



Electronic Communication Between City Council and Staff

January 13, 2022

The following guidelines are intended to facilitate effective communication between city councilmembers and staff that respect the council's authority to determine city policy while enabling the staff to successfully allocate time and resources to carry out the operation of city services.

All emails -- To help us more efficiently respond to Council emails, please direct all communications to the city administrator. If your question pertains to a particular department, please also include the department director. Therefore, all questions regarding departments overseen by the city administrator should be sent to the city administrator and the department director with a cc to the assistant city administrator and executive secretary (wynnette). For all questions regarding departments overseen by the assistant city administrator, please send to the assistant city administrator and the department director and cc the city administrator and executive secretary.

Communications specifically pertaining to council meetings and work session agenda packets, minutes, meeting time, location and technology should be sent to the city clerk and deputy clerk with a cc to the city administrator and assistant city administrator.

All questions and answers that pertain to the council as a whole should be shared with the full council. This will allow everyone to benefit from the information and reduce duplicate questions and answers.

Please do not email staff below department directors. The administration and director will determine which staff is best suited to respond to inquiries and promptly forward your email to that person if needed. Employees typically drop what they are doing to be responsive to council requests. Sending inquiries to non-directors can cause inefficiencies and make it harder for supervisors to manage staff workloads and duties.

Questions critical to agenda item decisions – We will work diligently to provide responses as soon as possible. Questions received during the work week will typically receive a response before the weekend. Questions received over the weekend will be responded to on Monday.

Urgent questions – We will do our best to answer urgent questions as soon as possible. Please feel free to call or text me (and/or Kevin) if an email requires urgent attention.

Questions from citizens – Councilmembers should be clear regarding who they would like to communicate with the citizen: the councilmember or a staff person. Please avoid looping citizens into email strings as often staff members need to coordinate with one another to provide a thorough and accurate response, and this is more difficult when citizens are included in the email thread. (You can email the citizen separately to let them know you have asked staff to help answer their question.) Once the response is determined to be accurate, staff can send it directly to the citizen and/or the councilmember, whichever you prefer.

Operational questions – Before asking operational questions, please consider how much time will be needed to answer them and if they relate to larger policy-level issues or day-to-day matters better left to staff.

Weekly Report - To prevent general questions that are not time-sensitive from interfering with other priorities, we will be answering them in my brief Weekly Report as much as possible. This will allow everyone to benefit from the information. With few exceptions, the staff and I develop the weekly written report. The mayor and council are the primary audience. It is purposely concise and meant to cover highlights of the week and critical meetings scheduled for the next week. The reports, which are posted on our website and available to the public, also function as a record that we can refer to when needed.

Department Reporting Responsibilities -- All department directors report directly to either the city administrator or assistant city administrator as follows. The city's email protocol for staff is last name first initial @billingsmt.gov

City Administrator – Chris Kukulski

- Assistant City Administrator – Kevin Iffland
- Finance Director – Andy Zoeller
- City Attorney – Gina Dahl
- Human Resources Director – Karla Stanton
- Public Works Director – Debi Meling
- Planning and Community Services Director – Wyeth Friday
- City Clerk – Denise Bohlman
- Public Information Officer – Victoria Hill
- Administrative Assistant – wynnette Maddox

Assistant City Administrator – Kevin Iffland

- Fire Chief – Pepper Valdez
- Police Chief – Rich St. John
- Aviation and Transit Director – Kevin Ploehn
- Information Technology Director – David Watterson
- Parks, Recreation and Public Lands Director – Mike Whitaker
- City-County Library Director – Gavin Woltjer
- Chief Building and Facilities Manager – Jessica Iverson
- Parking Division Manager – Tracy Scott
- Fleet Services Div. Manager – Mark Balt

Thank you for your leadership as we work together to help our city thrive.