



PROCEDURES REGARDING PRAYERS AND INVOCATIONS AT CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT/ DIVISION	City Secretary	
EFFECTIVE DATE	February 1, 2019	LAST UPDATED
AUTHORITY	Executive Policy Handbook - VII.G.	

I. BACKGROUND

The Killeen City Council, which is an elected legislative and deliberative public body, has a long-standing practice of opening its meetings with an invocation or prayer. Prayer before deliberative public bodies has been consistently upheld as constitutional by American courts including the United States Supreme Court, most recently in the 2014 case of *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, as it tends to lend gravity to public business, remind lawmakers to transcend petty differences in pursuit of a higher purpose, and express a common aspiration to a just a peaceful society.

The City Council intends, and has intended in past practice, to adopt a policy that upholds an individual's "free exercise" rights under the First Amendment. Furthermore, the City Council intends, and has intended in past practice, to adopt a policy that does not proselytize or advance any faith or belief, or show any purposeful preference of one religious view to the exclusion of others.

II. PROCEDURES

A. NO REQUIREMENT TO PARTICIPATE

No member of the City Council, city employee, or any other person in attendance at a meeting shall be required to participate in any prayer or invocation that is offered. Everyone will be treated equally in all respects whether they choose to participate, or not participate, in the prayer or invocation.

B. PRAYER OR INVOCATION

The prayer or invocation shall be voluntarily delivered by a minister of an



established congregation located within the City of Killeen or a layperson who resides within the City of Killeen (“speaker”). This opportunity is voluntary, and speakers are free to offer the invocation according to the dictates of his or her own conscience. To maintain a spirit of respect, the City Council requests only that the prayer or invocation opportunity not be exploited as an effort to convert others to the particular faith or belief of the speaker, nor to disparage any faith or belief different from that of the speaker. Speakers are asked to limit their prayers or invocations to two (2) minutes.

C. PROCESS FOR CONGREGATIONS

1. The City Secretary shall compile and maintain a database (the “Congregations List”) of religious congregations with an established presence in Killeen.
2. The Congregations List shall be compiled by referencing the listing for “churches,” “congregations” or other religious assemblies in the annual Yellow Pages phone book published for the City of Killeen, research from the Internet, and/or consultation with the Killeen Chamber of Commerce. All religious congregations with an established presence in Killeen are eligible to be included in the Congregations List, and any such congregation can confirm its inclusion by written request to the Clerk.
3. The Congregations List may also include the name and contact information of any chaplain who may serve the fire or police departments of the City of Killeen or Ft. Hood.
4. The Congregations List shall be updated, by reasonable efforts of the City Secretary, in November of each calendar year.
5. Within thirty (30) days of the effective date of this policy, and on or about December 1 of each calendar year thereafter, the City Secretary shall mail or email an invitation addressed to the “religious leader” of each congregation listed on the Congregations List, as well as to the individual chaplains included on the Congregations List.

D. PROCESS FOR LAYPERSONS

Citizens of the City of Killeen who wish to deliver a prayer or invocation at a Council Meeting are invited to contact the City Secretary for inclusion on the “Laypersons List.” In December of each calendar year, or within thirty (30) days of the effective date of the policy, the City shall publish an invitation for speakers to contact the City



Secretary to be included on the speaker's list.

E. SCHEDULING

Prayer and invocation-givers are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis, and may specify a preference for a specific council meeting, if desired.

If the selected speaker does not appear at the scheduled meeting, the Mayor may ask for a volunteer from among the audience to deliver the invocation or prayer. If no member of the audience is available, the Mayor may ask a Councilmember to give the invocation or prayer.

F. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. No speaker shall receive compensation for his or her service.
2. The City Secretary shall make a reasonable effort to ensure that a variety of eligible speakers are scheduled for the City Council meetings. In any event, no speaker shall be scheduled to offer a prayer or invocation at consecutive meetings of the City Council, or at more than two (2) City Council meetings in any calendar year.
3. Neither the City Council, nor any staff member, may engage in any prior inquiry, review of, or involvement in the content of any prayer or invocation to be offered by any speaker.
4. This policy shall also apply to all Boards, Commissions and Committees of the City of Killeen.
5. This policy is not intended, and shall not be implemented or construed in any way, to affiliate the City Council with, nor express the City Council's preference for, any faith, belief, or religious denomination. Rather, this policy is intended to acknowledge and express the City Council's respect for the diversity of denominations, faiths, and beliefs represented and practiced among the citizens of Killeen.