

## **POLICE & FIRE DEPARTMENT RETIREMENT PLAN BOARD COMMUNICATIONS POLICY**

### **BACKGROUND**

- 1) The Board is committed to ensuring effective communications among board members, and with Staff, plan members and their beneficiaries (“Plan Members”), vendors and stakeholders, including but not limited to City Council, City Administration, employer/employee organizations, and the media (“Stakeholders”). This policy provides guidance in support of this commitment.
- 2) The Board’s communication efforts will be guided by the following principles:
  - a) One Voice: To the extent possible the Board will strive to communicate clearly and consistently as a single, unified body.
  - b) A Policy Focus: The Board’s role in communications will emphasize establishing the Board Communications Policy, and advising staff with respect to communication plans or other strategic communications, and monitoring implementation. Day-to-day communications involving Plan Members and Stakeholders will occur primarily through Staff.
  - c) Transparency: The Board will strive to be as open as is practical in its communications among board members, and with staff, Plan Members, and stakeholders. Furthermore, it will at all times act in accordance with Open Meetings Laws.
  - d) Risk Control: In all of its communication activities, the Board will strive to minimize the risk of inaccurate, inconsistent, or unauthorized communications, as such communications may cause harm to the Plan, Plan Members or Stakeholders, or negatively impact the Board’s or the Plan’s credibility and external relationships. The need to control such risks will be balanced against board members’ individual rights of free expression.

### **GUIDELINES**

#### *Spokesperson*

- 3) The Board’s General Counsel will serve as spokesperson for the Plan.
- 4) The spokesperson will communicate only those positions that have been decided by the Board or that reflect the official views or policies of the Board.
- 5) When acting in a spokesperson capacity, the General Counsel will take all reasonable efforts to discuss sensitive issues with the Board prior to communicating them externally.

#### *Communication among Board Members*

- 6) Board members will at all times communicate with one another, with staff, and with stakeholders in a professional, respectful, and constructive manner.
- 7) Board members are expected to communicate to the Board any information they may possess that may be pertinent to decisions or actions of a fiduciary nature that are before the Board.
- 8) Board members shall be familiar with and comply with all applicable open meeting legislation including the Ralph M. Brown Act, California Government Code Section 54950, et. seq., which requires that, among numerous other things, (a) board members shall not conduct or participate in serial meetings one at a time or in a group that in total constitutes a quorum of the Board or committee of the Board either directly or through intermediaries or electronic devices, and (b) Board members shall not disclose to others any confidential information provided to them in closed session.

*Communication with City Council and City Administration*

- 9) The Board will provide timely public notice to the City Council and the City Administration of relevant issues on the Board's agenda. Additional communications may be provided through the non-voting board member, and spokespersons.

*Communication with Staff*

- 10) The Board recognizes that its authority rests with the Board itself and not with individual board members. Accordingly, requests by individual board members for information that require a material expenditure of staff time or external resources should be requested at board or committee meetings and require board or committee authorization or approval.
- 11) To support transparency and coordination of activities and resources, material communications between board members and staff are expected to occur through the Director of Retirement Services, Chief Operating Officer, and/or the Chief Investment Officer. Board members are expected to inform the Director of all material communications they may have with these and other staff of the Plan.

*Communication with Plan Members and Beneficiaries*

- 12) When communicating with Plan Members, board members will be sensitive to the risk of communicating inaccurate information and the potential harm that may result to Plan Members from such communications. Board members will mitigate this risk by refraining from providing advice, counsel, or technical education with respect to the rights or benefits a Plan Member may be entitled to under the plan provisions. Board members instead will direct Plan Members with personal benefit-related questions to the Plan office or website, or directly to senior management of the Plan.
- 13) A board member shall not have an ex parte communication on the merits of a quasi-adjudicative application made to the Board, such as an application for disability retirement, with any party or their attorney.

*Communication with Vendors and the Media*

- 14) Board member contact with vendors of the Plan should be limited to Board or Committee meetings, or arranged through Staff. Any material communications pertaining to the business of the Plan between a board member and a vendor outside of this context should be disclosed to the Board Chair and the Director. Where the material communication is between the Board Chair and a vendor, such disclosure shall be made to the Vice Chair and the Director.
- 15) In any communication with vendors, board members shall refrain from disclosing privileged information, or other information that may be perceived as granting special treatment or favoritism. Board members shall refer investment opportunities or other proposals they receive from vendors to the Director, Chief Investment Officer, or Investment Committee for investigation.
- 16) Board member communication with vendors during a solicitation for a new vendor shall be limited in accordance with the guidelines set out in Council Policy 0-35, Procurement and Contract Process Integrity and Conflict of Interest. Among other things, Council Policy 0-35 provides that after issuance of solicitations and prior to the issuance of Notice of Intended Award, board members will refer all inquiries to the Procurement Contact.
- 17) Press releases concerning the Plan will generally be the responsibility of the Spokesperson. Such releases will be shared beforehand with the Board or, if time does not permit, with the Chair.

*Communication with Other External Parties*

- 18) All Communications with regulatory authorities, civil grand juries, or investigators shall be directed to the Director and General Counsel for coordination and response, unless under the circumstances it would not be prudent to do so, in which case they shall be directed to the Chair.
- 19) When communicating with external parties on matters pertaining to the Plan:
  - a) Board members shall not communicate on behalf of the Board or the Plan unless authorized by the Board to do so, nor shall they make any remarks that a person might reasonably assume or infer represent the official position of the Board or the Plan; and
  - b) Board members shall not make any unilateral commitments on behalf of the Board or the Plan, nor give the impression of making such commitments.
- 20) The Board recognizes that board members may find themselves in situations where they are communicating publicly about issues pertaining directly or indirectly to the Police and Fire Department Retirement Plan. For example, they may be speaking on a conference panel, addressing City Council, or writing in a retiree newsletter. Unless the board member has been authorized by the Board to communicate on its behalf in such situations, board members shall preface their written or verbal comments with the following disclaimer (modified as appropriate for verbal versus written communications):

*I am speaking today [or writing] in my personal capacity [or in my capacity as X] and not as a member of the Board of the Police and Fire Department Retirement Plan. All opinions expressed [herein or in my presentation] are strictly my own and do not necessarily reflect the official positions or views of the Police and Fire Department Retirement Plan or its Board.*

- 21) If a board member wishes to make a public presentation or distribute publicly information about the Plan, they shall ensure that Staff and the Chair or the Board's General Counsel have reviewed and approved the accuracy of such presentation or information beforehand.
- 22) Board members should consult the Board Chair, Director, or the Board's General Counsel if they have any question about this policy or if an issue or situation arises about which the board member is uncertain how to communicate or respond.

**POLICY REVIEW & HISTORY**

- 23) The Board will review this policy at least every three (3) years.
- 24) This policy was approved by the Board on April 5, 2012.