



City of San Diego
MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 13, 2017

TO: Council President Myrtle Cole

FROM: Councilmember Scott Sherman

Councilmember Lorie Zapf

Councilmember Mark Kersey

Councilmember Chris Cate

RE: Rotating Council President Policy

Each year the City Council is required to select a Council President, who will manage the City Council for the following year. The nature of the selection process oftentimes results in a divided and bitter Council. Other consequences of the process can include allegations of Brown Act violations, horse-trading, and politicization of a largely administrative role. Due to these annual concerns and in the spirit of bipartisanship, we would recommend the Council review alternative processes.

There are several alternatives to the current process which have been used by other large cities in the United States and California. These alternative processes include having the City Manager set an agenda, having the Mayor preside over the Council meetings, or having a rotational Council President.

Locally, the County of San Diego has traditionally rotated the Board President on a yearly basis. While no policy has ever been officially created, the Board of Supervisors tradition has fostered a spirit of collaboration and bipartisanship. The City of Fresno has an established written policy that could be duplicated at the City of San Diego. We believe that such a policy would depoliticize the Council President selection process and increase the efficiency and cohesion of the City.

We respectfully request that an item be docketed at the first City Council meeting of 2018 for discussion. Thank you for your consideration.

cc: Honorable Mayor Kevin Faulconer
Mara Elliott, City Attorney

Existing Language

4.2. Selection of the Council President

In odd-numbered years, at the first Monday Council meeting in December and in even-numbered years, at the first Council meeting held on or after the tenth day of December, the Council shall select a Council President from one of its members by majority vote of the Council. The Council President shall serve for a term of one year, commencing on the date set forth above, or until a successor is selected and qualified, whichever is later. The Council President may serve more than one term.

4.3. Selection of the Council President Pro Tem

No later than the second meeting of the Council in January of each year, the Council President shall select a Council President Pro Tem, subject to confirmation by a majority of the Council. The Council President Pro Tem shall perform all the duties of the Council President as prescribed by the City Charter or by ordinance when the President is absent or unable to perform his or her duties. The Council President Pro Tem shall serve for a term of one year, commencing on the date set forth above, or until a successor is selected and qualified, whichever is later. The Council President Pro Tem may serve more than one term.

Proposed Language

4.2 At the first Council meeting held on or after the tenth day of December, the Council shall select a Council President and Council President Pro Tem on a rotational basis. The Councilmember who served as Council President Pro Tem the previous year shall serve as Council President. The Councilmember whose seniority immediately follows that of the Council President, shall serve as Council President Pro Tem. Whenever the office of Council President Pro Tem rotates to a Councilmember who has the same amount of seniority as another Councilmember, the office shall rotate to the next Councilmember by Council District, in increasing numerical order. If a Councilmember desires not to serve as a Council President or Council President Pro Tem, the office shall rotate to the next eligible Councilmember by seniority. No Councilmember shall serve as Council President twice unless all other Councilmembers have previously served or declined.