



City of Arts & Innovation

News Release

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City of Riverside to Guarantee 12 Days Public Notice of Upcoming Meetings

“Sunshine Ordinance” enshrines 12-day notice in municipal code; quadruples state requirement

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The City of Riverside, which earlier this summer announced plans to require 12 days of public notice before City Council and other public meetings, rather than the state-required three days, is set to cement those changes in its government culture through the creation of a “Sunshine Ordinance.”

The ordinance, which is scheduled for City Council consideration on Sept. 22, would require by law that agendas be available 12 days prior to meetings of the City Council and the City Council’s standing committees, as well as the citizen-led Planning Commission, Board of Public Utilities and Community Police Review Commission.

The notice requirement for a special meeting, which typically deals with issues of an urgent nature, would be increased from 24 hours to five days.

The ordinance is being proposed by City Attorney Gary G. Geuss, City Clerk Colleen J. Nicol and City Manager John A. Russo. Geuss noted that the ordinance strengthens changes Russo announced earlier this summer by administrative direction as the City’s top executive.

“The City Manager, City Clerk and I have been leading the charge for transparency in Riverside for several months now, and Mayor Bailey and the City Council have enthusiastically embraced these reforms,” Geuss said. “This ordinance will ensure those changes remain in place long after all of us are no longer working at City Hall.”

The changes are designed to provide the public with more time to examine proposals that are coming before the City Council for its consideration. Russo has said that the additional time will improve the public discourse in Riverside by giving people more time to read, digest and discuss forthcoming issues.

“For a democracy to be truly representative, the people must have an opportunity to fully review and question the proposed actions of their government,” Russo said. “Our ideas must be fully vetted before the City Council is asked to vote on them, and this ordinance will ensure that happens.”

The ordinance also requires that materials that are going to be used by the local body to make a decision be part of the agenda packet that is available to the public 12 days in advance of a regular meeting and 5 days before a special meeting.

Agendas and materials can be amended and supplemented no later than 72 hours before a regular meeting and only under specific circumstances, including:

- To add an item due to an emergency or urgency, provided the local body makes the findings required under the Municipal Code.
- To delete or withdraw an item.
- To provide additional information to supplement previously-provided material, as long as the new material was not known or considered to be relevant at the time the agenda was originally composed.

“This new ordinance makes clear more than ever how serious Riverside is about transparency in government,” Mayor Rusty Bailey said. “These changes are historic and will ensure that Riverside has an open and transparent government for generations to come.”