



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:
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Agenda Item Number: 4

Agenda Date: January 25, 2023

In Control: Governance Committee Meeting

DEPARTMENT: Office of Mayor and Council

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Emily McGinn

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Amendment of the City of San Antonio City Council Project Funds Ordinance

SUMMARY:

The City Council Project Funds Ordinance (CCPF) limits City Council members' expenditures during the election season by a moratorium on certain expenses. During election years, between the months of February through June, Councilmembers may not exceed the amount spent for binding and printing, mail and parcel post, and advertising and publications during the same period in a non-election year. Councilmembers use their budgeted binding and printing, mail and parcel post, and advertising and publications funds as well as carry-forward funds, to send newsletters and other communications to their constituents during the year. Given the fluctuations in individual Council office expenditures over the calendar year and the disparity between spending between respective Council offices, the direct comparison to the same months in the previous year may not be the optimal way to address election time spending. This item recommends options to amend the CCPF ordinance to expand the funds available to continue communication practices

during the moratorium period.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

To avoid the appearance of providing public funds to officeholders who are also candidates for elected office to use as campaign opportunities, the CCPF ordinance limits the City Council members' expenditures during the election season. Please note that the actual spending of public funds for campaign purposes is strictly prohibited by law. During election years, between the months of February through June, Councilmembers may not exceed the amount spent for binding and printing, mail and parcel post, and advertising and publications during the same period in a non-election year. Councilmembers use their budgeted binding and printing, mail and parcel post, and advertising and publications funds as well as carry-forward funds, to send newsletters and other communications to their constituents during the year.

ISSUE:

The moratorium on these expenses has resulted in some Councilmembers not having funds available to send communications to their constituents in the manner they have established over the course of the calendar year prefer and in some instances dramatically reducing the content and scope of communications.

During the moratorium calculation period of 2022, February through June, the City Council members spent a range between just over \$300 to over \$7,500 on binding and printing, mail and parcel post, and advertising and publications.

An option to address this funding issue is to amend the moratorium formula to use the average monthly binding and printing, mail and parcel post, and advertising and publications expense across Council Districts to create a spending limit based on that amount over the five-month period of February to June 2023. In the alternative, a Council District could use the aggregate City Council average or the average their District spent in 2022, whichever is higher. The average spent by the Council in the aggregate is \$1,842.66 per month, for an available funding during the moratorium of \$9,213.30. Using the revised formula results in a range of \$9,213.30 to \$36,570.82 for the moratorium allowance.

FISCAL IMPACT:

No immediate fiscal impact.

ALTERNATIVES:

City Council can choose to leave the moratorium in place, select one or the other of the options above, or arrive at a different option of their choice.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City council consider revising the CCPF ordinance and the moratorium formula by selecting one of the options above to either permit each Council District to spend the average of the expenses for the entire Council during all of 2022, or to spend the average their District spent, whichever is higher.