COUNCIL AGENDA: 4/17/2018
ITEM: 3.12 (File ID: 18-567)

CITY OF SAN JOSE
CAPITAL OF SILICON VALLEY

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Toni J. Taber, CMC
City Clerk

SUBJECT: **SEE BELOW**

DATE: April 12, 2018

SUBJECT: Sister Cities Travel Policy.

RECOMMENDATION: As referred to City Council, without recommendation, by the two councilmembers present at the Rules and Open Government Committee on April 11, 2018: Direct staff to amend the Council Travel Policy (9-5) to include the following regarding all City Council travel to Sister Cities:
(a) If the Mayor is unavailable to join a Sister City or official delegation overseas, (s)he may nominate a single member of the Council to represent the City, subject to Council approval.
(b) If public funding is to be used for that travel, more than one member of the Council may participate in such delegations only with formal Council approval. Additional Councilmembers may participate only if they identify a non-public, lawful source of funding.
(c) Councilmembers shall not use public dollars to bring additional City Council staff along as part of an international delegation.

RULES COMMITTEE: 4-11-18
ITEM: G.4
File ID: 18-224

CITY OF SAN JOSE
CAPITAL OF SILICON VALLEY

Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Mayor Sam Liccardo

SUBJECT: **SISTER CITIES TRAVEL POLICY**

DATE: April 5, 2018

APPROVED: 4-5-2018

RECOMMENDATION

Direct staff to amend the Council Travel Policy (9-5) to include the following regarding all City Council travel to Sister Cities:

1. If the Mayor is unavailable to join a Sister City or official delegation overseas, (s)he may nominate a single member of the Council to represent the City, subject to Council approval.
2. If public funding is to be used for that travel, more than one member of the Council may participate in such delegations only with formal Council approval. Additional Councilmembers may participate only if they identify a non-public, lawful source of funding.
3. Councilmembers shall not use public dollars to bring additional City Council staff along as part of an international delegation.

BACKGROUND

Travel can be a benefit for the City in fostering economic relationships, learning from best practices abroad, and building cultural bridges.

Council Policy 9-5 provides that "Travel by City officers and employees is an appropriate activity and expenses when performed for a public purpose. Requests for travel shall be limited to events from which the City derives specific benefits through attendance of a City representative…." The policy further provides how members of the Council should minimize the cost of such travel, document expenses, and ensure appropriate use of public dollars.

I have taken the opportunity to travel internationally when funded by non-profit organizations or other international non-governmental agencies--such as Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Sustainable Cities Network, or the Knight Foundation--where strategically aligned with key priorities, such as transit development, Smart City initiatives, and environmental sustainability.

I appreciate that other members of the Council will choose to do the same where appropriate. I also appreciate the conscientiousness of those who, like Councilmember Khamis on this April trip to Japan, chose to pay for travel out of their own pocket to avoid the public expense. Good sense and adherence to the existing City Policy has generally ensured that we avoid "junkets."

However, two concerns have arisen recently. First, the prospect of five councilmembers participating on a single trip has interrupted City business. It has constrained our agendizing substantive or controversial subjects on the April 10th Council meeting. It forced the cancellation of a Neighborhood Services Committee meeting, deferring deliberation on items relating to homelessness, afterschool programs, other issues, and a study session was also rescheduled. Interrupting meetings for lobbying trips to Sacramento or Washington may understandably have superseding priority—for example, to obtain critical resources for our City. Travel on "Sister City" trips is substantially less compelling as a public priority, however.

In prior years, the Council avoided uncomfortable public discussions about which Councilmembers would participate on such trips by implementing an informal process of Mayoral appointment of the City's representative, given the designation by Section 501 of the City Charter of the Mayor as the city's "political leader." I'm fine with the idea of returning to that approach. Alternatively, I've proposed in this memorandum a more formal process, to be inserted into Council Policy 9-5, to allow designation of the City's representative by the Mayor, subject to approval of the Council.

Second, I have concerns about the public expenditure of dollars for multiple members of the Council and staff to participate on the same trip. If we are to use public funds for this purpose, we must do so strategically, viewing these trips through the lens of our hard-working residents who are paying for them. The public justifiably sees declining marginal returns with the attendance of each additional member.

On several occasions in recent years—the 2008 Measure B, 2010 Measure B, 2016 June Measure B, the 2016 November Measure G, and 2016 November Measure B—I have led or co-led efforts to ask our voters to pay more out of their pockets for police, roads, transit, and other critical public services. The first question every pollster asks in the preparation for such campaigns focuses on their trust and job approval of the Council and Mayor. On each of those prior occasions, our voters supported these measures because they trusted that we would use their money appropriately. That trust is vital to our ability to do our jobs, and to serve our residents. I urge that we enact some minor reforms in the policy to ensure that we preserve that trust.