



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Councilmember Bien Doan
Councilmember Pamela Campos

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: June 6, 2025

Approved

Date:

**SUBJECT: Approve an Ordinance Establishing a “Pay for Performance”
Process for the Mayor and City Council**

RECOMMENDATION

Reject the “Pay for Performance” evaluation process for Mayor and City Councilmembers.

ANALYSIS

City Councilmembers are elected by the public to represent the public. Tying compensation to performance metrics shifts the accountability model from democratic elections to technocratic scorecards. Voters already have the power to reward or punish elected officials through the ballot box by awarding a second term or recalling an elected official who has failed to represent adequately. Tying finances to public service blurs the line between public service and public gain, weakening the foundational principle of representative government.

Additionally, performance in local governance is notoriously difficult to measure. Many of the outcomes elected officials are tasked with delivering are influenced by factors far beyond our control, including federal and state policies, market forces, and long-term infrastructure constraints. A poorly calibrated metric system risks rewarding superficial wins or penalizing those who pursue meaningful, long-term reforms that may not fit neatly into a dashboard.

The proposal’s performance metrics are still being designed. There is no clear, transparent, or democratic process in place to define these goals or evaluate them. Who decides what success looks like? Who ensures the metrics are unbiased, reflective

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of our values, and do not incentivize performative governance over principled decision-making?

Although the City Manager is tasked with presenting performance assessments, their role is ultimately subject to Council review. This structure creates a conflict of interest, where a majority on the Council could exert influence over which metrics are chosen, shaping evaluations in ways that may align with their agenda while sidelining dissenting voices.

Moreover, elected officials must be free to represent minority communities and dissenting views without fear of institutional pressure. Even though the proposal ties performance pay to collective metrics, it still risks reinforcing groupthink, pushing Councilmembers to conform in order to protect the Council's overall score. True representation requires the freedom to challenge the status quo, especially when standing up for marginalized or minority communities, or long-term needs which may not show immediate results.

While holding public officials accountable is essential, performance-based pay is not the answer. This City Council has long supported transparency, regular audits, and open data to assess progress. But true accountability lies with the voters, not with spreadsheets.

The signers of this memorandum have not had, and will not have, any private conversation with any other member of the City Council, or that member's staff, concerning any action discussed in the memorandum; and each signer's staff members have not had, and have been instructed not to have, any such conversation with any other member of the City Council or that member's staff.