

# CITY OF SAN RAFAEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



Policy No.	
Subject:	Public Correspondence Policy
Resolution No.	
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Prepared By	Rebecca Woodbury
Approved By:	Nancy Mackle

## PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE POLICY

**PURPOSE:** The goal of this policy is to ensure that City staff responds to phone calls, letters and emails from the public in a timely manner.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** All employees of the City of San Rafael.

**BACKGROUND:** Departments receive correspondence and inquiries from the public in a variety of ways, including phone calls, emails, letters, and "Contact Us" forms generated by the City website. In addition, the City Manager's Office often acts as a clearinghouse for many forms of public correspondence, including correspondence that has been sent to the City Council. Often, correspondence received by the City Manager's Office warrants a response from another department.

The intent of this policy is to ensure that correspondence from the public is responded to in a timely manner and that the City Council is copied on all correspondence sent on their behalf.

Applications for various City services and Public Records Requests have separate and specific response rules. Please consult with the City Attorney's Office for such rules and procedures. This policy does not apply to inquiries made in-person.

**POLICY:** City staff will respond to all phone calls, letters, and emails from the public within 48 hours (or 2 business days) of receipt. This policy does not apply to Public Records Requests or Applications.

### PROCEDURE:

- Department Directors should designate a primary contact and alternate staff person(s) for "Contact Us" forms and other correspondence. This can be done at the departmental level (e.g. anything related to your department is forwarded to X) or topic level (e.g. anything related to graffiti is forwarded to X).
- City Manager's Office will route public correspondence to the appropriate staff and track responses on behalf of the City Council.
- Staff will respond to all messages within 48 hours of send time. For messages sent over weekends and holidays, staff will respond within 48 hours of 8 a.m. of the first work day back. If a full response will take more time, staff will send a reply to the sender that a response is being formulated. Example message: "Thank you for your email. Staff is currently researching your issue and will get back to you by [date]." If the original message was sent to the City Council,

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but will take longer than 48 hours to formulate an appropriate response, please send a message similar to: "Thank you for your message. The City Council and Mayor have received your message and have asked for staff to respond on their behalf. I have forwarded your message onto the appropriate staff. Someone will respond to your question or concern shortly." In addition, let them know any other pertinent details such as if you or someone else will be their point of contact and what departments you are working with to develop your response.

- If an inquiry includes multiple concerns beyond the expertise of one staff member (for example, a person asks a question about parking and a question about a building permit), decide on one point of contact to work with appropriate staff to put together the response.
- If the nature of the correspondence is simply to register opposition or support on an agenda item for the City Council or any boards and commissions, staff will not issue a response. If appropriate, staff will collect and retain for project purposes.

### General Email Rules:

- Include Mayor and Councilmembers as a bcc on all messages originally sent to "All City Councilmembers." Include [city.manager@cityofsanrafael.org](mailto:city.manager@cityofsanrafael.org) as a bcc on all responses.
- When emailing 3 or more members of the City Council, always bcc them. This ensures they do not violate the Brown Act by responding via the "Reply All" function. Always use City email addresses for City Councilmembers, as opposed to their home email addresses.
- Include message id # in the subject line of all correspondence originating from a "Contact Us" form:

Subject: Copy of Council Contact - All City Councilmembers - 7580582

- Enable an out-of-office reply when out of the office for more than one day (does not include weekends).
- Departments may work with IT to customize the auto-reply text for their "Contact Us" forms.

### **ATTACHMENT:**

1. Department / Topic designated contacts
2. All City Councilmembers Auto-Reply Text

### **APPROVED BY:**



**Nancy Mackle, City Manager**

02-03-2015

**Date**