



*City of Arts & Innovation*

# City Council Memorandum

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL** **DATE: MARCH 28, 2017**  
**FROM: CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE** **WARDS: ALL**  
**SUBJECT: FORMATION OF THE WARD ACTION TEAMS TO ADDRESS MAJOR QUALITY OF LIFE PROBLEMS**

## **ISSUE:**

Receive an update on the formation of the Ward Action Teams to address the most pressing quality of life concerns in each ward of the City.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council:

1. Receive an update on the formation of the Ward Action Teams (WAT) to address the most pressing quality of life concerns in each Ward of the City; and
2. Participate in their respective Ward Action Team meetings and assist the staff as it prioritizes concerns that impact the quality of life in their Wards.

## **BACKGROUND:**

On January 31, 2017 the Proposed Measure Z Spending Plan was presented to City Council. Specific needs were identified in this Citywide initiative that included critical non-safety service needs, critical public safety needs, quality of life issues, critical infrastructure needs and technology needs. Some of these required addition of positions.

On February 21, 2017, City Council approved the addition of a Deputy City Attorney II classification to the City Attorney's Office, to be solely dedicated to the WAT. This position was established to join the proposed Community Advocate in the City Manager's office. The Community Advocate will lead and coordinate the Ward Action Teams.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The Problem

Major quality of life issues are among the most complex of the problems facing municipal government. There is often concern over the nature of the response and the response time from

different departments when addressing problems such as homeless encampments, vagrants, blight, marijuana dispensaries, and so on. These problems usually involve more than one department of the City, and sometimes require assistance from the County of Riverside or even the State of California.

Often, the problem is being monitored by different departments each using their respective authority, methodology, and expertise. Coordination amongst departments does occur with varying degrees of success, however the lines of accountability are usually unclear causing unnecessary time delays. This is often compounded by a lack of consistent communication between the community, the community's elected official, and staff.

## The Solution

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Fortunately, lack of coordination and ownership, unclear accountability, and inadequate communication are easily solved through the creation of interdepartmental Ward Action Teams. There will be seven teams – one for each of the seven wards – with staff representation from the following Offices and Departments

1. Ward Councilmember
2. Mayor's Office
3. City Manager's Community Advocate
4. City Attorney's WAT attorney
5. Community & Economic Development Department
6. Fire Department
7. Police Department
8. Public Utilities Department
9. Public Works Department
10. Riverside County District Attorney's Office
11. Riverside County Health Department (as needed)

The primary purpose of the WAT is to improve coordination and streamline our responses to high priority quality of life cases, to prevent undue bureaucratic delay, and to produce efficient, effective results.

The City Manager's Office will convene monthly WAT meetings in close consultation with the Councilmember for each Ward. The Team will identify a list of Quality of Life concerns in that ward to be prioritized. The Team will have a collective responsibility for the resolution of those priorities and will provide an action plan with clear expectations and team member assignments.

This is a new program, NOT a new division. Aside from the coordinator and city attorney's representative, no new staff are needed. No one needs to be reassigned from their usual

responsibilities. The WAT includes staff who already have the knowledge and tools to perform the work in their respective departments. This is about coordination, streamlining, ownership, and accountability in order to handle such cases as quickly as possible and preventing the usual confusion and bureaucratic delays from occurring.

Given the concern that councilmembers have expressed in the wake of last December's Ghost Ship fire in Oakland, creating the WAT program now is especially timely. That tragedy serves as a significant case study. We already perform WAT functions, but usually in a "fire drill" mode when a situation has reached critical mass of complaints and frustration. The WAT provides opportunity to work proactively and directly with the Councilmember to help prioritize the most important concerns in their Wards, and to address those concerns in a timely manner.

## Funding

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The City Attorney's Office requested, and was approved, additional funding for a Deputy City Attorney II dedicated solely to the WAT. There will also be the proposed Community Advocate in the City Manager's office. The other City departments will absorb the cost within their existing budget appropriations for staff participation with the Ward Action Teams.

## **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact with this update.

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availability of funds:	Scott G. Miller, PhD., Chief Financial Officer/City Treasurer
Approved by:	John Russo, City Manager
Approved as to form:	Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Attachment:	Participation Letter from District Attorney Hestrin
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