



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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Riverside Mayor calls for decorum at City Council meetings

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Mayor Ron Loveridge, a proponent for open governance, is working with City Manager Scott Barber and Chief of Police Sergio Diaz to clarify the roles and responsibilities of elected officials and staff in carrying out the decorum rules at public meetings. This follows an incident this Tuesday involving a regular speaker at Riverside City Council meetings.

The Riverside Police Department is preparing a draft policy to provide response guidelines for the police personnel that staff City Council meetings. The new protocol gives the meeting chair, generally the Mayor or Mayor Pro Tem, the sole authority to have someone removed from a meeting for violations of decorum. Security issues will be handled by the Police Department.

Mayor Loveridge said, “The City Council and I continue to encourage public comment as part of our open process”. He also stated that it wouldn’t have been appropriate to intervene on Tuesday once the officers took over the situation and that “We stand behind the officer”.

Chief Diaz said he is recommending that the protocol include specific language the presiding officer would read to let the speaker and police officers know what steps would be taken if the disruption continues.

The incident that prompted the new rule occurred at an October 23 City Council meeting during the evening session. A City Council regular who routinely disrupts the Council meetings by exceeding speaking times and violates other meeting rules, such as shouting from the audience or talking on a cell phone, refused again on this day to comply with the rules and failed to cooperate with repeated – more than 16 - requests by the Mayor to bring her comments to a close. She also refused to comply with requests by a police officer to take her seat and then to step outside that ultimately resulted in her arrest and a misdemeanor citation.

The speaker was released within approximately 15 minutes. She spoke 6 times on October 23 and despite her allegation that she was being censored, she was allowed to speak 2 additional times following her citation.

The clarification of protocol will help maintain decorum at the meetings and allow the Mayor and Council more time to focus on business issues.

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