
 - l. Liaison with City staff.
4. The charge shall be included in a handbook developed by or for each commission, board and committee and shall be reviewed in required orientation and subsequent training.
 5. The City Secretary shall develop a template for committee charges from the Mayor and Council.

C. Required records and reports

1. Every appointed body shall maintain and submit required records and reports in the required format to the City Secretary via designated City staff liaisons.
 - a. Templates for major required reports and records shall be maintained, updated and distributed by the City Secretary via designated City staff liaisons. (Appendix B)
 - b. When templates are provided, they shall be used to develop and submit required records and reports.
2. Minutes of all regular and called meetings shall be submitted to the City Secretary via designated City staff liaisons within one week.
3. The Chair and members of every appointed body shall work with their designated City staff liaisons to develop and submit an annual report via the City Secretary to the Mayor and Council by January 1, unless directed to honor a different reporting schedule. (Appendix B, Templates 8, 9, 10)
4. The annual and other required reports shall include the work, activities and accomplishments of the appointed body, along with any other reporting requirements specified by the Mayor and Council.
5. The Mayor and Council shall decide which appointed bodies shall present

oral and written reports at Council meetings.

6. The Mayor and Council may require additional written and/or oral reports.

D. Purpose and intent

1. The purpose and intent for which every appointed body is created shall be expressed in its vision and/or mission statement.

a. Every standing committee's vision statement shall reflect its projected long-range accomplishments.

b. Every standing and ad hoc committee's mission statement shall reflect its projected short-range accomplishments.

c. Every standing and ad hoc committee shall develop measurable goals and objectives that are related to their respective vision and mission statements.

E. Appointment, nomination and confirmation

1. When federal or state laws empower the Mayor or other official to "appoint" members and make no reference to confirmation, Council confirmation is not required but may be provided as a courtesy.

2. Generally, regardless of the enabling authority, the Mayor and Council Members will nominate members to commissions, boards and committees, subject to Council confirmation. (Appendix B, Template 1)

a. Council confirmation requires a two-thirds vote of the Council (minimum six ayes).

b. Nominees shall be confirmed before they can take and subscribe to their oaths of office or assume their appointive duties.

c. If a nominee is not confirmed, the appointing official shall submit another nomination for that position.

3. "Nominees" are persons whose nominations are pending confirmation, while "appointees" are City appointed officials who have taken their respective oaths of office and who either did not require confirmation or were confirmed.

F. Oaths of office

1. "Every person elected or appointed to any office in the City shall, before entering upon the duties of his (or her) office, take and subscribe to the

oath of office subscribed in Article XVI., Section I. of the State Constitution.” (Charter, 43)

- a. Before taking the oath or affirmation, City appointed officials shall subscribe to the statement in Article XVI, Section 1(d) of the State Constitution, which states that they neither offered nor were offered anything in exchange for being appointed or confirmed.
 - b. The City Secretary, assisted by designated staff liaisons, shall be responsible for administering the oaths of office and securing the related statements.
2. Persons nominated to serve on City commissions, boards and committees must be confirmed by a two-thirds vote of Council (minimum six ayes) before taking and subscribing to their respective oaths of office, unless statutes provide otherwise.
 3. The Mayor and Council may require that conditions including training and completion of required records be met before oaths of office may be administered to confirmed nominees.

G. Residency

1. Generally, the Mayor shall appoint City residents, and Council Members will appoint residents of their respective districts, but all shall honor residency requirements specified in the enabling authority that creates or extends a commission, board or committee.
2. This policy is intended to ensure geographic diversity is reflected in the City’s board, commissions and committees.

H. Membership diversity

1. In addition to residency requirements that ensure geographic diversity, the Mayor and Council shall make every effort to ensure that appointed boards, commissions and committees reflect the appropriate diversity for the issues and purposes at hand.
2. “Diversity” refers not only to gender, age and ethnicity, but also to the variety of segments of the community interested in the issues to be addressed and the purposes to be served.

I. Qualifications and standards of performance

1. The Mayor and Council shall be responsible for ensuring that their respective appointees are qualified to serve on the selected appointed body and to meet the standards of performance.

2. Qualifications and standards of performance may be defined in the charge to an appointed body and/or in the enabling authority, provided they are consistent with these procedures.
3. A person who is removed from an appointed office for grounds defined in these procedures shall be ineligible for other City appointed offices for five years after the date of removal. (Charter, 43)

J. Terms of appointed service

1. Generally, appointees shall serve at the will of the Mayor or Council Member who nominated them and who may replace them at any time.
2. Appointees shall serve terms concurrent with their respective nominators, unless otherwise specified in the Charter, legislation or other enabling authority or in these procedures.
 - a. Example: The Land Development Code limits terms of Board of Adjustment members to four years of service on that board. They may not serve longer, though they may be appointed to other commissions, boards and committees.
 - b. Example: Members of the Planning and Zoning Commission are limited to eight years of service on that board and may not serve longer, though they may be appointed to other commissions, boards and committees, consistent with Section 24.1.1.1 Code of Ordinances.
3. The terms of appointees automatically shall terminate when their respective appointing officials leave their offices.
 - a. The terms of such appointees terminate automatically, regardless of the reason that appointing officials vacate their elected offices.
 - b. Appointees may serve in a “holdover” capacity defined as when the appointing Council Member is himself or herself in a holdover seat or the new Council Member has not yet appointed his or her representative.
4. A Mayor or Council Member elected to serve an unexpired term may nominate persons to serve terms concurrent with theirs.

K. Vacancies

1. When vacancies exist, they shall be filled in accordance with the following procedures:

- a. The Mayor or Council Member responsible for the original appointment shall nominate a new member within 30 days of the written notification received from the Chair of the Commission, board or committee.
- b. Members appointed to fill vacancies shall serve for the respective unexpired terms.

L. Officers

1. Unless otherwise directed by legal requirements, the Mayor and Council may designate the Chair and Vice Chair of an appointed body or direct the appointed body to select a Chair, Vice Chair and other officers by majority vote of their members present.
 - a. Generally, the Mayor will nominate the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Charter Revision Commission and of the Redistricting Commission from among their members, subject to confirmation by a two-thirds vote of Council (minimum six ayes), but the Mayor and Council may empower other commissions, boards and committees to elect their officers.
 - b. Every appointed body shall include at least a Chair and Vice Chair and other officers deemed necessary or designated in the appropriate charge, enabling authority and/or bylaws.
 - c. If not otherwise specified in the appropriate charge, enabling authority or bylaws, the Chair and/or the appointed body may appoint additional officers, including a Parliamentarian and Sergeant-at-Arms.
 - d. Vacancies shall be filled by the same procedures, and new officers shall serve for the unexpired terms and may be reappointed or reelected.
2. The Chair shall preside at all regular and called meetings of the appointed body.
 - a. The Vice Chair shall preside and assume other related duties in the absence of the Chair.
 - b. In the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, the next ranking officer shall assume presiding and other related duties.
 - c. In the absence of officers, the member with the most seniority may assume presiding duties, or the members may select a temporary presiding officer.

M. Required meetings and attendance

1. Boards, commissions and committees appointed by the Council shall meet at least three times per year, unless otherwise stipulated by law or Council action.
 - a. The Chair may call additional meetings.
 - b. When the Chair fails to call either three meetings per year or additional meetings requested by members, meetings may be called by the members as follows:
 - (1) by the Vice Chair and one other officer.
 - (2) by two members of a five-member appointed body.
 - (3) by three members of a seven-member appointed body.
 - (4) by four members of a nine-member appointed body.
 - (5) by six members of an appointed body that has 10 or more members.
 - c. Attendance by members is required at all regular and called meetings.
 - d. When a member is absent from a meeting for good reason, his or her absence may be excused by a majority vote of members present.
2. Appointed bodies shall maintain current participation records that reflect attendance, excused/unexcused absences and quorums at each meeting.
3. Members whose participation records reflect three unexcused absences shall forfeit their appointed positions.
4. A board, commission or committee that does not meet three times a year for lack of a quorum shall be reviewed by the Mayor and Council to determine the resulting course of action, which may include replacing officers, replacing members and/or dissolving the appointed body.
 - a. This information shall be submitted by designated City staff liaisons to the City Secretary, who shall report it to the Mayor and Council.
 - b. The Chair and members of such appointed bodies may present oral and/or written information to explain the circumstances and to request or to recommend specific action.

- c. Boards, commissions and committees may be abolished and/or reorganized by majority vote of the Council (minimum five ayes), consistent with their enabling authority and/or by amending or repealing such enabling authority.

N. Open meetings and posting requirements

- 1. Although the Texas Open Meetings Act does not apply to most citizen advisory committees, such as those created and appointed by the Mayor and Council and described herein, its notice and other procedural requirements shall be mandatory for City commissions, boards and committees so that all meetings shall be open to the public.
 - a. This is intended to ensure accessibility and accountability.
 - b. Notices shall be posted by the City Secretary, but submitted by the designated representative of a City commission, board or committee via designated City staff liaisons.
- 2. All regular and called meetings of City commissions, boards and committees shall be posted according to the procedure defined in this handbook for Council meetings and, therefore, as specified in the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- 3. Any “deliberative body that has rulemaking or quasi-judicial power,” such as the Board of Adjustment or the Metropolitan Planning Organization, is subject to all requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act, as are the Mayor and Council.

O. Quorum requirements

- 1. A quorum generally shall be defined as a majority of the membership, excluding ex officio members, unless otherwise provided by statute or Charter.
 - a. Example: Two members of a three-member committee constitute a quorum.
 - b. Example: Three members of a four-member or of a five-member committee constitute a quorum.
- 2. Commission, board and committee meetings and hearings should be scheduled only if members have been polled about their attendance, and a quorum is assured.

- a. The polling officer, preferably the City staff liaison or the liaison's designee, is encouraged to provide members with two or three alternative dates, then to select the meeting date for which a quorum is assured.
 - b. If the polling officer determines that a quorum will not be established, the meeting should be postponed or canceled, and polling should be conducted anew.
3. If a quorum is not established 20 minutes after the posted time, the Chair may call the meeting to order to create a record that a quorum failed to materialize, requiring the meeting to be postponed or canceled.
- a. A record of attendance, including excused and unexcused absences, shall be forwarded to the City Secretary immediately.
 - b. The City Secretary shall include the information in the regular reports to the Mayor and Council, noting any recurring problems for a given commission, board or committee.
 - (1) Example: Failure to establish and to maintain a quorum at two or more meetings shall be considered a recurring problem.
 - (2) Example: A member's unexcused absence at two or more meetings shall be considered a recurring problem.
4. The Chair of a standing or ad hoc advisory committee composed of public members may call a meeting to order for the purposes defined below, but shall not take votes or final actions in the absence of a quorum.
- a. The Chair may call a meeting to order timely for purposes of making a record and encouraging arrivals, then declare the appointed body "at ease, pending the arrival of a quorum" or "adjourned because of lack of quorum."
 - b. In the absence of a quorum, the Chair may call a meeting to order to receive reports, engage in informal discussion, plan alternate meetings, hear public testimony, etc., provided there is no intent to circumvent the intent of the Texas Open Meetings Act and no votes or final actions are taken during the temporary or permanent absence of a quorum.
 - (1) "Call a meeting to order" for the purpose of calling roll or engaging in other appropriate activities does not imply that business will be conducted.

- (2) “Voting” and “final actions” are defined literally and do not include receiving reports, engaging in informal discussion, hearing public testimony and engaging in other similar activities without taking votes or final actions.
 - (3) Example: If the Laredo Commission for Women does not have a quorum at its meeting, but a scheduled speaker and observers are present, the presentation may be heard, but no vote or final action shall be taken during the temporary or permanent absence of a quorum.
 - (4) Example: If the Telecommunications Advisory Committee does not have a quorum at its meeting, members may discuss policies and programs, but no vote or final action shall be taken during the temporary or permanent absence of a quorum.
- c. The Chair may call a meeting to order in the absence of a quorum to determine whether to report to the Mayor and City Council such problems related to attendance, establishing quorums, etc.
- 5. After a quorum is established, the Chair and members may conduct business, that is, may take votes and final actions.
 - a. No final action shall be taken or vote called for during the temporary or permanent absence of a quorum.
 - b. The temporary lack of a quorum does not preclude continuing discussion, accepting or listening to reports or public testimony, or participating in other informal activities or ceremonies that do not require votes or final actions, provided there is no intent to circumvent the Texas Open Meetings Act.
 - c. A point of order that a quorum is not present shall be ruled in order when a quorum is not maintained, although the Chair shall provide an opportunity for members to return to the meeting to reestablish the quorum.

P. Accountability and accessibility

- 1. Cognizant that their appointees are public servants whose performance and work affect residents and visitors, the Mayor and Council shall hold them responsible for the highest standards of accountability and accessibility, including required reporting.

2. Appointees shall comply with general and specific requirements, policies and procedures, and statutory requirements, knowing that failure to do so will be grounds for removal.
3. Every appointed body shall be accountable and accessible not only to the Mayor and Council, but also to the public.
4. Appointees shall complete directory forms provided by the City Secretary or the City Secretary's designee. (Appendix B, Template 4)
 - a. Appointees shall share extended directory information with the Mayor and Council, with designated City staff liaisons and with colleagues on their respective appointed bodies.
 - b. Appointees also shall provide specified directory information so that the public can contact them by telephone, by mail and, if possible, by email.
 - c. Appointees unwilling to provide this information shall not serve on the City's commissions, boards and committees.

Q. Ethical standards

1. Appointees shall reflect the highest ethical standards.
2. No appointee shall accept a gift or engage in any "quid pro quo" activity in exchange for any action as an appointee. (Charter, 43)
3. Any elected or appointed official or City staff member who loses records, documents or property because of negligence shall reimburse the City. (Charter, 44)
4. Questions regarding conflict of interest issues should be referred to the City Attorney for a legal opinion.

R. Decorum

1. Appointees shall reflect proper decorum at all meetings and City activities, treating colleagues and constituents with respect and courtesy.
2. Members shall be held to the standards of decorum defined in the Protocol Handbook and abstracted herein for the Mayor and Council.

S. Required training and orientation

1. Appointees shall comply with the required training and orientation

standards defined by the Mayor and Council. (Appendix B, Template 7)

2. Failure to participate in required training and orientation shall be grounds for removal.
3. Training and orientation shall focus on protocol, procedures and customer service, including the following elements:
 - a. Review of charge to appointed body
 - b. Parliamentary procedure and rules of decorum
 - c. Techniques for successful meetings, hearings, forums
 - d. Accountability and responsibility
 - e. Public information and feedback
 - f. Customer service

T. Required handbook

1. Every standing and ad hoc committee shall develop and maintain a training packet and handbook that will reflect the format provided by City staff and will include the following elements:
 - a. Committee and staff directory (abbreviated)
 - b. Elements of committee's charge
 - c. Rules, regulations, bylaws
 - d. Policies and procedures
 - e. Required reports and forms
 - f. Schedule, timeline, deadlines
 - g. Appropriate legal documents
 - h. Ethical standards, decorum
 - i. Training, orientation materials
 - j. Standard identification information (date of publication, names of writers and developers, etc.).
2. The City Secretary, assisted by designated City staff liaisons, will develop a template for committee handbooks.
3. Each handbook shall include essential identifying information, including date of publication, names of writers and developers, required directory information, requirements and standards of performance adopted by the Mayor and Council.

U. Forfeiture

1. Members automatically shall forfeit their appointed positions for the following reasons:

- a. change in status, resulting in no longer reflecting membership qualifications;
 - b. failure to attend three consecutive meetings without being excused by a majority vote of the commission, board or committee; or
 - c. any other reason if removal is requested by the member's appointing official.
2. Members who forfeit an appointed position shall not qualify for subsequent nomination to the same commission, board or committee, even after the general five-year disqualification period that follows removal from appointed office.

V. Grounds for removal

1. Appointees also may be removed at will by the Mayor or Council Member who appointed them or who succeeded the appointing official.
2. Appointees may be removed for reasons including, but not limited to, the following:
 - a. failure to attend meetings, resulting in failure to establish quorum;
 - b. failure to attend required training, orientation;
 - c. serious breach of ethical standards and/or decorum;
 - d. failure to comply with charge to appointed body;
 - e. conflict of interest; or
 - f. conviction of a crime

W. Parliamentary procedure, bylaws and rules

1. Robert's Rules of Procedure, 10th edition, 2000, shall be the parliamentary authority for all appointed bodies.
 - a. Bylaws and rules may be adopted that conflict with Robert's Rules and shall take precedence.
 - b. Generally, procedures for adopting and amending bylaws and rules shall reflect those defined herein for adopting and amending this procedures handbook.
 - c. When bylaws and rules are in conflict with legal authority, the latter prevails.
 - d. When bylaws and rules are in conflict with Council ordinances, resolutions, motions and adopted protocol and procedures, the

latter prevail, and the former shall be changed accordingly.

e. When bylaws and rules are silent on an issue, Robert's Rules prevail.

2. The 10th edition (2000) of Robert's Rules shall be the parliamentary authority until the 11th or other successive edition is designated by the Council.

X. Recognition of community service

1. The Mayor and Council may recognize members of appointed bodies for outstanding leadership and community service.

a. The Mayor and Council may initiate recognitions for community leadership and service.

b. Department directors and designated staff liaisons may recommend members for recognition and suggest an appropriate letter, certificate or memento.

2. The Mayor and Council may provide certificates of appointment to appointees who have taken and subscribed to their respective oaths of office.

3. Members whose terms on City commissions, boards and committees expire shall receive a certificate and/or letter of recognition and gratitude, including the dates of their service.

a. Such certificates and letters shall be presented as a positive expression of gratitude for public service rendered.

b. They shall be consistent with policies and procedures regarding terms of appointing officials and their nominees.

c. Certificates of recognition and gratitude shall include appropriate information, including the following elements:

- (1) Name of appointee
- (2) Name of commission, board or committee
- (3) Years of service, including beginning and ending dates
- (4) Statement of gratitude
- (5) If appropriate, statement of gratitude for distinguished, identified service or leadership
- (6) Name and title of Mayor, with signature space
- (7) Name and title of appointing official, with signature space

(8) Name and title of Chair, with signature space.

4. The City Secretary shall develop a standardized format for letters and certificates of appreciation and, assisted by designated City staff liaisons, shall process them timely when terms of appointees expire.

Priority II. Council Meetings

The Laredo Mayor and City Council Members consider all Council meetings opportunities to serve their constituents effectively and efficiently. The procedures defined herein are instruments intended to promote leadership and sensitivity in interacting with each other and with the public during all meetings, regardless of purpose, size or schedule.

Detailed in this chapter are clear, concise procedures that will enhance productivity and information exchange at Council meetings. Equally important, these procedures should facilitate progress as the Mayor and Council Members benefit from listening to constituents and responding to their priorities, needs and interests. Such accessibility and accountability in public forums are critical to balancing what is best for Council districts individually with what is best for the City of Laredo cumulatively.

These high standards surpass legal requirements, common courtesy and popular practices. While the City Charter, for example, requires Council to meet at least monthly, these procedures call for at least three meetings per month. Instead of meeting at their own convenience during the workday, the Mayor and Council convene regular meetings at 5:30 p.m. so that constituents with traditional workday schedules can participate. What's more, the Mayor and Council ensure that Council meetings are broadcasted live and again later via public access television.

Because of the disparity in interpretations, rulings and opinions of the Texas Opening Meetings Act, coupled with the possibility of misunderstanding of legislative intent and the criminal penalties for violations, serious readers are urged to study the statute and the related publications developed by the Texas Attorney General's staff. They were relied on heavily in developing this chapter of the procedures handbook. The extensive related research is reflected in the "References" section, though publications made available and statutes adopted after publication (February, 2001) also apply and should be studied.

Ranging from public notices and agendas to decorum and press availability, the subjects discussed herein are intended to facilitate leadership and responsiveness at Council meetings. They should be useful not only to the Mayor and Council Members, but also to anyone interested in interacting with them at meetings.

I. Regular and called Council meetings

A. The Mayor and Council shall hold regular meetings on the first and third Monday of every month at the Council Chambers in the Laredo City Hall at 5:30 p.m.

1. When a regular meeting day is a City holiday, the meeting shall be held on

the following day, Tuesday, at the same time and place.

2. No Council meeting shall extend beyond 11 p.m., unless extended once for 15 minutes by majority vote of Council Members present.
 3. The Mayor and Council may schedule regular meetings at a different location within the City limits, but on the same day and time, by majority vote of Council Members present, subject to posting requirements.
- B. The Mayor or at least four Council Members may request special meetings of the Council.
1. Such requests must be submitted in writing to the City Secretary.
 2. Special meetings are subject to the same requirements of regular meetings of the Council, including 72-hour posted notices.
 - a. Typically, special meetings will be held at Council Chambers in the Laredo City Hall.
 - b. Special meetings are held in addition to regular meetings and may be scheduled at a place and on a day and time convenient for those addressing the subject at hand.
- C. All regular, special, emergency and closed meetings of the Laredo Mayor and City Council shall be called and conducted in compliance with provisions of the Charter of the City of Laredo, Section 2.07, 9-10, and with provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act, Chapter 551, Government Code.
- D. Definitions (Government Code, 551.001)
1. As a “municipal governing body in the state” the Council is subject to the Texas Open Meetings Act, which offers the relevant definitions that follow:
 - a. Closed meeting: “a meeting to which the public does not have access.” (Used interchangeably with “closed session” and “executive session.”)
 - b. Deliberation: “a verbal exchange during a meeting between a quorum of a governmental body, or between a quorum of a governmental body and another person, concerning an issue within the jurisdiction of the governmental body or any public business.”
 - c. Meeting: “a deliberation between a quorum of a governmental body, or between a quorum of a governmental body and another person, during which public business or public policy over which the governmental body has supervision or control is discussed or considered or during which the governmental body takes formal

action. The term does not include the gathering of a quorum of a governmental body at a social function unrelated to the public business that is conducted by the body, or the attendance by a quorum of a governmental body at a regional, state, or national convention or workshop, if formal action is not taken and any discussion of public business is incidental to the social function, convention, or workshop.”

- d. Open: “open to the public.”
- e. Quorum: “a majority of a governmental body, unless defined differently by applicable law or rule or the charter of the governmental body.”

2. The Mayor and Council Members employ additional definitions to underscore their intent to comply with the Texas Open Meetings Act:

- a. Call to order: initial action required to garner attention, to call roll and/or to determine and to create a record regarding whether a quorum is established; does not imply that business will be conducted.
- b. Conduct business: take votes or final actions in the presence of a quorum.

E. Public meetings, posting (Government Code, 551.C; Open Meetings Handbook)

- 1. To provide public access to the City’s decision making process, all regular, called and special Council meetings shall be duly posted, and all shall be open to the public, except for closed sessions held in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act. (Government Code, 551.002; Handbook, 1)
- 2. Workshops, forums and committee meetings also shall be open and duly posted according to provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- 3. The Mayor and Council shall provide “written notice of the date, hour, place, and subject of each meeting held by the governmental body.” (Government Code, 551.041)
- 4. The description of each subject shall be sufficient to alert the public, in general terms, that it shall be considered.
 - a. Descriptions such as “old business,” “new business,” “personnel matters” and “litigation matters” are not sufficiently descriptive to meet legal requirements.
 - b. The more important a particular subject is to the community, the more specific its description in the posted notice should be.

5. All regular and special meetings, workshops, forums and committee meetings of the Council shall be posted according to the following procedures (Government Code, 551.043):
 - a. The City Secretary shall post the notice at least 72 hours before the meeting “on a bulletin board at a place convenient to the public in the city hall.” (Government Code, 551.043, 551.050)
 - b. The written notice shall reflect the following:
 - (1) Date, hour and place of the meeting.
 - (2) Subject matter and topics to be considered, excluding generalities such as “new business.”
 - (3) Whether items are posted strictly for discussion purposes or whether for discussion and possible action by Council.
 - (4) Reference to reserving the right to reconvene in closed session regarding any subject posted, as authorized by the Texas Open Meetings Act.

F. Subjects not posted

1. If a member of the public or the Mayor or a Council Member inquires about a subject that was not included in the public notice for the meeting, the following responses are allowable and legal (Government Code, 551.042):
 - a. State specific factual information in response to the inquiry.
 - b. State existing policy in response to the inquiry.
 - c. Offer to post the subject for a future meeting.
 - d. Offer to consider the subject at an emergency meeting if it meets the requirements.
 - e. Refer to City staff members.
2. The Mayor and Council shall not otherwise deliberate about any subject that is not included in the public notice for the meeting.
3. The Mayor and Council shall avoid raising questions related to subjects that were not posted in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

G. Emergency and supplemental posting (Government Code, 551.045; Open Meetings Handbook, 24-26)

1. The Mayor or Council Members who request an emergency or supplemental notice should ask the City Attorney's advice regarding whether such action complies with the Open Meetings Act. (Handbook, 26)
2. If an emergency meeting is required, the City Secretary shall post the notice at least two hours before the meeting at a public place readily accessible to the public at all times.
 - a. The procedures for posting a regular meeting shall be observed, except for the difference in the posting deadline requirement and as otherwise provided by the Texas Open Meetings Act.
 - b. The posting notice for an emergency meeting also shall identify the urgent public necessity or emergency requiring such a meeting.
 - (1) Emergency meetings are justified only when there is an imminent threat to the public health and safety or reasonably unforeseen situations that require immediate attention.
 - (2) The mere necessity for quick action does not necessarily constitute an emergency when the situation calling for such action is one that reasonably should have been anticipated. (Handbook, 25)
 - (3) Non-emergency items cannot be added to a posted emergency meeting agenda with less than full notice.
3. When a meeting has been duly posted and an emergency or urgent public necessity requires items be added to the agenda, the following procedure shall be followed:
 - a. The City Secretary or the City Secretary's designee shall post a supplemental notice of subjects added to a meeting agenda after the initial posting.
 - b. The emergency or urgent public necessity shall be identified in the supplemental notice.
 - c. The supplemental notice shall be posted at least two hours before the meeting is convened.
 - d. The supplemental notice is justified only if an emergency or an urgent public necessity requires immediate action by the Mayor and Council because of an imminent threat to public health and safety or a reasonably unforeseen situation.

4. The City Secretary shall take at face value the emergency meeting or supplemental item information submitted for posting. (Government Code, 551.045)
5. In addition to posting the public notice of an emergency meeting or supplemental items, the City Secretary or the City Secretary's designee shall give special notice by telephone to members of the news media who filed a request for such notice and who agreed to reimburse the City for the cost of special notices. (Government Code, 551.047)
 - a. The media request for specific notice must include information about how to contact the medium by telephone or telegraph.
 - b. All media representatives who file this request shall receive specific notice about emergency meetings or emergency supplemental items to be considered by the Mayor and Council.

H. Development of notices (Government Code, Chapter 551; Open Meetings Handbook)

1. The City Secretary is responsible for the physical posting of all public notices, but not for their initiation or development.
 - a. The City Secretary, however, shall develop a notice submitted to him or her by the Mayor or a Council Member and shall inform the City Manager.
 - b. The City Secretary shall post notices, regardless of who developed them.
2. The City Manager is responsible for developing agendas for Council's regular, special and workshop meetings, subject to approval by the Mayor or the Mayor's designee.
 - a. The Mayor may designate a Council Member to approve the agenda for a specified meeting.
 - b. In the absence of the Mayor, the Mayor Pro Tempore or the Mayor's designee shall approve the agenda for a specified meeting.
3. Notices must include sufficient information to inform the public about what subjects will be considered.
4. Questions regarding the specificity of content of notices and their compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act shall be referred to the City Attorney.

- I. Closed sessions (Government Code, 551.E; Open Meetings Handbook, 28-43; Charter, 207.B, 6)
 1. The Council may recess to discuss in a closed or executive session any matter that is allowed by the Texas Open Meetings Act, provided that the general subject matter for consideration is expressed in the posted agenda and in the motion calling for such a session and that final action thereon shall not be taken by the Council until the matter is considered in an open session portion of an open meeting held in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.
 2. The Council shall meet in closed session only under the following conditions (Government Code, 551.101):
 - a. The agenda includes a notice that the Mayor and Council may reconvene in closed session as authorized by the Texas Open Meetings Act.
 - b. The Council first shall convene in open meeting and establish a quorum.
 - c. The Mayor or other presiding officer shall announce that a closed meeting will be held and shall identify the sections of the Texas Open Meetings Act that authorize the closed meeting for the purpose at hand.
 - d. The Mayor and Council Members shall take no “straw,” informal or formal votes in closed sessions, nor make any attempt to count votes, though they may express their opinions about subjects under deliberation and may indicate how they will vote in open session. (Handbook, 30)
 - e. The Mayor or other presiding officer shall ensure that a certified agenda or tape of the closed session is kept.
 - (1) He or she shall begin and end a closed session with an announcement of the date and time.
 - (2) He or she shall certify by notarized statement the accuracy of the agenda or tape.
 3. Exceptions to the requirement that Council meetings be open are detailed in the Texas Open Meetings Act and merely mentioned below for easy reference. The statute specifies that the Mayor and Council may meet in closed session for the following purposes (Government Code, 551.071-

551.076):

- a. To seek legal advice about pending or contemplated litigation or a settlement offer or when the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct of the state Bar of Texas clearly conflict with this chapter.
 - b. To engage in certain deliberations regarding real property, economic development, test items and prospective gifts.
 - c. To discuss certain personnel matters.
 - d. To deliberate regarding security devices.
4. Final actions and votes regarding subjects deliberated in closed sessions may be taken only during the open session portion of an open meeting held in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act. (Government Code, 551.102)

J. Required records

1. Open sessions

- a. The City Secretary shall prepare and keep minutes or make a tape recording of each open meeting. (Government Code, 551.021)
 - (1) If minutes are kept, the City Secretary shall ensure they “state the subject of each deliberation” and “indicate each vote, order, decision, or other action taken.”
 - (2) If a tape recording is made and kept in lieu of written minutes, the City Secretary shall ensure that it includes the date, place and time that the meeting began and ended and also includes each vote, order, decision or other action taken.
- b. Minutes and tape recordings of open sessions of open meetings are public records and shall be available for public inspection and copying on request to the City Manager or the City Manager’s designee. (Government Code, 551.022)

2. Closed sessions

- a. The Mayor and Council shall make and keep either a certified agenda or a tape recording of each closed session, except for a closed consultation with their attorney in compliance with the

Texas Open Meetings Act. (Government Code, 551.103, 551.071)

(1) If a certified agenda of a closed session of an open meeting is kept, the Mayor or other presiding officer shall certify by notarized statement that the agenda is a true and correct copy of the proceedings and that it includes the following information (Government Code, 551.103):

(a) a statement by the Mayor or other presiding officer at the beginning and at the end of the meeting, indicating the date and time;

(b) a statement of the subject matter of each deliberation during the closed session; and

(c) a record of any further action to be taken.

(1) If a tape recording is made and kept in lieu of written minutes, it must include announcements by the Mayor or other presiding officer stating the date and time at the beginning and at the end of the closed session. (Government Code, 551.103)

b. Records of legally held closed sessions are confidential and are not subject to public inspection, except under a court order. (Government Code, 351.042)

K. Rights of public

1. The public shall have access to the decision making of the Mayor and Council by attending open sessions and viewing meetings broadcasted over public access television.

2. Although not generally required by statute, the Mayor and Council may provide opportunities for the public to speak at Council meetings and may indicate items for which such opportunities will be offered.

3. Members of the public shall be given reasonable opportunities to speak at public hearings, which shall be posted and conducted according to the appropriate statutes, Charter, ordinances, resolutions or motions.

4. A member of the public “may record all or any part of an open meeting...by means of a tape recorder, video camera, or other means of aural or visual reproduction.” (Government Code, 551.023)

a. The Mayor and Council may adopt reasonable rules relating to the

location of recording equipment and the manner in which the recording is conducted.

- b. No rule may prevent or reasonably impair a person’s right to record an open session of an open meeting.

L. Quorum

1. Definition, requirement

- a. Either of the following shall constitute a quorum of the Council:
 - (1) Mayor and any four Council Members or
 - (2) any five Council Members. (Charter, 10)
- b. A quorum must be established and maintained before any business can be conducted.
- c. A quorum must be established in an open session before the Mayor and Council may reconvene in closed executive session. (Government Code, 551.101)
- d. The authority delegated to the Mayor and Council “may be exercised only at a meeting of a quorum of its members.” (Handbook, 2)

2. Absence of a quorum

- a. In the absence of a quorum, members “may adjourn from time to time and may compel the attendance of absent members in the manner and subject to the penalties prescribed by the rules of the Council.” (Charter, 6)
- b. In the absence of a quorum at a Council meeting, the Mayor or other presiding officer may call the meeting to order for the limited purpose of calling roll and creating a record of attendance and absences.
- c. If a quorum has not been established 20 minutes after the scheduled time to convene, the Mayor or other presiding officer may announce that the meeting is postponed or canceled for lack of a quorum and may state the date, time and place of the next meeting that will be posted in compliance with the Open Meetings Act.
- d. No business shall be conducted nor any closed session held in the absence of a quorum.

M. Recess, adjournment

1. After a quorum is established and business is underway or concluded, the Chair may entertain a motion either “to recess” and “to reconvene” within a reasonable period not to exceed 24 hours from the time of recess or “to adjourn” until the next duly posted open meeting.
 - a. If a meeting is recessed briefly for purposes such as a lunch or coffee break and the scheduled time to reconvene is announced, the results of the initial roll call are assumed in effect when the group reconvenes, but quorum requirements still apply for conducting business.
 - (1) Such brief recesses are considered “breaks,” and the continuation of a meeting after the recess is consistent with the Texas Open Meetings Act.
 - (2) If the recess is longer than expected, though within reasonable limits not to exceed 24 hours, the delay and the expected time to reconvene should be announced.
 - b. If a meeting is recessed for purposes such as a closed session and the time to reconvene in open session is uncertain, the Mayor and Council shall “recess, subject to the call of the Chair,” and the expected time to reconvene shall be announced.
 - (1) Such brief recesses also are considered “breaks,” and the continuation of a meeting after a recess that is less than 24 hours is consistent with the Texas Open Meetings Act.
 - (2) Changes in the expected time to reconvene should be announced.
2. If the Mayor and Council must continue the business at hand, but cannot recess and reconvene within 24 hours, then the meeting should be adjourned, not recessed, and the next meeting shall be posted in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

N. Violations (Government Code, 551.G; Open Meetings Handbook, 48-56)

1. If the Mayor or a Council Member is uncertain whether certain actions or meetings are consistent with the Texas Open Meetings Act, he or she should request a legal opinion from the City Attorney.
2. Actions taken in violation of the Texas Open Meetings Act are voidable. (Government Code, 551.141)

- a. Such actions may be invalidated by a court, but they are not automatically void.
 - b. Actions that were taken without full compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act may be considered anew at a different meeting, provided all posting and other requirements are met.
 - c. If an initial meeting does not meet the requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act, actions properly considered and taken at a second meeting shall be considered valid from the date of the second meeting.
3. Any persons, including news media representatives, “may bring an action by mandamus or injunction to stop, prevent, or reverse a violation or threatened violation” of this law, though the court “shall consider whether the action was brought in good faith and whether the conduct of the governmental body had a reasonable basis in law.” (Government Code, 551.142)
4. Violations of the Texas Open Meetings Act are detailed in the Government Code, 551.G, and merely are mentioned below for easy reference. Generally, a person commits a violation if he or she:
- a. “knowingly conspires to circumvent this chapter (Texas Open Meetings Act) by meeting in numbers less than a quorum for the purpose of secret deliberation in violation of this chapter (Texas Open Meetings Act)”--a misdemeanor punishable by a \$100-\$500 fine and/or one-six months jail confinement. (Government Code, 551.143)
 - b. knowingly calls, aids in or participates in a closed session that is not permitted by this chapter (Texas Open Meetings Act)--a misdemeanor punishable by a \$100-\$500 fine and/or one-six months jail confinement. (Government Code, 551.144)
 - c. participates in a closed session knowing that neither a certified agenda nor a tape recording is being made and kept-- a Class C misdemeanor punishable by a \$500 fine. (Government Code, 551.145)
 - d. knowingly discloses to a member of the public the certified agenda or tape recording of a legally closed session--a Class B misdemeanor punishable by a fine up to \$2,000 and/or jail confinement up to six months, with the added possibility of liability for reasonable attorney fees, court costs, actual damages and exemplary damages. (Government Code, 551.146)

O. Enforcement

1. The Webb County District Attorney has the authority and discretion to enforce the Texas Open Meetings Act.
2. Enforcement officers generally rely not only on the statute, but also on related Attorney General opinions and court cases.
3. The Texas Attorney General does not have enforcement authority, but interprets the Texas Open Meetings Act through official opinions and provides extensive related information.
 - a. Consistent with state law, Attorney General opinions may be requested by the Governor, the Chair of a state legislative committee, the District Attorney or County Attorney, but not by the City Attorney. (Government Code, 402)
 - b. The Texas Attorney General provides access to Attorney General opinions, decisions, summaries of applicable laws and other information through its website (www.oag.state.tx.us).
 - c. To expedite proper decision making at all levels of government, the Texas Attorney General also provides an open government hotline (512/478-6736).
 - d. Handbooks and publications about the Texas Open Meetings Act may be ordered from the Texas Attorney General's Office via 512/936-1730 or by fax, 512/462-0548.

II. Presiding officer

A. Presiding duties

1. The Mayor shall preside over regular and called meetings of the Council.
2. In the absence of the Mayor, the Mayor Pro Tempore shall assume presiding and other duties.
3. In the absence of the Mayor and the Mayor Pro Tempore, Council members shall assume presiding duties and other duties in seniority order.

B. Agenda review by presiding officer

1. To promote efficiency, the City Manager or the City Manager's designee shall review the agenda and related materials with the Mayor or other presiding officer before each regular and called meeting of the Council.

- a. The review may be waived by the Mayor or other presiding officer.
 - b. This should be an update regarding the agenda, recommended actions, and other developments.
2. The review shall focus on the agenda and related written materials and shall not constitute a briefing.
 3. The review shall not be subject to the posting requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act, unless attended by additional Council Members.
 4. A staff briefing for the Mayor and Council Members or for Council Members only shall be subject to the posting requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act.

III. Agenda

- A. The Council shall determine its order of business. (Charter, 2.07.B, 6)
- B. The regular order of business shall be reflected in the agenda as follows, unless suspended by unanimous consent (voice vote with no objection) or by a two-thirds vote of Council Members present after it is adopted by majority vote of Council Members present:
 1. Call to Order
 2. Pledge of Allegiance
 3. Roll Call
 4. Approval of Minutes
 5. Communications and Recognitions
 - a. Recognitions
 - b. Communiqués
 6. Appointments to Commissions, Boards and Committees
 7. Public Hearings
 8. Introductory Ordinances
 9. Final Readings of Ordinances
 10. Resolutions
 11. Motions
 12. Staff Reports
 13. General Council Discussions and Presentations
 14. Executive or Closed Sessions
 15. Adjournment
- C. The following deadlines shall be observed for placing items on the agenda for a regular Council meeting:

1. The Mayor and Council Members shall submit agenda items to the City Manager or the City Manager's designee by 1 p.m. on the Wednesday preceding a Monday Council meeting.
 2. Any two Council Members may place agenda items on a supplemental agenda if submitted to the City Manager or the City Manager's designee by 1 p.m. on the Friday preceding a Monday Council meeting.
 3. The City Manager and Department Directors shall submit agenda items to the City Manager's office by noon on the Wednesday preceding a Monday Council meeting.
- D. The Mayor and Council Members each may place up to four agenda items under "Council Communications" for any regular Council meeting.
1. The four agenda items placed by the Mayor or by a Council Member are not subject to review by the Mayor, other Council Member, City Manager or other City staff member, nor is an agenda item subject to editing without the approval of the Mayor or Council Member who submitted it.
 2. This limit shall apply to business tabled or left pending from a previous meeting.
 3. This limit does not apply to the agenda item titled, "Communications and Recognitions."
 - a. Sponsored activities under "Communications and Recognitions" are intended to be brief but meaningful.
 - b. They are not intended as opportunities to make speeches.
 - c. They must be in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.
 4. Discussion items are limited to ten minutes each. The presiding officer has the ability to suspend the time limit. The time keeper is the City Secretary.
- E. The City Manager shall be responsible for the development and for the delivery of the agenda and related materials to the Mayor and Council Members, subject to approval by the Mayor or by the Mayor's designee, on the Wednesday preceding the regular Council meeting on Monday.
1. The Mayor or Council Members shall submit items for the agenda to the City Manager or the City Manager's designee.
 2. Supplementary agenda materials shall be distributed on Friday preceding the regular Council meeting.

3. The agenda and related materials shall be delivered to the Mayor and Council at their respective designated delivery sites.

IV. Adoption, suspension of regular order of business

- A. The Council may adopt the order of business in the agenda by majority vote of Council Members present, but is not required to do so.
- B. The Council may suspend the agenda and consider items listed therein in a different order, typically for purposes of efficiency and to accommodate constituents who attend Council meetings.
 1. This may be accomplished by inviting Council Members to articulate their requests, then adopting one motion to suspend the agenda to allow all requests.
 2. Additional timely requests to suspend the agenda will be in order.
 3. If the Council does not adopt the agenda, the order of business therein is followed, unless suspended by unanimous consent (voice vote with no objection) or by majority vote of Council Members present.
 4. If the Council adopts the agenda, the order of business therein may be suspended by a two-thirds vote of Council Members present or by unanimous consent (voice vote with no objection).

V. Attendance

- A. The Mayor and Council Members are required to attend all regular and special Council meetings.
 1. The Council by majority vote of Council Members present may excuse the absence of the Mayor or of a Council Member.
 2. The Mayor or a Council Member shall forfeit his or her elected office for failure to attend three consecutive regular meetings without being excused by Council. (Charter, 4-5)
- B. If the Mayor or a Council Member arrives after the roll call, he or she shall be considered present for the meeting, and the roll call record shall not reflect an absence.

VI. Decorum, duties

A. Mayor and Council

1. The Mayor or other presiding officer shall preserve strict order and decorum at all regular and special meetings of the Council.
2. The Mayor and Council Members shall reflect proper decorum and extend every courtesy to each other and to all who address them.
3. The Mayor and Council Members shall address each other by elected title and surname, not by first names, during meetings and shall reflect the appropriate level of formality in addressing other participants.
4. A Council Member who desires to speak should address the presiding officer and upon recognition should confine remarks to the question under discussion and shall avoid references to personalities, use of indecorous language and questions about motives.
5. A Council Member who has gained the floor shall not be interrupted unless it is necessary to call that Council Member to order.
 - a. A Council Member who is called to order shall cease speaking until the question of order is determined.
 - b. If the Council Member is determined to be in order, he or she shall be permitted to proceed.
6. A Council Member shall have the right to deliver a speech of “personal privilege” that shall be limited to cases in which his or her integrity, character or motives are questioned or impugned.

B. City staff

1. All City staff members who attend Council meetings shall observe strict order and decorum.
 - a. They shall avoid interrupting proceedings or engaging in debate with the Mayor, Council, staff or witnesses.
 - b. When appropriate, City staff members may seek recognition by the presiding officer, but shall not interrupt proceedings.
 - (1) They shall allow sufficient time for the Mayor and Council to debate or discuss a subject before seeking recognition to add information.
 - (2) When recognized by the presiding officer, City staff

members shall direct all comments through the presiding officer and to the Mayor and Council in general.

- (3) They shall answer questions and may provide additional information, but shall not engage in debate with the Mayor, Council Members or witnesses.
 - c. They shall honor protocol, including using forms of address such as “Mayor (SURNAME)” and “Council Member (SURNAME),” rather than using first names, “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Miss” or “Ms.” for the Mayor or Council Members.
2. The City Manager’s responsibilities at Council meetings shall include the following (Charter, 3.05, and other chapters):
 - a. Attend all meetings and be prepared to provide relevant information and answer questions.
 - b. Report to the Mayor and Council regularly, as reflected on the agenda.
 - c. Follow through on all directives from the Mayor and Council and report progress timely.
 - d. Direct City department directors and other appropriate staff members to attend and to perform specified duties.
 - e. Direct City staff members to develop follow-through reports for the Mayor and Council Members, especially when problems arise that hamper or preclude 100 percent compliance with Council’s actions or directives.
 - f. Perform other duties required by the Mayor and Council.
3. The City Secretary’s duties at Council meetings shall include the following (Charter, 2.16):
 - a. Attend all meetings and be prepared to provide relevant information and answer questions.
 - b. Keep accurate minutes of Council meetings in a book provided for that purpose.
 - c. Ensure that minutes and tape recordings of open and closed executive sessions are kept in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

- d. Engross and enroll all laws, resolutions and ordinances of the Council.
- e. Take charge of and preserve and keep in order all the books, records, papers, documents, and files of the Council.
- f. Develop, collect, compile and submit reports about and from the City's commissions, boards and committees, as required herein.
- g. Perform other duties required by the Mayor and Council.

C. Witnesses

- 1. Witnesses shall observe strict order and decorum:
 - a. They shall present testimony that focuses on issues, not on personalities.
 - b. They shall direct all comments through the presiding officer and to the Mayor and Council in general.
 - c. They shall not engage in direct debate with City staff or other witnesses.
 - d. They shall reflect every courtesy toward others, just as they shall be treated courteously.
- 2. Witnesses shall state their names and whom they represent and must honor all rules and procedures, including the following:
 - a. Complete witness cards and provide all required information, pledging to testify truthfully under oath.
 - b. Limit remarks to the subject at hand as identified on the agenda.
 - c. Observe time limits, typically from three to five minutes.
 - d. Answer questions from Mayor and Council.
 - e. Submit written testimony, when appropriate.
 - f. Avoid repetitious testimony or reading verbatim.
 - g. Comply with the notice requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act, especially relative to limited responses allowed to queries

about subjects not posted.

VII. Press availability

- A. The Mayor and Council may schedule a “press availability” to facilitate the timely dissemination of public information.
- B. The “press availability” may be scheduled before the Council meeting or during a recess.
- C. The City Public Information Officer shall be responsible for making arrangements, facilitating interviews and disseminating information.
- D. Every effort shall be made to provide media representatives with the interviews and information that interest them.
- E. News media representatives shall be provided equal access to information.
- F. The “press availability” shall be planned and conducted according to policies and procedures defined for articulating the City’s official position on issues.

VIII. Parliamentary procedure

A. Parliamentary authority

- 1. Robert’s Rules of Procedure, 10th edition, 2000, shall be the parliamentary authority for Council meetings.
 - a. Rules and procedures may be adopted that conflict with Robert’s Rules and shall take precedence.
 - b. When rules and procedures are silent on an issue, Robert’s Rules prevail.
 - c. When Robert’s Rules conflict with statutes, the Charter, ordinances, resolutions or motions of the Council, the latter prevail.
- 2. The 10th edition of Robert’s Rules shall be the parliamentary authority until the 11th or other successive edition is designated by Council.

B. Parliamentary procedures

- 1. The Mayor and other presiding officers at Council meetings shall enforce standards of parliamentary procedure.

2. When procedures are in conflict with statutes, the Charter, ordinances, resolutions or motions of the Council, the latter prevail.

Priority III. Public Information

The Mayor and City Council firmly support the public's right to be informed about City-related issues and events. This belief is the foundation for their commitment to the efficient, effective dissemination of information internally and to the public.

When the Mayor of Laredo and the City Council Members express a united position regarding issues of importance to constituents, their impact is significant. That is why the need to articulate such unity with credibility and responsibility is underscored herein. It is also why only authorized persons who are well versed regarding the issue at hand will be designated spokespersons for the City.

The procedures defined in this chapter highlight actions required to define an "official city position" and to designate City spokespersons. They differentiate official positions from personal perspectives, describe who should make public announcements, define the elements of a "Comprehensive Public Information Plan" and delineate the internal information process that includes the Mayor and Council Members. Clearly, the purpose is to ensure dissemination of accurate information by well-informed persons who are qualified to express the City's official position on issues.

- I. Official City position
 - A. Any "official city position" must be defined and described in a formal resolution adopted by a two-thirds vote of the Council (minimum six ayes).
 - B. The Mayor and Council may designate appointed officials and/or City staff members to articulate the City's official position to the media or to other interested persons.
 1. Such spokespersons may be designated in the resolution related to the City's official position on an issue.
 2. A spokesperson for a given "official City position" may be designated at any time, even after the resolution is adopted.
 - C. No City elected or appointed official or staff member shall refer to an "official city position" unless referencing a position stated in an adopted formal resolution.
 1. Appointees to commissions, boards and committees are advisers to the Mayor and Council and do not speak or act for them.
 2. The position of commissions, boards and committees are not automatically those of the Mayor and Council and shall not be considered "official City positions" unless defined and described in a formal resolution adopted by

the Council.

II. City spokesperson

- A. The Mayor is the official spokesperson for the City.
- B. In the absence of the Mayor, the Mayor Pro Tempore assumes duties as the official spokesperson for the City.
 - 1. If the Mayor Pro Tempore is unable or unwilling to serve as official spokesperson, the Mayor may designate another Council Member to serve in that capacity.
 - 2. If the Mayor does not designate an alternate spokesperson, the Mayor Pro Tempore may designate another Council Member to serve in that capacity until the Mayor directs otherwise.
- C. Council Members may assume duties as official spokespersons for the City.
 - 1. Those who have relevant expertise or represent an impacted Council district may be designated City spokespersons for particular issues.
 - 2. They may be designated the City's spokespersons for particular issues for a designated time range or for a particular event.
 - 3. Council Members freely may articulate the City's "official positions" as defined and described in formal resolutions adopted by the Council.
- D. City staff members, including department directors, shall not act as spokespersons for the Mayor and/or City Council, unless specifically authorized by them for a particular issue, event or situation.

III. Personal perspective

- A. The Mayor and Council Members may express their personal perspectives on issues.
- B. When expressing their perspectives, the Mayor and Council Members shall differentiate between personal and official positions on issues.

IV. Public announcements

- A. The Mayor and Council shall make all major announcements regarding matters considered by the Council; major projects, including grants and construction; federal and state legislation; and cooperative projects with other governmental units, including those in Mexico.

- B. All public announcements shall be distributed to all news media who regularly report City news.
- C. The Mayor shall encourage state and federal elected and appointed officials to inform and involve the Mayor and Council before disseminating public information about the City of Laredo.
- D. The City Manager immediately shall inform the Mayor and Council about public announcements that will be made by non-City officials about the City of Laredo.

V. Public information

- A. The Public Information Officer shall develop a *Comprehensive Public Information Plan* for approval by the Mayor and Council. (Appendix C)
- B. The plan shall include the following elements:
 - 1. Priorities and objectives to be accomplished by implementing the plan.
 - 2. Priority subjects, actions, directives and meetings of the Mayor and Council that should be the subject of public information.
 - a. Example: Public notices about meetings, agendas.
 - b. Example: Public announcements about grants, construction, City responses to natural disasters.
 - c. Example: Timely information about the City and about each of the eight Council districts.
 - 3. Targeted, identified groups of citizens who should receive public information.
 - a. Example: Residents of District 1 should be targeted to receive public information messages about a District 1 Town Hall Meeting.
 - b. Example: Taxpayers should be targeted to receive public information notices about City budget hearings.
 - c. Example: Taxpayers who do not speak English should be targeted for English/Spanish or Spanish public information messages.
 - 4. Print and electronic media who shall receive public information messages.
 - a. The media list should include names/titles of key contacts.

- b. The list should be in directory format, including physical and mailing addresses; telephone and telefax numbers; and email addresses.
 - c. It shall be updated continually.
 - 5. Timeline and goals for disseminating public information about the City and each Council district via the City's public access television channel.
 - 6. Strategic plan for disseminating public information to the media and to the public in times of natural disasters and other crises.
 - 7. Methodology for evaluating and for improving the "Comprehensive Public Information Plan."
 - 8. Fair Rules for Political Forums, which shall be developed under the supervision of the City Manager and in cooperation with the Public Access Director. (Appendix D)
- C. Public information shall be disseminated to print and electronic media representatives simultaneously.
- D. Media representatives shall be treated fairly in terms of ensuring their access to the City's elected and appointed officials and to public information.
- E. The Public Information Officer shall facilitate interaction between the media and the Mayor and Council by enhancing access, scheduling interviews and providing requested public information.

VI. Internal information

- A. The City Manager, assisted by the Public Information Officer, shall ensure that information is shared with the Mayor and Council before it is disseminated to the public.
- B. When the City Manager receives important information about any subject of priority interest, he or she immediately shall contact the Mayor and Council Members.
- C. The City Manager, assisted by the Public Information Officer, shall develop and implement an internal information network that includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - 1. A system for sharing important information immediately with the Mayor and Council Members.

2. A system for enabling the Mayor and Council Members easily to designate their respective preferred permanent and temporary methods for being contacted immediately about priority information.
 - a. This may include contact by telephone, pager, telefax or email.
 - b. Preferred contact methods will be recorded and maintained by the City Manager, assisted by the Public Information Officer.
 - c. The Mayor and Council Members may change their preferred contact methods temporarily and/or periodically by informing the City Manager or Public Information Officer.
 - d. Council Members who do not record a preferred immediate contact method shall be contacted by telefax.
3. The City Manager shall ensure that all City staff members honor the internal information network and communicate with the Mayor and Council Members in compliance with their preferred contact methods.

VII. Public events, invitations

- A. The City Manager, assisted by the Public Information Officer, shall develop a system for ensuring that City-sponsored events are scheduled in cooperation with the Mayor and appropriate Council Members.
- B. Efforts shall be made to facilitate participation by the Mayor and the Council Member who represents the district in which an event is held.
- C. Generally, City-sponsored events shall reflect the policies, procedures, formats and order of precedence defined in The City of Laredo Protocol Handbook.
- D. The City Manager shall direct the appropriate City staff members to develop standardized formats for invitations to similar events.

Priority IV. Communication with City Staff

Determined to make a difference for constituents and to be responsive to their needs, the Mayor and Council Members rely on City staff members to provide excellent customer service. To honor the Charter while enhancing their responsiveness to constituents, the Mayor and Council Members worked with the City Manager to develop the policies and procedures herein. The result is a set of procedures that should facilitate appropriate interaction among the Mayor and Council Members and City personnel as they strive to communicate more effectively for the benefit of constituents.

I. Charter excerpts

- A. “Neither the Council nor any of its members shall in any manner dictate the appointment or removal of any City administrative officer or employee whom the City Manager or any of his subordinates are empowered to appoint, but the Council may express its views and fully and freely discuss with the City Manager anything pertaining to appointment and removal of such officers and employees.” (Charter, 2.03.B., 8)
- B. “Except for the purpose of inquiries and investigations under Section 2.06, the Council or its members shall deal with City officers and employees who are subject to the direction and supervision of the City Manager solely through the City Manager and neither the Council nor its members shall give orders to any such officer or employee neither publicly nor privately.” (Charter, 2.03.C., 8)
- C. “The Council shall have the power to inquire into the official conduct of any department, agency, office, or employee of the City. For this purpose the Council shall have the power to administer oaths, subpoena witnesses, and to compel the production of books, papers, and other evidence material to the inquiry. The Council shall provide by ordinance penalties for contempt in failing or refusing to obey any such subpoena or to produce any such books, papers or other evidence and shall have the power to punish any such contempt in the manner provided by ordinance.” (Charter, 2.06, 9)

II. Information requests

- A. The Mayor and Council Members may request information from City staff, especially while following-up to Council’s directives and concerns expressed by constituents, so long as such inquiries are not attempts to “deal with” or to “give orders” to City staff and, therefore, are consistent with the Charter.
 - 1. These requests may relate to securing information or determining the status of work assigned in response to Council directives.
 - 2. Such requests shall not be considered “management directives,” but,

simply, legitimate information requests allowed by the Charter.

3. City staff members shall inform the City Manager of any such contacts.

B. The Mayor and all Council Members will receive information that is requested by and provided to any of them by City staff.

1. Requests for written information shall be directed to the City Manager.

2. The City Manager shall prioritize responding to such requests and may assign the task to the appropriate City staff member.

3. The City Manager shall ensure that when information is developed at the request of one Council Member, copies of it also shall be forwarded to the Mayor and all other Council Members, unless they waive their right to receive specific material.

III. Communication with City staff

A. The City Manager shall assist the Mayor and Council Members in developing and implementing methods for facilitating communication and interaction with City staff members, especially department directors.

1. This may include scheduling presentations by department directors and their staffs to the Mayor and Council.

2. Such presentations shall be duly posted and may be scheduled before regular Council business meetings.

3. Department presentations may be combined with staff reports, constituent requests and queries about the status of projects and responses to Council directives.

B. The Mayor and Council Members may interact freely and communicate with City staff members at town hall meetings, budget hearings, workshops and committee meetings.

C. City staff members shall make every effort to facilitate cooperative efforts with the Mayor and Council Members to meet the needs of constituents and to perceive the Charter in a positive light, rather than as a barrier to communication.

Adoption, Amendment of Priority Procedures

- I. Development of procedures
 - A. The procedures herein were developed under the leadership of the Protocol, Procedures and Customer Service Council Committee for consideration by the Laredo City Council.
 - B. Every effort was made to reflect consistency with the Laredo City Charter and with federal, state and local laws.
 - C. The City Manager directed the City Secretary, City Attorney and their designees to make recommendations immediately and continually regarding required amendments to the Charter, local ordinances, resolutions or motions, and corrective actions required of them, if any, to ensure that the procedures herein would prevail.
 - D. This handbook is a work in progress. Additional priorities will be addressed as the handbook is supplemented or developed further.
- II. Amendment of procedures
 - A. Prior to adoption, procedures may be amended by majority vote of Council Members present.
 - B. After procedures are adopted, they may be amended by a two-thirds vote of Council (minimum six ayes).
- III. Adoption of procedures
 - A. Although the adopted *Priority Procedures for the Laredo Mayor and City Council* may be amended at any time in accordance with procedures defined herein, it is intended to be reviewed for amendment before being considered anew for adoption by each newly organized administration as soon as possible after the City of Laredo election in even-numbered years.
 - B. Sections and subsections may be approved independently by majority vote of the Council (minimum five ayes), or
 - C. The entire document may be approved by a two-thirds vote of the Council (minimum six ayes).
- IV. Suspension of procedures
 - A. Procedures adopted herein may be suspended for specific purposes and periods by a two-thirds vote of the Council (minimum six ayes).

- B. Motions to suspend must define the particular procedures to suspend and the specific purpose that will be served by suspension.
- C. Suspensions are neither encouraged nor expected, but are provided for as a precaution, should a justifiable and unforeseen need arise.

V. Prevailing authority

- A. To the extent that previously adopted ordinances, resolutions or motions conflict with the ordinance through which these procedures were adopted, this ordinance prevails.
 - 1. If necessary, the conflicting authority will be amended to ensure that these procedures prevail.
 - 2. The City Attorney shall recommend such amendments to the Mayor and Council to ensure that these procedures prevail.
- B. These procedures shall be in effect immediately upon adoption by the Council and shall apply to all commissions, boards and committees, regardless of their enabling authority or appointing officials.

VI. Record of adoption of procedures

- A. *Priority Procedures for the Laredo Mayor and City Council* was adopted unanimously by the Laredo City Council on Monday, October 4, 1999, effective immediately, subject to technical and clarifying corrections defined by the author and consistent with the intent of the Laredo Mayor and City Council.
- B. This second edition was adopted unanimously by the Laredo City Council on Tuesday, February 20, 2001, effective immediately, subject to technical and clarifying corrections defined by the author and consistent with the intent of the Laredo Mayor and City Council.

Conclusion

Priority Procedures for the Mayor and City Council, 2001-2002, reflects a commitment to public service that requires cooperation and communication among Laredo's elected leaders and their appointed officials and staff members. It addresses four priority areas of responsibility, namely, appointing commissions, boards and committees; participating in Council meetings; disseminating internal and public information; and communicating with City staff. These are essential elements in the City's customer service efforts.

The procedures defined herein are based not only on the consensus developed through the leadership of the Protocol, Procedures and Customer Service Committee of the City Council, but also on a strong foundation of information. Federal and state statutes, City and state publications and interviews with experts were rich sources of consideration and inspiration. The extensive research reflected in the "References" section enriched content and direction while stimulating originality and creativity. As a result the priority procedures handbook is an original set of interrelated guidelines that are customized for the City's elected and appointed leaders and tailored to meet their needs while interacting with each other and with their shared constituents, the families of Laredo.

The 1999 edition established a work in progress that was amended based on experience and feedback. This 2001 edition also builds on the consensus reflected in the *City of Laredo Protocol Handbook* that the Council also adopted unanimously in 1999 and also revised in 2001. What's more, it includes three new appendices that provide templates for required reports and records, a *Comprehensive Public Information Plan for the City of Laredo* and *Fair Rules for Political Forums*.

Always intended as a work in progress, the procedures handbook will be developed further as the Mayor and Council Members identify the need for additional priority procedures. Everyone's participation is requested and welcomed. Feedback may be submitted at City Hall, 1110 Houston Street, Laredo, Texas 78040.

Local government works best when it is attentive, responsive and supportive. The Laredo Mayor and City Council are committed to such excellence in public service by providing outstanding customer service. Priority procedures defined herein will facilitate the efficiency and effectiveness of their leadership for Laredoans.

¡Viva Laredo!

Appendix A

City of Laredo Commissions, Boards and Committees

May, 2011

Appendix A

City of Laredo Commissions, Boards and Committees May, 2011

I. STANDING commissions and board created by Charter

COMMITTEE	APPOINTMENTS	LIAISON
Planning & Zoning Commission	9 by Mayor, Council Members	Planning
Board of Adjustment	9 by Mayor, Council Members (5 regular, 4 alternate members)	Planning
Civil Service Commission	9 by Mayor, Council Members and 5 elected by City employees	Human Resources

II. AD HOC commissions created by Charter

COMMITTEE	APPOINTMENTS	LIAISON
Charter Commission	9 by Mayor, Council Members	City Secretary
Redistricting Commission	16 by Council Members	Planning

III. STANDING commissions and boards created by other governmental bodies

COMMITTEE	MAYORAL APPOINTMENTS	LIAISON
Metropolitan Planning Organization	Mayor; 3 Council Members	Planning
Laredo Housing Authority	5 members, including one housing project tenant	
South Texas Development Council	3 Council Members and 2 non-governmental members	
Community Action Agency Advisory Board	3 Council Members	

IV. STANDING committees composed of Mayor and Council Members

COMMITTEE	APPOINTMENTS	LIAISON
City-County Government Issues Committee	2 Council Members, Deputy City Manager, Finance Director and City Attorney	City Manager
Finance Committee	4 Council Members	City Manager
Operations Committee	4 Council Members	City Manager
Health and Benefits Committee	4 Council Members	City Manager
Laredo Municipal Housing Corporation	Mayor, 8 Council Members	Com. Dev.
Laredo Public Facility Corporation	Mayor, 8 Council Members	City Manager
Veteran Affairs Committee	3 Council Members and a representative from every veterans organization	City Manager

V. STANDING committees created and/or appointed by Mayor and Council Members

COMMITTEE	APPOINTMENTS	LIAISON
Airport Advisory Committee	9 by Mayor & Council Members	Airport
Building Standards Board	5 members and three alternates by Mayor	Building
Citizens Environmental Advisory Committee	9 by Mayor & Council Members	Environmental
Convention and Visitors Bureau Advisory Committee	9 by Mayor, Council Members	Convention and Visitors Bureau
Economic Development Advisory	9 by Mayor, Council Members	
Electrical Examining Advisory Committee	3 by Mayor, 2 ex-officio by Mayor	Building
Historic District & Landmark Board	9 by Mayor	Planning
Keep Laredo Beautiful	Between 3-15 members appointed by the City Manager	
Laredo Housing Finance Corporation	5 by Mayor	City Manager
Laredo Commission for Women	18 by Mayor & Council Members	City Secretary
Library Advisory Committee	9 by Mayor & Council Members	Library
Para Transit Advisory Committee	9 by Mayor & Council Members	Transit/El Metro
Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee	9 by Mayor & Council Members	Parks & Recreation
South Texas Library System	2 by Mayor	Library
Telecommunications Advisory Committee	9 by Mayor & Council Members	Information Services and Telecommunications
Third Party Funding Advisory Committee	9 by Mayor & Council Members	Library
Transportation & Traffic Safety Advisory Committee	9 by Mayor & Council Members plus 1 and 1 alternate by the Asociación de Transportistas	Traffic

VI. AD HOC committees created and/or appointed by Mayor and Council Members

COMMITTEE	APPOINTMENTS	LIAISON
Sports Ad Hoc Advisory	9 by Mayor and Council Members	Parks
Vehicles for Hire Ad Hoc	9 by Mayor and Council Members	Traffic

VII. Blue Ribbon Committees

COMMITTEE	APPOINTMENTS	LIAISON
International Trade Blue Ribbon	12 by Mayor	Bridge
People with Disabilities Blue Ribbon	12 by Mayor	Health
Public Health Issues Blue Ribbon	12 by Mayor	Health

Appendix B

**City of Laredo
Templates for Priority Procedures Reports**

May, 2011
Appendix B

**City of Laredo Commissions, Boards and Committees
Templates 1-10 for Priority Procedures Reports
May, 2011**

To facilitate the work not only of the Mayor and Council Members, but also of City appointed officials, 10 templates were developed for completion by the appropriate persons. Templates may be added, amended or omitted by the Mayor and Council via the City Secretary. Those included herein are effective May, 2011.

Generally, forms and shell reports are provided so that appointees simply have to incorporate the requested information. Instructions and information to be inserted are shown in ALL CAPS, and an "X" is shown wherever numbers or dates should be substituted.

Additional templates will be developed upon request, just as these can be modified to simplify the process. Next on the agenda, for example, is developing a template for handbooks. Our purpose is to expedite our cumulative effort to be accessible and accountable to the residents of Laredo.

Available templates referenced in this handbook are listed below:

- Nomination/Confirmation/Verification of City Appointed Official
- Charge from the Laredo Mayor and City Council
- Membership Status
- Members and Staff Directory
- Quarterly Report of Meeting Attendance
- Annual Report of Meeting Attendance
- Required Training Attendance Report
- Sample Cover Letter for Biannual Report
- Contents Page for Annual Report
- Annual Report



City of Laredo Commissions, Boards, Committees
Nomination/Confirmation/Verification record
 (Department/Liaison) _____

Nomination/Confirmation/Verification of City Appointed Official

Commission/board/committee _____

Nominating official _____ Date _____

Term: Beginning on _____ and ending on _____

Previous appointments/total years served _____

Name of nominee _____

Home address _____

Place of work/address _____

Telephones: Home _____ Work _____

Fax _____ Cellular _____

Email address _____

Current residence in Council District Number: _____

Please check the following qualifications:

- | <u>Yes</u> | <u>No</u> | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | a. American Citizen |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | b. Residency within the city limits for the past 12 months |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | c. Qualified registered voter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | d. Shall not be employed by the City nor hold any city office |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | e. Shall have a police background check |

(please sign): _____

Date of Birth: _____

Driver's License Number: _____

(The background check report is solely for internal use and is not a public record.)

Accessibility: As a City Appointed Official you must release at least one address and one telephone number to the public. Please indicate which may be released:

Home address: yes _____ no _____ Home telephone: yes _____ no _____
 Work address: yes _____ no _____ Work telephone: yes _____ no _____
 Fax number: yes _____ no _____ Email address: yes _____ no _____

Please see the attached graphic in order for you to determine whether you are related within the 2nd degree by affinity (by marriage) or within the 3rd degree by consanguinity (by blood) to the Mayor, any City Council Member, any elected city official, the City Manager, or to any city employee who is employed with the city for less than two years.

No, I am not: _____

Yes, I am related to: _____ Relationship: _____

Confirmation by Council by vote of _____ on _____.

Oath of office administered on _____ Assumed duties on _____.

Verification by City Secretary _____ on _____.

Charge from the Laredo Mayor and City Council, January, 201X

To the (C/B/C NAME)_____

(OMIT/SUB ALL CAP DIRECTIONS WHEN COMPLETING TEMPLATE. INFO IN CAPS/LOWER CASE MAY BE INCORPORATED VERBATIM OR EDITED.)

VII. General powers and duties (BRIEF, VERY GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF POWERS AND DUTIES & WHETHER STANDING OR AD HOC C/B/C.)

VIII. Vision and mission statements (AD HOC–ONLY MISSION STATEMENT)

- A. Vision: (CAPTURES STANDING C/B/C’S PROJECTED LONG-RANGE ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY 20XX AND SERVES AS DATE AND INTENDED ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM WHICH TO WORK BACKWARDS IN WRITING MISSION, GOALS, RESPONSIBILITIES.)
- B. Mission: (CAPTURES STANDING OR AD HOC C/B/C’S RELATED SHORT-RANGE ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY 20XX, AN EARLIER DESIGNATED YEAR.)

III. Goals, responsibilities

- C. Goals: (SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE CLOSE-RANGE ACCOMPLISHMENTS RELATED TO VISION, MISSION)
- D. Responsibilities: (SPECIFIC ACTIONS THAT WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO REACH MEASURABLE GOALS, MAKE PROGRESS TOWARD VISION, MISSION; PURPOSE, INTENT.)

IV. Officers, members

- E. Officers (MUST BE ADAPTED FOR CHARTER, REDISTRICTING COMMISSIONS, WHOSE CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS ARE APPOINTED)
 - 1. Members shall elect a Chair and a Vice Chair.
 - 2. Members also may elect other officers by majority vote.
 - 3. Officers shall serve one-year terms and may be re-elected.
 - 4. Officers shall be elected by majority vote from among members whose terms are equal to or longer than the officer’s term.
 - 5. Officers shall be elected by a majority vote of members voting in the presence of a quorum.
 - 6. Members may authorize the Chair to appoint other officers, including a Parliamentarian and/or a Sergeant-at-Arms, provided the authorization to appoint is by majority vote.
 - a. Appointed officers serve at the will of the appointing official, but may be removed by a majority of the members.
 - b. Appointed officers may be re-appointed to one-year terms, provided they were not removed by majority vote.
- F. Members
 - 1. Number of members:

2. Appointed by:

IX. Qualifications

- A. Residency:
- B. Expertise:
- C. Other:

X. Ethics and standards of performance

- A. Members are City Appointed Officials and shall reflect the highest standards of ethics, performance and excellence in customer service.
- B. They also shall reflect professionalism, courtesy and proper decorum in interacting with each other and with the public and while serving as City Appointed Officials.
- C. They shall comply with the standards, parliamentary authority (Robert's Rules of Procedure, 10th edition, 2000), policies and procedures defined in the protocol and procedures handbooks adopted by the Mayor and Council.

XI. Training requirements

- A. Initial requirements, 200X: Members shall comply with the required orientation defined by the Mayor and Council.
- B. Additional training: Members shall participate in additional training required by the Mayor and Council and may expect a focus on topics such as protocol, procedures and customer service, including the following elements:
 - 1. Review of charge
 - 2. Parliamentary procedure and rules of decorum
 - 3. Techniques for successful meetings, hearings, forums
 - 4. Accountability and responsibility
 - 5. Public information and feedback
 - 6. Customer service in specific areas
- C. Failure to comply: Failure to participate in required orientation and training shall be grounds for removal, including denial of confirmation and/or of the oath of office.

XII. Timeline, schedule, required reports

- A. Timeline (IDENTIFY VISION DATE/GOAL: WORK BACKWARDS, INCLUDING MILESTONE DATES.)
- B. Schedule (DATES OF EVENTS, MEETINGS, TRIPS, ETC.)
- C. Required reports
 - 1. Biannual reports: Members shall submit biannual reports to the Mayor and Council by January 1 and by July 1.
 - a. The January 1 report shall be the annual report and shall evaluate the work, activities and accomplishments of the previous year and the plans for the next year. Its required content is reflected in

- Template 10, which is in the procedures handbook.
- b. The July 1 report shall be submitted by the City Secretary with the assistance of designated City staff liaisons and shall include a progress report and required records.
2. Minutes: The designated staff liaison shall submit the minutes of each meeting within a week of the meeting.
 - a. The minutes shall include records of attendance, excused and unexcused absences and whether a quorum was established.
 - b. The minutes shall be signed by the Chair and designated staff liaison.
 - c. The Chair and designated staff liaison shall be responsible for recording the subsequent approval of the minutes.

XIII. Meeting requirements

- A. Members shall meet at least three times during the calendar year.
- B. If the Chair fails to call the required number of meetings, other members may call meetings according to requirements in the priority procedures handbook adopted by the Mayor and Council.

XIV. Accountability to the Mayor and Council

- A. Appointees of the Mayor and Council are accountable to the Mayor and Council.
- B. Annual reports, minutes and additional oral and written reports requested by the Mayor and Council shall reflect that accountability.
- C. The Mayor and Council hold all City Appointed Officials accountable for the highest standards of ethics, performance and excellence in customer service.

XV. Accountability and accessibility to the public

- A. Reports submitted to the Mayor and Council shall be public information and reflect accountability to the public.
- B. Members shall be subject to the notice and openness requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act.
 1. All meetings shall be posted in compliance with the procedures defined for the Mayor and Council in the priority procedures handbook.
 2. All meetings shall be held in compliance with the openness provisions of the Texas Open Meetings Act defined for the Mayor and Council in the priority procedures handbook.

XVI. Liaison with City Staff

- A. The designated City staff liaison shall be a representative of (DEPARTMENT)_____.
- B. The designated City staff liaison shall submit all required reports and records to the Mayor and Council via the City Secretary or the City Secretary's designee.
- C. The City Manager shall ensure that the designated City staff liaison works with members to comply with all directives of the Laredo Mayor and Council, including

complying with provisions of the protocol and procedures handbooks adopted by the Mayor and Council.

Charge Recommendation and Adoption

This charge was recommended to the Laredo Mayor and Council by
Designated Staff Liaison _____
Department _____
Date _____
for the (C/B/C NAME) _____
created by (ORDINANCE/RESOLUTION/MOTION) _____ on
(DATE) _____.

This charge was approved and issued by the Laredo Mayor and Council on
(DATE) _____

Raul G. Salinas, Mayor
City of Laredo

Gustavo Guevara, Jr.
City Secretary

Membership Status, (MONTH, YEAR)

(C/B/C NAME)

(DEPARTMENT)

Membership Status

(C/B/C NAME)

Date

Member	Appointing Official for term beginning/ending (if applicable)	Number years on C/B/C	Term status: current/expired or N/A	Comments
Chair				
Vice Chair				

Designated City Staff Liaisons

Name	Department	Telephones: Home/Work	Fax/Email	Pager
		H W	F E	

Members/Staff Directory, (MONTH, YEAR)

(C/B/C NAME)

(DEPARTMENT)

Members and Staff Directory

(C/B/C NAME)

Date

Member	Address	Telephones: Home/Work	Fax/Email	Appointing Official/Term
Chair		H W	F E	AO T
Vice Chair		H W	F E	AO T
		H W	F E	AO T
		H W	F E	AO T
		H W	F E	AO T
		H W	F E	AO T
		H W	F C	AO T
		H W	F E	AO T
		H W	F E	AO T
		H W	F E	AO T

Quarterly Report, Meeting Attendance, (MONTH, YEAR)

(C/B/C NAME)

(DEPARTMENT)

Quarterly Report of Meeting Attendance

Period from (DATE) to (DATE)

(C/B/C NAME)

Date:

Member	Number of times present/ of number of meetings	Excused absences	Unexcused absences	Comments
Chair				
Vice Chair				

Comments _____

Meeting Attendance Report form, December, 201X

(C/B/C NAME)

(DEPARTMENT)

Annual Report of Meeting Attendance

January 1, 201X, to December 31, 201X

(C/B/C NAME:)

Date:

Member	Number of times present/ of number of meetings	Excused absences	Unexcused absences	Comments
Chair				
Vice Chair				

Comments _____

Required Training Attendance Report
(MONTH) 1, 200X-(MONTH) 1, 200X

(C/B/C NAME:)

Date:

Member	Required training	Present or Absent	Comments
Chair	(DATE/TOPIC) (DATE/TOPIC)		
Vice Chair	(DATE/TOPIC) (DATE/TOPIC)		
	(DATE/TOPIC) (DATE/TOPIC)		
	(DATE/TOPIC) (DATE/TOPIC)		
	(DATE/TOPIC) (DATE/TOPIC)		
	(DATE/TOPIC) (DATE/TOPIC)		
	(DATE/TOPIC) (DATE/TOPIC)		
	(DATE/TOPIC) (DATE/TOPIC)		
	(DATE/TOPIC) (DATE/TOPIC)		

Comments _____

City of Laredo Commissions, Boards, Committees/**Template 8**, 5/2011
Sample Cover Letter for Annual Report, January 1, 201X

(LETTERHEAD OR NAME OF C/B/C)
(ADDRESS)

(MONTH, DAY, YEAR)

The Honorable Raul G. Salinas, Mayor
and Members of the Laredo City Council
1110 Houston Street
Laredo, Texas 78040

Dear Mayor Salinas and Council Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit to you our annual report from the (NAME). We hope that our work projects our pride and pleasure in serving as City appointed officials and in advising you, our elected officials, as together we meet new standards of excellence in accountability, accessibility and excellence in customer service.

Our future successes will be measured by our progress in realizing our vision and mission and our related goals and responsibilities. Your charge to us is challenging and promising, for it articulates expectations and establishes requirements while strengthening our relationship with you and with our designated City staff liaisons. For this we are grateful.

Feel free to call upon us if we can provide additional information or whenever you deem it necessary to expand our charge. We are delighted to join you in serving our mutual constituents, just as we look forward to a productive year of partnership and cooperation.

Respectfully submitted,

(INCLUDE ALL SIGNATURES, OR AT LEAST SIGS OF CHAIR, VICE CHAIR & STAFF LIAISON:)

(SIGNATURE)
(NAME), Chair

(SIGNATURE)
(NAME), Vice Chair

(SIGNATURE)
(NAME), Member

(SIGNATURE)
(NAME), Member

(SIGNATURE)
(NAME), Member

(SIGNATURE)
(NAME), Member

(SIGNATURE)
(NAME), Member

(SIGNATURE)
(NAME), Member

(SIGNATURE)
(NAME), Member

(SIGNATURE)
(NAME), Designated City Staff Liaison

Contents

Introduction	X
Committee and Staff Directory	X
Charge from Mayor and Council.....	X
Evaluation of Work, Activities and Accomplishments	X
Required Records and Reports.....	X
Progress Report to Mayor and Council.....	X
Minutes of Meetings	X
Meeting Attendance, Excused and Unexcused Absences.....	X
Quorums at Meetings	X
Required Training Attendance.....	X
Membership Status.....	X
Members Serving Current Terms.....	X
Term Limitations.....	X
Vacancies.....	X
Rules, Regulations, Bylaws	X
Compliance with Protocol, Procedures Adopted by Mayor and Council.....	X
Certification of Consistency	X
Status of Revisions Required for Consistency	X
Handbook Development	X
Priorities	X
Conclusion.....	X

Introduction

The Laredo Mayor and Council charged the (C/B/C NAME) with the responsibility of (SUMMARY OF GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES). The City's elected leadership also directed their appointed leaders to meet standards of accountability, accessibility and excellence in customer service. Accordingly, this annual report of the (REFERENCE TO NAME) chronicles our progress from (MONTH/DATE/YEAR) to (MONTH/DATE/YEAR) toward meeting the directives of the Mayor and Council in the priority procedures handbooks adopted for the City of Laredo..

This report evaluates work, activities and accomplishments, evaluating them by the standards and goals reflected in vision and mission statements (AD HOC COMMITTEES SHOULD OMIT REFERENCE TO VISION STATEMENT) and in related goals and responsibilities. It also includes required reporting elements and records, including the committee and staff directory; the proposed charge to the (NAME); summaries of attendance, quorum, and training participation records; and the status of members serving current terms, vacancies and term limitations.

Report writers also described progress toward handbook development and implementation and toward ensuring that rules, regulations and bylaws comply with the protocol and priority procedures adopted by the Laredo Mayor and Council. Most important, the (NAME'S) priorities for (SPECIFY PERIOD) were projected and summarized.

(ADD ADDITIONAL INFORMATION TO SUIT C/B/C)

Committee and Staff Directory (INSERT TEMPLATE 4 ON NEW PAGE)

Charge from Mayor and Council (INSERT TEMPLATE 2 ON NEW PAGE)

Evaluation of Work, Activities and Accomplishments

(EVALUATE PROGRESS IN TERMS OF VISION/MISSION STATEMENTS, GOALS/RESPONSIBILITIES.)

Required Records and Reports

The (NAME) pledges to meet the highest standards of accountability and of accessibility not only to the Laredo Mayor and Council, but also to the public. Such a commitment is consistent with a commitment to standards of excellence in customer

service. Accordingly, members will prioritize developing, maintaining and submitting timely required records and reports, with the understanding that such records are public information.

Annual Reports to Mayor and Council

As required by the Laredo Mayor and Council the (NAME) (SUMMARIZE COMPLIANCE WITH SUBMITTING REQUIRED ANNUAL REPORT AND RECORDS TO MAYOR AND COUNCIL.)

Minutes of Meetings

As required by the Laredo Mayor and Council, the (NAME) submitted copies of minutes to (NAME/TITLE) within one week of each meeting. (ALTERNATIVELY, REPORT FAILURE TO SUBMIT MINUTES TIMELY. IF MINUTES WERE KEPT BUT NOT SUBMITTED, SAY SO AND INDICATE WHO HAS CUSTODY OF SUCH RECORDS. IF MINUTES WERE NOT KEPT, SAY SO, EXPLAIN CIRCUMSTANCES AND PLEDGE TO KEEP THEM AND TO SUBMIT THEM, EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY.)

Meeting Attendance, Excused and Unexcused Absences

The (NAME) meets regularly (HOW OFTEN? WHEN?). In 201X members will meet at least three times, consistent with directives from the Laredo Mayor and Council.

Attendance (HAS/HAS NOT) been problematic, as evidenced in the chart that follows. Of the X members, X (HAVE/HAS) good attendance, X (HAVE/HAS) X excused absence(S) and X (HAVE/HAS) more than three unexcused absences. According to these records, X members meet the City's standards, while X do not and may be reviewed by the Laredo Mayor and Council.

(IF ATTENDANCE FACILITATES ESTABLISHING/MAINTAINING QUORUM, SAY SO. IF POOR ATTENDANCE CAUSES QUORUM PROBLEMS, SAY SO. ALSO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING ATTENDANCE, EXPLAIN UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT IMPACTED ATTENDANCE AND ADD OTHER APPROPRIATE COMMENTS THAT MAY HELP MAYOR AND COUNCIL UNDERSTAND REASONS FOR ATTENDANCE PROBLEMS, IF ANY.)

(INSERT TEMPLATE 6 ON NEW PAGE)

Quorums at Meetings

Establishing and maintaining quorums (HAS/HAS NOT) been problematic. (DESCRIBE/EVALUATE PROBLEM AND HOW TO RESOLVE.)

Required Training Attendance

Generally, members (HAVE/HAVE NOT) participated in the required training for members of the City's commissions, boards and committees. Of the X members, X attended (INDICATE THE NUMBER OF REQUIRED SEMINARS ATTENDED BY MEMBERS). Attendance at the required training sessions is reflected in the related chart herein and summarized below:

(MONTH/DATE): (TOPIC): Of X members, X participated in the (MONTH, DATE) required seminar that focused on (TOPIC) and X did not. (EXPLAIN ANY UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES, IF ANY, THAT IMPACTED ATTENDANCE.)

(FOLLOW THIS FORMAT FOR EACH REQUIRED SEMINAR)

(INSERT TEMPLATE 7 ON NEW PAGE)

Membership Status

The status of members was reviewed in light of the qualifications and term limitations adopted by the Laredo Mayor and Council in the priority procedures handbook. Results are reflected in the related chart herein and described below:

Members Serving Current Terms: The current Laredo Mayor and Council Members have appointed or reappointed X of the X members of the (NAME), while X members were appointed by former City elected officials and have not been reappointed or replaced.

Vacancies: Based on (REASONS), the (NAME) has X vacancies that should be filled by (MAYOR? COUNCIL MEMBERS?)

Rules, Regulations, Bylaws

Robert's Rules of Procedure, 10th edition, 2000, is the parliamentary authority authorized by the Laredo Mayor and Council. In addition, the (NAME) operates under the policies, procedures and rules defined in the following documents: (LIST BYLAWS, RULES, PROCEDURES MANUALS, ETC. ALSO STATE WHEN AND BY WHAT AUTHORITY THEY WERE ADOPTED.) (IF THE C/B/C HAS NO RULES, BYLAWS, ETC., SAY SO.)

Compliance with Protocol, Procedures Adopted by Mayor and Council: These documents have been reviewed and determined to be consistent (OR INCONSISTENT) with the protocol and procedures handbooks adopted by the Laredo Mayor and Council. (IF INCONSISTENT, IDENTIFY THE REVISIONS REQUIRED AND THE RELATED ACTION. EXAMPLE: BYLAWS REVISION BY C/B/C OR CHARTER AMENDMENT PROPOSED BY COUNCIL TO VOTERS.)

(BASED ON CONSISTENCY OR INCONSISTENCY, INCLUDE ONE OF THE

FOLLOWING, OR ADAPT AS NECESSARY:)

Certification of Consistency: Upon the recommendation of the (NAME'S) designated City staff liaison, the City Secretary certified that the (BYLAWS, ETC.) are consistent with directives of the Laredo Mayor and Council, effective (DATE).

Status of Revisions Required for Consistency: Upon the recommendation of the (NAME'S) designated City staff liaison, the City Secretary identified the following inconsistencies with the directives of the Laredo Mayor and Council, effective (DATE). The status of these revisions (DESCRIBE).

Handbook Development

Developing this annual report is an important part in the process of handbook development and implementation. Both documents, for example, include the following materials that were developed and included herein: a membership and staff directory; the charge from the Mayor and Council; evaluations based on new standards; projections based on vision/mission statements and related goals and responsibilities, which were developed as part of the charge; plans for meeting new standards; and projections for 201X. The handbook, however, also includes rules, regulations, and bylaws; policies and procedures; required reports and forms; schedule, timeline and deadlines; appropriate legal documents; ethical standards and decorum; training and orientation materials; and standard identification information. (ALTERNATIVELY, IF HANDBOOK HAS NOT BEEN COMPLETED, EXPLAIN CIRCUMSTANCES AND ESTABLISH TARGETED COMPLETION DATE.)

Priorities for (MONTH) 1-(MONTH) 1, 201X

(DESCRIBE PRIORITIES FOR 201X, BASED ON VISION/MISSION STATEMENT, GOALS/RESPONSIBILITIES. DESCRIBE PRIORITIES FOR NEXT YEAR).

Conclusion

(REVIEW YOUR INTRODUCTION AND USE IT AS REFERENCE POINT FOR DEVELOPING CONCLUSION. INCLUDE REFERENCE TO STANDARDS OF ACCOUNTABILITY, ACCESSIBILITY AND EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE. PLEDGE TO MEET RESPONSIBILITY AS CITY APPOINTED OFFICIALS WHO SERVE IN ADVISORY CAPACITY TO LAREDO MAYOR AND COUNCIL. END ON POSITIVE NOTE. FOR EXAMPLES, READ THE INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS IN THE PROTOCOL AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOKS.)

Appendix C

City of Laredo

Comprehensive Public Information Plan

May, 2011

City of Laredo

Comprehensive Public Information Plan

The Laredo Mayor and City Council firmly support the public's right to be informed about City-related issues and events. This belief is the foundation for their commitment to the efficient, effective dissemination of information internally and to the public. Accordingly, they directed the development of a "Comprehensive Public Information Plan" that would reflect their commitment to accessibility, accountability and excellence in customer service.

Implementing such a plan to benefit Laredoans will require interaction and cooperation at all levels of the City's administration, from the Mayor and City Council to the City Manager, City Secretary, Public Information Officer, Public Access Director, Department Directors and everyone involved in the daily business of prioritizing the needs and interests of Laredoans and of providing cost-effective services timely and efficiently.

Consistent with the policies directed by the Charter of the City of Laredo, the "chain of command" is from the Mayor and Council Members through the City Manager, who expresses their directives to the Public Information Officer, Public Access Director and other Department Directors.

I. Priorities and Objectives

A. The City of Laredo's "Comprehensive Public Information Plan" reflects the following highest priorities and objectives:

1. Ensure that Laredoans are fully informed about the City of Laredo's priorities, services and functions, consistent with the highest standards of accessibility, accountability and excellence in customer service.
2. Provide avenues through which Laredoans can participate in the local government process, including major projects such as redistricting and revising the City of Laredo Charter..
3. Ensure that residents of each City Council district shall receive relevant, timely public information about their district and shall have access to avenues of participation in local government at the district level.

4. Include an “Emergency Response Plan,” developed as a separate document, that can be implemented quickly and efficiently when necessary to keep Laredoans informed about natural disasters and other emergencies.
 5. Implement a strategy for using English and Spanish print and electronic news media, public access television programming and the internet to disseminate timely, relevant public information to Laredoans.
 6. Implement a plan that includes the development and distribution of informative publications, including newsletters, brochures, letters and flyers.
 7. Develop and implement policies and procedures to enhance the City’s responsiveness to Laredoans who request public information and open records.
 8. Disseminate public information to media outside the City of Laredo when appropriate and consistent with the need to cooperate with other levels of government.
- B. Implementing the City’s “Comprehensive Public Information Plan” shall require the cooperation and interaction of all City Department Directors with the Public Information Officer, the Public Access Director and the City Secretary.
- C. The Mayor and Council shall consider the “Comprehensive Public Information Plan” for approval and evaluate it in light of the regularity, thoroughness, relevance and timeliness with which Laredoans are kept informed about City government priorities, accomplishments, services and functions, consistent with the highest standards of accessibility, accountability and excellence in customer service.

II. Subjects of Public Information

- A. The Public Information Plan prioritizes disseminating information about priority subjects such as the following:
1. Public notices about meetings, agendas and workshops, etc., whether pertaining to the business of the Mayor and City Council or of the City’s Commissions, Boards and Committees.
 2. Reports about the actions, directives and meetings of the Mayor and Council, especially in regards to fiscal responsibility and accountability.
 3. Public announcements about grants, construction, new facilities, transportation improvements, etc.
 4. Timely and thorough information about the City’s responsiveness and preparedness regarding natural disasters and emergencies.

5. Timely and regular information about the City, each of the eight City Council districts, and City services and departments.
- B. The Public Information Officer shall ensure that public information about priority subjects is disseminated regularly to Laredoans.

III. Targeted Receivers of Public Information

- A. The Public Information Officer and the Public Access Director and their staffs continuously shall identify targeted groups of Laredoans who should receive specific public information.

1. Example: Residents of each Council district should receive information about their respective town hall meetings, City meetings and workshops, new and remodeled City facilities, construction, transportation improvements, etc.
2. Example: Taxpayers should be targeted to receive public information notices about City budget hearings and the scheduled adoption of the City budget.
3. Example: Taxpayers who do not speak English should be targeted for English/Spanish or Spanish public information messages.
4. Example: Work with school districts in general and with specific schools to reach personnel and parents in their neighborhoods.
5. The Public Access Director shall research the availability of grants to provide closed-caption programs.

- B. The Public Information Officer, Public Access Director and City Secretary and their staffs shall determine how to package and channel relevant information to targeted groups of Laredoans.

1. This may include targeted mailings to Council district residents or targeted to individuals throughout the City.
2. It may include flyers, letters, posters and other announcements.
3. Targeted groups may include Laredoans who are likely to be interested in greater participation in City government, perhaps by considering appointments to the City's Commissions, Boards and Committees.

IV. Media

- A. The Public Information Officer shall coordinate efforts with the City Secretary and the Public Access Director to ensure that the Public Information Plan is implemented as public information is disseminated by all available means:

1. Local print and electronic news media
 2. City's website
 - a. The City's website may include links to archives of press releases.
 - b. Public announcements and press releases may be posted on the City's website.
 3. Public access television programming
 - a. Public information can be disseminated via public access channel programs, announcements, scrolled information, multi-media automated public service announcements, etc.
 - b. When necessary, live broadcasts can be scheduled to inform the public about important news, especially during emergencies.
 - c. The Public Information Officer and the Public Access Director shall work together to submit proposals to the Mayor and Council regarding how to ensure that the public benefits from the opportunities afforded by the new Public Communication Center.
- B. The Public Information Officer shall maintain and submit to the Mayor and City Council and to the appropriate Department Directors a current media list that includes the following:
1. Names/titles of key contacts.
 2. References to the languages of choice of each medium and to their deadlines.
 3. Schedules of distribution, broadcasting, etc.
 4. Directory format, including physical and mailing addresses; telephone and telefax numbers; pagers; and email addresses.
- C. Media lists shall include not only Laredo and Nuevo Laredo print and electronic media, but also print and electronic media that disseminate information about Laredo.
1. This includes major newspapers such the Dallas Morning News, the Houston Chronicle and the San Antonio Express-News and publications such as Texas Monthly.
 2. It includes the Associated Press and other relevant news services.
- D. Media representatives shall be treated fairly in terms of ensuring their access to the City's elected officials and to public information.

1. Press releases shall be provided simultaneously via telefax and telephone calls.
 2. Press availabilities during Council meetings shall ensure that the Mayor and Council Members are accessible to discuss timely issues before media deadlines.
 - a. The Public Information Officer shall inform the Mayor and appropriate Council Members when media representatives request access to them during Council meetings.
 - b. The Mayor shall recess Council meetings to accommodate media representatives, though in compliance with the Priority Procedures adopted by the Mayor and Council.
 3. The Public Information Officer shall facilitate interaction between the media and the Mayor and Council Members by enhancing access, scheduling interviews and providing requested public information.
- E. Upon request by electronic media representatives, the Public Access Director may provide videotape excerpts of City meetings and events.
- F. When appropriate, the Public Information Officer shall disseminate press releases to media in cities visited by the Mayor and Council.

V. Public access television programming

- A. The Public Information Officer and the Public Access Director and their staffs shall prioritize the production of the following public information programs:
1. A bimonthly 30-minute report about the City of Laredo, perhaps titled, "Laredo at a Glance."
 - a. The Mayor, Council Members and appropriate City staff members would report to Laredoans about City issues, services and events.
 - b. It could include interviews, excerpts from meetings, news reports, on-location videotaping throughout City, calendar of events and departmental highlights.
 2. An occasional 30-minute program through which the Mayor will report to Laredoans, perhaps titled, "Mayor's Report."
 - a. The Mayor could host local and out-of-town guests, interacting with them on-location.
 - (1) An ideal time to accomplish this is between festivities associated with Washington's Birthday Celebration.

- (2) Tapings also could be scheduled at the State Capitol during trips arranged for related purposes.
 - b. It could include excerpts from meetings, trips, workshops, speeches, etc.
 - c. It also could include videotape excerpts of the Mayor being interviewed by the Public Information Officer and/or by media representatives.
 3. A 30-minute program that focuses on two Council Member districts, so that each district would be the focus of a 15-minute report each month, and perhaps titled, "Council Member's Corner."
 - a. Council Members could host guests, conduct interviews, be interviewed and focus on special projects and developments in their respective districts.
 - b. They could narrate videotapes of neighborhood sites, meetings and special events such as groundbreakings and ribbon cuttings.
 - c. They could encourage residents to participate in local government by attending Town Hall meetings, Council meetings, etc.
 - d. The format could be similar to "Laredo at a Glance" and/or "Mayor's Review," but focus on one district at a time.
 - e. Although the goal is to schedule monthly programs, the effort and results of the first efforts will be the basis for determining their regularity.
 4. Public service announcements.
 5. Community Calendar
- B. The City of Laredo's Public Information Officer and Public Access Director shall develop a schedule that ensures the most efficient and effective use of the City's new Public Communication Center to disseminate public information to Laredoans.
1. Programs such as those described above will be aired three times.
 2. One evening per week shall be devoted to City of Laredo programs.
 3. The City's public information programming shall be prioritized not only for production staff, but also for airing time.
- C. The Public Information Officer and the Public Access Director shall serve on the

Political Forum Committee with the City Manager or the City Manager's designee to organize and conduct political forums for local elections.

1. They shall develop and implement Fair Rules for Political Forums. (Appendix D)
2. They shall ensure that Laredoans have access to this important public information and public service that should result in a better informed electorate.
3. They shall provide opportunities for candidates or their designees and for panelists to review the rules in advance and to commit to abide by them.
4. They shall provide opportunities for panelists to develop appropriate questions within their time limits.

D. The Public Information Officer and the Public Access Director shall design and adapt sets that project the public service commitment of the City of Laredo.

1. These shall be simple and inexpensive, but shall include the name of the City of Laredo and other appropriate information.
2. Sets shall include components that can be used in different combinations to create the impression of different sets. Example: Using color-coordinated chairs with a table in one set, but behind a desk in another.
3. Different sets shall be adapted appropriately for different programs such as the following:
 - a. "Laredo at a Glance"
 - b. "Mayor's Review"
 - c. "Council Member's Corner"
 - d. Political Forums

E. The Public Information Officer and the Public Access Director shall develop and recommend policies and procedures for individuals and groups who seek access to production facilities and/or who are interested in airing their events via public access channels.

VI. Official City position

A. Any "official city position" must be defined and described in a formal resolution adopted by a two-thirds vote of the Council (minimum six ayes).

- B. The Mayor and Council may designate appointed officials and/or City staff members to articulate the City’s official position to the media or to other interested persons.
 - 1. Such spokespersons may be designated in the resolution related to the City’s official position on an issue.
 - 2. A spokesperson for a given “official City position” may be designated at any time, even after the resolution is adopted.
- C. No City elected or appointed official or staff member shall refer to an “official city position” unless referencing a position stated in an adopted formal resolution.
 - 1. Appointees to commissions, boards and committees are advisers to the Mayor and Council and do not speak or act for them.
 - 2. The position of commissions, boards and committees are not automatically those of the Mayor and Council and shall not be considered “official City positions” unless defined and described in a formal resolution adopted by the Council.

VII. City spokesperson

- A. The Mayor is the official spokesperson for the City.
- B. In the absence of the Mayor, the Mayor Pro Tempore assumes duties as the official spokesperson for the City.
 - 1. If the Mayor Pro Tempore is unable or unwilling to serve as official spokesperson, the Mayor may designate another Council Member to serve in that capacity.
 - 2. If the Mayor does not designate an alternate spokesperson, the Mayor Pro Tempore may designate another Council Member to serve in that capacity until the Mayor directs otherwise.
- C. Council Members may assume duties as official spokespersons for the City.
 - 1. Those who have relevant expertise or represent an impacted Council district may be designated City spokespersons for particular issues.
 - 2. They may be designated the City’s spokespersons for particular issues for a designated time range or for a particular event.
 - 3. Council Members freely may articulate the City’s “official positions” as defined and described in their formal adopted resolutions.
- D. City staff members, including department directors, shall not act as spokespersons for the Mayor and/or City Council, unless specifically authorized by them for a

particular issue, event or situation.

1. If staff members are approached by the media to comment about City issues, the staff member should contact the City Manager or the Public Information Officer for advice and directives regarding how to handle the request.
 2. Staff members may seek authorization to address specific issues, events or situations with media representatives, especially when timely or about issues within their realms of expertise.
- E. The Mayor often designates the Public Information Officer as the spokesperson for the Mayor and Council.

VIII. Personal perspective

- A. The Mayor and Council Members may express their personal perspectives on issues.
- B. When expressing their perspectives, the Mayor and Council Members shall differentiate between personal and official positions on issues.

IX. Public announcements

- A. The Mayor and Council shall make all major announcements regarding matters considered by the Council; major projects, including grants and construction; federal and state legislation; and cooperative projects with other governmental units, including those in Mexico.
 1. Unless designated to do so, City staff members shall not make public announcements.
 2. Typically, the Public Information Officer shall prepare a press release making announcements in the name of the Mayor and the Council Member whose district is impacted or who Chairs the relevant Council Committee.
- B. All public announcements shall be distributed to all news media who regularly report City news.
- C. The Mayor shall encourage state and federal elected and appointed officials to inform and involve the Mayor and Council before disseminating public information about the City of Laredo
- D. The City Manager immediately shall inform the Mayor and Council about public announcements that will be made by non-City officials about the City of Laredo.
 1. The Public Information Officer shall be a liaison with public information personnel who work for Laredo's state and federal elected officials, including members of the U.S. Congress and of the Texas Legislature.

2. The Public Information Officer shall work with these public information colleagues to ensure that the Mayor and Council Members are informed and involved when public announcements about the City of Laredo are made by state and federal officials.
- E. The Public Information Officer shall ensure that the Mayor and Council Members shall be informed and invited to all press conferences that pertain to the City of Laredo.
1. This includes ensuring that Department Directors understand policies and procedures and do not assume responsibility for making public announcements.
 2. It also includes cooperating with the City Secretary and designated City staff liaisons to ensure that City Commissions, Boards and Committees understand public information policies and procedures.
- X. Internal information
- A. The City Manager, assisted by the Public Information Officer, shall ensure that information is shared with the Mayor and Council before it is disseminated to the public.
 - B. When the City Manager receives important information about any subject of priority interest, he or she immediately shall contact the Mayor and Council Members.
 - C. The City Manager, assisted by the Public Information Officer, shall develop and implement an internal information network that includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 1. A system for sharing important information immediately with the Mayor and Council Members.
 2. A system for enabling the Mayor and Council Members easily to designate their respective preferred permanent and temporary methods for being contacted immediately about priority information.
 - a. This may include contact by telephone, pager, telefax or email.
 - b. Preferred contact methods will be recorded and maintained by the City Manager, assisted by the Public Information Officer.
 - c. The Mayor and Council Members may change their preferred contact methods temporarily and/or periodically by informing the City Manager or Public Information Officer.
 - d. Council Members who do not record a preferred immediate contact method shall be contacted by telefax.

3. The City Manager shall ensure that all City staff members honor the internal information network and communicate with the Mayor and Council Members in compliance with their preferred contact methods.

XI. Public information about City events, invitations

- A. The City Manager, assisted by the Public Information Officer, shall develop a system for ensuring that City-sponsored events are scheduled in cooperation with the Mayor and appropriate Council Members whose attendance shall be prioritized.
 1. This shall include a scheduling form that shall be routed for approval to the Mayor, Council Members and City Manager.
 2. It shall include a public information form to be used in planning press releases and media coverage, including on public access television.
 3. The Public Information Officer shall coordinate scheduling of City-sponsored events and shall be responsible for arranging their re-scheduling if the Mayor and designated Council Members cannot attend on the proposed date.
- B. Efforts shall be made to facilitate participation by the Mayor and the Council Member who represents the district in which an event is held.
- C. Generally, City-sponsored events shall reflect the policies, procedures, formats and order of precedence in the City of Laredo Protocol Handbook.
- D. The City Secretary shall develop standardized formats for invitations to similar events.

XII. Evaluation

- A. The Public Information Officer and Public Access Director shall develop performance measures for evaluating the “Comprehensive Public Information Plan.”
- B. The evaluation shall include a method for collecting feedback to improve the plan.

XIII. Implementation

- A. The Mayor and Council unanimously adopted the fourth draft of the “Comprehensive Public Information Plan” on February 20, 2001, as part of the Priority Procedures for the Mayor and City Council, Laredo, Texas.
 1. Intended as a starting point for further discussion, the first draft was revised based on feedback from the Protocol, Procedures and Customer Service Committee and from the City Manager and Department Directors.

- B. Implementation of the Comprehensive Public Information Plan for the City of Laredo will depend on related decisions that focus on personnel, priorities and budget.

Appendix D
City of Laredo
Public Communication Center

Fair Rules for Political Forums

May, 2011

1 of 12

City of Laredo Public Communication Center
Fair Rules for Political Forums

As a service to Laredoans and to ensure an informed constituency, the City of Laredo's Public Communication Center sponsors and hosts political forums for candidates in local elections. The Laredo Mayor and City Council directed the development of fair policies, procedures and rules for forums, consistent with their commitment to accessibility, accountability and excellence in customer service.

Fair Rules for Political Forums is intended to allow candidates in contested local races to express themselves regarding issues and to enrich listeners with relevant information required to vote for the best candidates. The rules also are intended to ensure well-organized formats that facilitate proper decorum, enhance information exchange and promote preparedness of panelists and candidates. Equally important, these rules are presented as a set of flexible alternatives to be considered by the City of Laredo Political Forum Committee and to be disseminated to candidates in local elections as soon as possible after filing deadlines. Local elections include, but are not limited to, races for Mayor, City Council and Municipal Court Judge; County Judge, Commissioners Court and Sheriff; District Judge and District Attorney; and Boards of Trustees of the Laredo Community College, Laredo Independent School District and United Independent School District.

Well-intentioned sponsors, organizers and panelists sometimes unintentionally treat candidates unfairly, simply because they do not consider better alternatives or the consequences of their actions. Perhaps the best example of such unintended unfairness is the common practice of allowing one candidate to make the first opening statement and the last closing statement—a definite advantage. Intended to facilitate the process and to ensure fairness for candidates and their supporters, these rules may be adopted or adapted appropriately for specific occasions and races, particularly to accommodate the number of candidates vying for the same position.

To facilitate the task of forum organizers and to preclude on-air errors, four forms were developed and are included with these rules. The first may serve as the program agenda and should be completed last to reflect the results of completing the other three forms that record results of drawing for order of presentation and for lectern or seat for election forums in which there are two, three or four or more candidates.

Political Forum Committee

The Mayor and City Council may appoint a Political Forum Committee (PFC) to organize and conduct political forums for local elections. The committee typically should consist of the City Manager or the City Manager's designee, the Public Access Director and the Public Information Director. Its charge shall include developing rules, procedures and schedules for the forums; inviting and informing candidates; arranging, conducting and broadcasting forums; determining the format and completing the appropriate attached forms; and ensuring fairness and proper decorum.

The PFC shall be responsible for taping and broadcasting the City of Laredo's Public Communication Center's forums that focus on city, county and school board elections. It also may consider broadcasting forums hosted by other sponsors, provided their tapes reflect the standards established by the PFC, including for broadcast quality and decorum.

Political Forums for city, county and school board elections

Political forums are pre-recorded at the City of Laredo's Public Communication Center, then scheduled for broadcasting three times on Channel 13.

Schedule

The PFC shall develop and announce the schedule for political forums, including dates and times for the following:

- Meeting with candidates who have filed for local offices
- Distribution of *Fair Rules for Political Forums*
- Deadlines for accepting invitation, for suggestions, for drawings
- Drawings for order of presentation, for preferred lectern/seat
- Political forum (check-in time, starting time, ending time; broadcast times)

Pre-forum meeting with candidates

As soon as possible after the filing deadline, the PFC shall hold a meeting for all

candidates or their representatives. The agenda will include the following:

- Distributing and discussing the rules for forums, including a demonstration of drawing and timekeeping techniques and of forum participation
- Accepting suggestions for moderators, panelists, questions
- Announcing deadlines for accepting invitations to participate in forums, for suggestions, for drawings
- Seeing a videotape of a previous forum and/or viewing the forum set
- Handling “no shows” or late arrivals for drawings, forums
- Question/Answer period

Model forum format

- Moderator calls program to order; welcomes candidates, participants, and audience; articulates disclaimer; introduces two candidates, two panelists, timekeeper; thanks sponsors and hosts; describes program format, order of presentations, rules, time limits, procedures, etc. (2 minutes)
- Each candidate makes an opening statement. (1-2 minutes each)
- First panelist asks the same question to both candidates. (Each question should take 15 seconds or less; each answer, 1 minute or less)
- Second panelist asks the same question to both candidates. (Each question should take 15 seconds or less; each answer, 1 minute or less)
- Candidates take turns answering first, but panelists raise questions in the same order in which they asked the first two questions. (1-minute or less for each answer)
- Moderator announces there is time for one more question to be answered by each candidate, followed by closing statements. (15 seconds)
- Last question is asked/answered. (15 seconds + 1 minute per answer)
- Moderator explains order of presenting closing statements and calls on candidates. (15 seconds)
- Each candidate makes a closing statement. (1-2 minutes each—same as opening statement)

- Moderator thanks candidates, panelists, sponsor, hosts, timekeeper, audience; summarizes purpose; reviews appropriate early voting and election day schedule; urges everyone to vote; and adjourns. (1 minute)
- Program ends as participants shake hands with each other and City of Laredo logo appears.

Rationale for model program format

Setting the same time limit for opening and closing statements is less confusing to candidates, most of whom are not used to “timed” presentations.

Allowing candidates the same time to answer questions ensures them equal opportunities to respond to each question. Formats that require candidates to take turns rebutting questions can result in an unfair advantage or disadvantage to a candidate.

Requiring candidates to answer the same question from each panelist gives them an equal opportunity to address each subject raised.

Inviting only two panelists is likely to result in four or more rounds of questions, while limiting their questions to 15 seconds or less will force them to refine their phrasing and avoid making statements or mini-speeches. Panelists should be required to ask fair questions, to avoid repetition and duplication and to avoid displaying favoritism in any way.

Unacceptable program format

Not establishing and enforcing time limits for answers can be not only unfair, but also confusing to candidates and to the audience. Time limits ensure that each candidate has an equal opportunity to answer each question and enable listeners to compare candidates’ ability to answer questions succinctly within that period.

Not establishing and enforcing time limits for panelists can be annoying because lengthy questions take up valued time that should be available for candidates.

Allowing panelists to ask different questions to candidates is unfair because both candidates should have the opportunity to answer all questions.

Not having a timekeeper with warning signs and buzzer can impede candidates’ ability to complete their answers.

Moderators and panelists

The PFC shall invite and consider suggestions for moderators and panelists to

participate in the forums. Candidates will be given an opportunity to make suggestions, and each candidate may strike one moderator or panelist, although only for the forum in which that candidate participates, provided the strike is provided before the established deadline. They will receive advance notice about the selected moderator and panelists for their respective forums.

Every effort must be made to select moderators and panelists who are knowledgeable about the issues, will treat candidates fairly and will take the time to prepare and to abide by forum rules.

Because the participation and performance of moderators and panelists are critical to the success of these forums, the PFC will assist and require them in the following ways:

- inform them about the rules of procedure, especially those that apply to them
- review suggested questions in advance, especially to preclude duplication
- ensure that they develop questions that are appropriate and within time limits
- provide necessary scripts and forms to facilitate a smooth program

Questions and answers, rebuttal

Questions should be succinct, to-the-point, issue-oriented, fair, relevant, appropriate for the race at hand, and not designed to favor a candidate. They should be raised in a professional, unbiased manner to both candidates. Equally important, they should be questions—literally—and NOT statements or speeches by panelists.

The moderator and panelists should review questions in advance to avoid repetition and duplication and to ensure that they can be raised within time limits.

Candidates will be invited to submit suggested questions for panelists.

Answers should be related to the question raised. Time not used by a candidate will be forfeited, unless requested for rebuttal purposes.

A candidate who has answered a question and has time left may use the rest of the time to rebut a statement made earlier by another candidate. This policy should not be abused by candidates who want to avoid answering a question and would prefer to revisit a question raised earlier.

Drawings for order, lectern/seat

Candidates in each forum shall be invited to participate in a drawing to determine

their order of presentations and preferred lectern or seat. Those who do not participate in the drawing shall forfeit their opportunity to draw for preferences, unless they send designated representatives to draw for them.

Although often well-intentioned, the following criteria are unfair and unsuitable for determining the order of presentation and preferred lectern or seat: “ladies first” (also politically incorrect); alphabetical order; reverse alphabetical order; ballot order; incumbents first; and first-come, first-served. Such unintentional unfairness is precluded by allowing candidates to participate in a fair drawing for the order of presentations and seating.

Accordingly, for each forum, the procedure shall be as follows: The PFC shall provide a container and numbered papers to correspond with the total number of candidates who will participate in that forum. Example: “1” and “2” for a two-person race, but from “1” to “5” for a five-person race.

The numerical order drawn (from lowest to highest) shall reflect the order in which candidates may select their preferred lectern or seat and the order of presenting opening and closing statements and of answering questions. To facilitate the process, PFC shall provide forms in which candidates shall indicate their selections, and completed forms shall be used during the forum by the moderator, panelists and candidates.

Although this drawing procedure should result in treating candidates more fairly, it may prove cumbersome initially and, therefore, shall be conducted in advance and fine tuned as necessary. It will be relatively easy to employ in two-candidate races, but must be adapted for races with more candidates.

Time limits

The PFC shall establish time limits that are appropriate for the number of candidates and the time allotted for their forum. Moderators, panelists and candidates will be asked to understand and to abide by their respective time limits, which shall be enforced strictly.

A timekeeper should be seated within easy range of vision of candidates and program participants and should be equipped with a dependable timer and buzzer, as well as with alert, warning, and time up signs (for 2-minute statements: 1 minute to go, 30 seconds to go, 15 seconds to go, and time up; for 1-minute answers: 15 seconds to go, and time up). Buzzer should be next to a microphone and should keep ringing until candidate stops talking.

Set

The PFC shall design and arrange a suitable set for political forums. The set should be simple and inexpensive but attractive and convey a message of public service

from the City of Laredo. It shall project an atmosphere of proper decorum and shall facilitate interaction between candidates and panelists.

The moderator and/or panelists should be seated at a draped table or desk. Each shall have an assigned microphone and name place card large enough to be read easily by the candidates.

Arrangements for candidates will vary, depending on the number of candidates in a race, but each should have an assigned microphone. Lecterns are preferable in a two-candidate race, but draped tables or desks are preferable for multiple-candidate races.

Water, paper and pens shall be provided for each participant. These and similar items shall be placed appropriately so as not to be block signs or be distractions.

Audio-visual equipment, visuals, notes

Participants shall not use audio-visual equipment or other visuals during forums, unless allowed under the procedures adopted by the PFC and distributed in advance to candidates.

Ideally, candidates should speak without notes so that viewers can observe their knowledge, sincerity and ability to think quickly. This precludes a candidate's depending on "canned" answers prepared in advance by others. Unless otherwise indicated by the PFC, candidates will be asked not to read statements verbatim, but will be allowed to use notes for reference during their opening and closing statements.

Alternatives include allowing candidates to use notes for their opening and closing statements, but not while answering questions; allowing a specified number of pages of notes (typically, 2 or 3); or allowing unlimited reliance on notes, even allowing candidates to read their opening/closing statements and answers to questions.

Signs, lapel stickers

Each candidate should have the option of placing two political signs within size ranges specified by the PFC, one at the front of the lectern and another on the wall behind the candidate. Designated sizes will vary according to the size of the lecterns and set, but content should be limited to what is printed on a typical political yard sign (name, position sought, "re-elect" or "for" line, logo, election day, disclaimer, etc.)

Candidates also may wear lapel stickers in standard sizes.

Decorum

The moderator shall be responsible for establishing and maintaining rules of decorum.

Participants in forums shall reflect proper decorum and professionalism. They shall use titles such as “Mayor,” “Council Member,” “Judge,” “Commissioner,” and “Sheriff” for elected officials and such as “Mr.,” “Mrs.,” “Miss,” “Ms.” and “Dr.” for others.

Using an empty chair as a reminder of an absent candidate shall be prohibited.

Firearms prohibited

Participants, including law enforcement officers, shall not have firearms on the set. Refusal to abide by this rule shall result in removal from the premises and forfeiture of the opportunity to participate in the forum.

“No Shows” and No Responses

If one of two candidates in a race is a “no show” for a forum, the candidate who is present will be given the opportunity to proceed alone, though for half of the time allotted for both candidates.

If one of several candidates in a race is a “no show,” the time allotted for the forum may be shortened. Alternatively, the PFC may honor the original schedule by simply making more time available for questions to be asked and answered by the other candidates.

Candidates who do not meet deadlines for accepting invitations to participate in forums shall forfeit the opportunity. The PFC shall set the deadline, which typically shall be one month after the filing deadline.

Guests

Only participants and on-duty Public Communication Center personnel will be allowed in the recording studio while the forums are underway. Each candidate, however, may be accompanied by two guests who may view proceedings in the designated meeting room.

Special related requests, questions

Special related requests and questions about political forums shall be referred to the PFC for consideration. This includes requests to broadcast forums sponsored by other organizations, to videotape other forums, to schedule additional forums and to provide copies of videotapes.

30-Minute Forum for Two-Candidate Race

Developed specifically for a 30-minute forum for a two-candidate race, this format can be adapted to accommodate more candidates or to change the length of the forum for a particular race.

Ideal arrangement for candidates: lecterns, seats, microphones, signs

Ideally, two identical side-by-side lecterns should be available, one for each candidate. The candidate who draws "1" for this purpose shall select a lectern, and the candidate who draws "2" shall be assigned the other. If only one candidate is present at drawing time, that candidate shall be designated "1" for this purpose and shall make the first selection.

If identical lecterns are not available, the candidates shall be seated at a draped table, desk or other suitable place. If so, they shall select seats according to the procedure described for selecting lecterns.

Each candidate should be given the choice of using a fixed or clip-on microphone.

Alternative settings

Acceptable but less suitable arrangements are listed below:

- Six-foot draped table at which both candidates are seated, each with an assigned microphone and options for placing signs or name place cards. The moderator and panelists should be seated at a second draped table, and each should have an assigned microphone and name place card.
- Separate small table for each candidate, each with an assigned microphone and small identification sign. Moderator either stands at a lectern with a microphone or is seated at a third table.
- Eight-foot table at which moderator is seated between the two candidates. Each participant should have an assigned microphone, and candidates should be given options for placing signs or name place cards.

Unacceptable arrangements

Sharing a lectern and microphone or not having them available is unfair to candidates and exacerbates their anxieties. It also projects unpreparedness of sponsors, especially when candidates hold and share clip-on microphones.

A moderator who is seated casually on a bar stool or who walks around also can be very distracting to candidates.

Order of opening/closing statements

The winner of the drawing will choose whether to deliver the first **or** second opening **or** closing statement. The other candidate will choose whether to deliver the **other** statement first **or** second. Examples: If Candidate "1" decides to deliver the second closing statement, Candidate "2" will deliver the first closing statement and decide whether to deliver the first or second opening statement. If Candidate "1" decides to deliver the first opening statement, Candidate "2" will deliver the second opening statement and will decide whether to deliver the first or second closing statement. This precludes the unfair practice of automatically giving one candidate the unfair advantage of opening **and** closing the forum by virtue of delivering the first opening and the second closing statement.

Order of answering questions

The candidate who makes the first opening statement should answer the first question first, and the other candidate should answer the second question first. They should take turns answering questions first in that order. Examples: Candidate "1" delivers the first opening statement, then answers questions 1, 3, 5, and 7 first. Candidate "2" delivers the second opening statement, then answers questions 2, 4, 6, and 8 first.

Model 30-Minute program format

- Moderator calls program to order; welcomes candidates, participants, and audience; articulates disclaimer; introduces two candidates, two panelists, timekeeper; thanks sponsors and hosts; describes program format, order of presentations, rules, time limits, procedures, etc. (2 minutes)
- Each candidate makes an opening statement. (2 minutes each = 4 minutes)
- First panelist asks the same question to both candidates, followed by second panelist. (Each question should take 15 seconds or less.)
- Candidates take turns answering first, but panelists raise questions in the same order in which they asked the first two questions. (1-minute or less for each answer)
- Moderator announces there is time for one more question to be answered by each candidate, followed by closing statements. (15 seconds)
- Last question is asked/answered. (2 minutes and 15 seconds)
- Moderator explains order of presenting closing statements and calls on candidates. (15 seconds)

- Each candidate makes a closing statement. (2 minutes each = 4 minutes)
- Moderator thanks candidates, panelists, sponsor, hosts, timekeeper, audience; summarizes purpose; reviews appropriate early voting and election day schedule; urges everyone to vote; and adjourns. (1 minute)

Multiple-Candidate Races

These rules may be adapted for multiple candidate races by providing draped tables (rather than lecterns) for the appropriate number, though each candidate should have an assigned microphone and sign or name place card.

Time limits for opening/closing statements, questions, and answers should be suitable for the number of candidates and the time provided for the forum, as should the number of panelists. The opening and closing statements should be the same length, however, and each candidate should have equal time to answer each question.

The order of making opening and closing statements should be decided by a “drawing” that designates the order in which candidates decide the order in which they will deliver the opening or closing statement. Every effort should be made to ensure fairness and to preclude the same candidate from delivering the first opening statement and the last closing statement. Examples: In a three-candidate race, the candidate who draws “1” will decide whether to speak first, second, **or** third during the opening **or** closing statement; “2” will select the next statement slot; and “3” will select next. The process will be repeated in reverse order, with “3” selecting the first of the remaining three speaking slots. This means, for instance, that if “1” chooses to deliver the third closing statement; “2” might choose to deliver the first opening statement; while “3” might select the first closing statement and the third opening statement; and “2” automatically (in this scenario) would deliver the second closing statement and “1” would deliver the second opening statement.

The first question should be answered by candidates in the same order in which the opening statements were delivered, then candidates should follow that order in taking turns answering successive questions first.

The PFC shall determine whether a separate drawing will be held to determine the order in which the three candidates shall select their seats. Alternatively, they may decide to allow “3” to select the first seat.

The number of panelists, perhaps two or three, should facilitate complete rounds of questions from them within the time allowed for the forum and the number of candidates.

60-Minute Forums

These rules may be adapted for 60-minute forums simply by adapting the time limits, number of rounds of questions, and number of panelists. Opening and closing statements could be extended to three minutes, but the time limit should be the same for opening and closing statements. Imposing different time limits for opening versus closing statements hampers speech organization, especially for candidates who are not used to making timed presentations. Example: Each candidate may deliver a 3-minute opening and a 3-minute closing statement.

The number of panelists may be extended to three or four, but only if complete rounds of questions by all panelists can be projected in light of other time limits and the number of candidates. Questions should be limited to 15 seconds to preclude statements and mini-speeches by panelists. The focus should be on the candidates, not on panelists or moderator.

Bilingual Forums

These rules may be adapted for bilingual forums, but participants must be informed in advance that a second language may be spoken by panelists and/or candidates. Surprising them and/or not allowing candidates to prepare for a bilingual format is unfair.

Agenda and Order of Presentation for Four-Candidate Forum

Complete this form with the names of program participants, including the moderator, candidates and panelists. Although designed for a four-candidate forum, the form can be adapted for more or fewer candidates by adjusting the number of blanks.

For purposes of simplicity and efficiency, designate the candidates numerically in the order in which they will deliver the opening statements. Thus the candidate to speak first will be "Opener 1," etc. Simply write each candidate's name by his or her designated number in each of the categories below (opening statements, questions, closing statements). Also add the name of the moderator and of the panelists. When completed, this form should serve as the program agenda and reflect the order of presentation.

Welcome and Opening Remarks By (MODERATOR) _____

Opening Statements by Candidates

Opener 1 _____

Opener 2 _____

Opener 3 _____

Opener 4 _____

Question 1 by (PANELIST) _____

Opener 1 _____

Opener 2 _____

Opener 3 _____

Opener 4 _____

Question 2 by (PANELIST) _____

Opener 2 _____

Opener 3 _____

Opener 4 _____

Opener 1 _____

Question 3 by (PANELIST) _____

Opener 3 _____

Opener 4 _____

Opener 1 _____

Opener 2 _____

Question 4 by (PANELIST) _____

Opener 4 _____

Opener 1 _____

Opener 2 _____

Opener 3 _____

Closing Statements by Candidates

Closer 1 _____

Closer 2 _____

Closer 3 _____

Closer 4 _____

Concluding Remarks By (MODERATOR) _____

Forum Agenda: Order of Presentation, lectern/seat for Two-Candidate Races

Position sought _____ Precinct _____ Two candidates _____

Instructions: Candidates in each race will participate in two drawings. Results will determine the order in which they will select their preferred lecterns/seats and their orders of presentation.

In Column I, write the names of candidates for the position identified above.

In Column II, write the names of candidates according to the numbers they selected in the first drawing and, therefore, in the order in which they will select their preferred lectern or seat.

In Column III, write the names of candidates according to the numbers they selected in the second drawing and, therefore, in the order in which they will select the order in which they will deliver opening and closing statements and answer questions.

I. Names of candidates	II. Order drawn for lectern/seat	III. Order drawn for presentation
1	1	1
2	2	2

Instructions: In the order listed (1-2) in Column III, candidates will write their names to reflect the order in which they will make **either** the opening or the closing statement. Then, in reverse order (2-1), candidates will write their names to indicate the order in which they will deliver the other statement.

IV. Order of opening statement	V. Order of closing statements
1	1
2	2

Questions: Q1 will be answered in the same order as the opening statements were delivered, beginning with Candidate 1. Q2 will be answered in that order, but beginning with Candidate 2. The process will continue, with Candidate 1 answering odd-numbered questions first (1, 3, 5, 7) and Candidate 2 answering even-numbered questions first.

Panelist 1 will ask Q1, Q2 and Q6 first, and Panelist 2 will ask Q3, Q4 and Q5 first. If there is time for one more question, the moderator will decide which panelist will ask another question, or the moderator may ask one.

Forum Agenda: Order of Presentation, lectern/seat for Three-Candidate Races

Position sought _____ Precinct _____ Three candidates _____

Instructions: Candidates in each race will participate in two drawings. Results will determine the order in which they will select their preferred lecterns/seats and their orders of presentation.

In Column I, write the names of candidates for the position identified above.

In Column II, write the names of candidates according to the numbers they selected in the first drawing and, therefore, in the order in which they will select their preferred lectern or seat.

In Column III, write the names of candidates according to the numbers they selected in the second drawing and, therefore, in the order in which they will select the order in which they will deliver opening and closing statements and answer questions.

I. Names of candidates	II. Order drawn for seat selection	III. Order drawn for presentation
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3

Instructions: In the order listed (1-3) in Column II, candidates will write their names to reflect the order in which they will select preferred seats. Then, in the order listed (1-3) in Column III, they will select the order in which to make **either** the opening or closing statement. Finally, Candidate 3 will get the first choice of the options left for statements, and the other candidates will be assigned the only available options for them.

IV. Order of opening statement	V. Order of closing statements
1	1
2	2
3	3

Questions: Q1 will be answered in the same order as the opening statements were delivered, beginning with Candidate 1. Q2 will be answered in that order, but beginning with Candidate 2, and Q3 will be answered in the same order, but beginning with Candidate 3. The process will continue,

If there are two panelists, Panelist 1 will ask odd-numbered questions, and Panelist 2 will ask even-numbered questions. This will result in each candidate having the opportunity to answer a question first.

Forum Agenda: Order of Presentation, seat for Multiple Candidate Races (4 or more)

Position sought _____ Precinct _____ # of candidates _____

Instructions: Candidates in each race will participate in two drawings. Results will determine the order in which they will select their preferred seats and their orders of presentation.

In Column I, write the names of candidates for the position identified above.

In Column II, write the names of candidates according to the numbers they selected in the first drawing and, therefore, in the order in which they will select their preferred seats.

In Column III, write the names of candidates according to the numbers they selected in the second drawing and, therefore, in the order in which they will select the order in which they will deliver opening and closing statements and answer questions.

I. Names of candidates	II. Order drawn for seats	III. Order drawn for presentation
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	3
4	4	4
5	5	5

Instructions: In the order listed (1-5) in Column III, candidates will write their names to reflect the order in which they will make **either** the opening or the closing statement. Then, in reverse order (5-1), candidates will write their names to indicate the order in which they will deliver the other statement.

IV. Order of opening statement	V. Order of closing statements
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

Questions: Q1 will be answered in the same order as the opening statements were delivered, beginning with Candidate 1. Q2 will be answered in that order, but beginning with Candidate 2. The process will continue, with each question being answered first by the next candidate in numerical order.