Guidelines for Preparing
Mayoral Commendations and Proclamations
Office of Mayor Sam Liccardo

Updated January 5, 2017

An official commendation from the Mayor and Council is a special honor to the people who receive them. Many recipients proudly display the commendation in a lobby display case, or hang it in a place of honor in the office or home. Commendations must be appropriately researched, gracefully written, and properly produced.

To accomplish this goal, adequate time for preparation and review must be given, both by the requestors and by Council/Mayoral staff. A quality job that represents the high standards of the Mayor, Council, and City of San José cannot happen if commendations are rushed.

Based on our experience with real-time requirements, we have prepared guidelines to help Council offices, City departments, and the Mayor's Office to produce ceremonial documents in which we all can take pride.

Timelines for Preparing Commendations/Proclamations to be presented AT City Council meetings:

- Up to three commendations and/or proclamations will be presented at each afternoon meeting. The Mayor's Agenda Services Manager (ASM) coordinates the calendar for ceremonials to be presented during Council meeting. Please contact ASM to secure your desired presentation date.

- Once you've booked the meeting date for your ceremonial item, turn in agenda language to the City Clerk's office via Agendadesk. It is best to do this two weeks ahead of your presentation date, however, the final deadline for turning in agenda language is 11 a.m. on the Wednesday prior to the desired date for your ceremonial.

    - Please keep in mind that each Council office can schedule at most 2 ceremonial items for each day that council meets (afternoon and evening sessions count as the same day). Adjournments *do not* count toward this limit.

- To allow adequate time for review and processing, a **formatted** draft of the commendation or proclamation itself must be received by ASM in the Mayor's Office on the Tuesday two weeks prior to the agendized meeting date.

- Commendation drafts will be edited for content, language, and format by the Mayor's Office. If sufficient lead-time is provided by the requestor, these revisions can be reviewed by the requestor. Otherwise, **the changes by the Mayor's Office are final.**

- The Mayor's Office will print the final document and obtain the Mayor's signature. If there is sufficient time, the Mayor's Office will place the document on our counter to facilitate gathering signatures, however, it is the responsibility of the requesting Council Office to get any additional signatures needed, along with necessary seals, ribbons, folder, frame, and related materials.

- Please check the schedule for holidays, long agendas, and other factors that may affect deadlines and prep time and plan accordingly.

Scheduling and Preparing Invocations

- Invocations should brief, thoughtful and appropriate for the occasion. Over the course of the year invocations are expected to reflect the diversity of San José.

- Submit your district's list of invocators selected for your assigned month to ASM and Agendadesk by the 15th of the preceding month.

- Along with the name of the individual or group providing the invocation, provide information detailing how many participants there will be, what equipment they will need or be bringing and what set up, if any, is required. City Hall Event Services should be notified of preliminary set-up needs at least 5 days before the Council Meeting (advance notice is preferred). Final set-up needs should be coordinated no later than the Friday before the meeting.

- Due to space, time limitations, fire code regulations, and security the maximum number of participants is 20. Invocations involving significant set up and take down time are discouraged.

- Total time for an invocation shall not exceed 5 minutes, including introductions, entering, exiting and take down.

- Council offices are encouraged to provide a copy of these guidelines to invocators.

Adjournments

- Council meetings may be adjourned to commemorate and honor the life of someone who has died.

- Adjournments honor a lifetime. For that reason, only one will be scheduled per meeting.

- The Agenda Services Manager maintains the schedule for adjournments. Ideally, adjournments will be scheduled soon after the death, however, the scheduling should defer to the wishes of the surviving loved ones.

- The Council office requesting the adjournment is responsible for sending agenda language to the City Clerk's Agendadesk.

- If the family doesn't show for the adjournment due to improper notification of the Council District staff, the adjournment may be brought forward by a different Council District.

- Ideally, adjournments will be turned in by 11 a.m. on the Wednesday prior to the Council meeting so that the name of the deceased and the adjournment language will appear on the City Council agenda. However, if no prior adjournment has been scheduled, it is possible to add an adjournment under Orders of the Day should the surviving loved ones wish to have the adjournment take place quickly.

Ceremonial Presentation During the City Council Meeting

- Presentation of Commendation or Proclamation should last no more than 4 minutes

- The order will go as follows:
    - Mayor provides a brief introduction
    - One Councilmember or City staff member provides brief remarks and asks Mayor to present commendation/proclamation
    - One recipient or representative makes brief remarks
    - Persons other than the recipient or representative may stand at the podium but may not speak
- Commendations/Proclamations during council meetings are a forum for Mayor/Councilmembers to recognize others – this is not an opportunity for people outside of the city to speak about the recipient.

- Slide shows/PowerPoint presentations are highly discouraged and will be factored into the 3- to 4-minute time limit.

- It is each Council District's responsibility to bring their commendation/proclamation to the Council meeting for presentation.

- Commendations/Proclamations will honor one entity per presentation. For example, if you want to honor your community center for being a great community center, you can give a commendation to the community center. But you cannot give a commendation to the leader of the community center for being a great leader and to the community center for its great work, at Council.

Timelines for Commendations/Proclamations to be presented in the community:

- Please submit your draft commendations/proclamations for mayoral signature to Jose Lujano and cc. Candace Le at least 5 working days prior to the event at which the commendation/proclamation will be presented. For example, a commendation to be presented at a Saturday event would need to be turned in on the Monday before.

- In a week with a Monday or Friday holiday, please add extra time and turn in commendations at least a full week in advance.

- If you are going to give a large number of commendations at an event, additional time will be needed. Please coordinate with Jose ahead of time.

- As with ceremonial documents presented at Council meetings, the Mayor's Office will review, edit, and print the final document and obtain the Mayor's signature. If there is sufficient time, the Mayor's Office will place the document on our counter to facilitate gathering signatures, however, it is the responsibility of the requesting Council Office to get any additional signatures needed, along with necessary seals, ribbons, folder, frames, and related materials.

Preparing Your Ceremonial Document

Content of Document

- Do your homework before you prepare your draft. A commendation must say that someone is wonderful, but it must also include specific reasons why and why that's relevant to the people of San José.

- The Internet is a wonderful resource for getting more information. So is the telephone. A caution, however – make sure websites are current so the information you obtain is accurate.

- If draft language or a boilerplate version is received from another source, check facts, tone, and purpose to ensure it really is appropriate for use in a commendation from the Mayor of San José.

- A commendation commends. A proclamation proclaims. Thus a commendation praises a person or group, often upon the occasion of an event or milestone; a proclamation declares a day, week, or month in honor of an issue or occasion.

- Personal milestones such as birthdays and golden anniversaries should be observed with a letter rather than a commendation or proclamation.

- We do not issue posthumous commendations.

Structure of Document

- When a commendation draft is given to ASM in the Mayor's Office, it should be already formatted using 12-point Times New Roman font and indents rather than tabs or spaces. The draft should include councilmember(s) name(s), dates, and "whereas" clauses. (See attached template).

- Any font smaller than 12-point is hard to read, if everything doesn't fit on the page, reduce the amount of content rather than reduce the size of type.

- A commendation or proclamation is actually all one sentence, so its "whereas clauses" are not separate sentences. **There should be no periods in any of the sections.**

- Each whereas clause ends with ***"; and"*** until the last one, which ends with a semicolon ***";"***

- Four four-line "whereases" in a commendation or proclamation are pretty much the maximum to fit comfortably on one page in a commendation with just the mayor's signature and your councilmember's signature. Four two-line "whereases" are the maximum that will fit on one page in a commendation with full council signature.

- The mayor and the clerk sign commendations, and generally at least one other councilmember as well. Occasionally more councilmembers will sign on. With more signatures, there is less room on the page for the commendation language itself, putting a premium on focused writing.

- Commendations not presented at Council do not have to be signed by the mayor. But be sure to check with the other council offices to ensure that no one else is doing that commendation.

Proclamations must be signed by the mayor as, by the City Code, all proclamations are mayoral proclamations.

Flow and Style of Wording

- Commendations should flow when spoken aloud, which may occur when presented at Council meetings or public events.

- Vary the start of each whereas clause to avoid the feel of a list. This is especially true for using the name of the person or group being commended.

- If the wording feels repetitive, chances are that's the case. Each whereas clause should add new information and the information within each clause should hang together.

- Use parallel structure so that your ideas flow naturally. For example, "restore, preserving and interpretation" should become "restore, preserve, and interpret," "restoration, preservation, and interpretation," or "restoring, preserving, and interpreting."

- Make sure all verb tenses are internally consistent; don't mix up past and present in the same line.

- The subject and verb should agree – either both should be plural or both should be singular. "The community are grateful" becomes "the community is grateful."

- Use the full name of an organization at the first mention, then use short forms for the second mention, and finish with the full name. If an organization's name is truly too long to repeat, shorten it to what sounds natural, so that "Older Women's Volunteer Association of Northern California" becomes "the Association."

- Avoid using acronyms or abbreviations for organization names. They are awkward and informal, unless the acronym is the common term, such as YMCA or IBM.

- Don't over capitalize. Use UPPER CASE only for proper names, and capitalize City only when it refers to the organization of the "City of San José." When referring to our city where our residents live, use lower case.

Word Choice

- Language of commendations is formal and a bit exalted, and is not conversational or casual.

- Vary the adjectives used and take advantage of the thesaurus, but make sure the adjectives add meaning. See the list of "commendable adjectives" (attached).

- Avoid using a long string of words before a possessive, i.e.: "the United States of America's position" or "the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services' programs." Instead, "the position of the United States of America" and "programs of the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood services."

- Use active voice, not passive voice: say "The honoree received the award" rather than "The award has been received by."

- Contractions are informal so do not use them.

Double Check *(before sending it to us)*

- Read the commendation aloud. This will help you catch awkward phrasing.
- Use spell check. Please.
- Make sure the date and year are correct (especially for an update of an annual event).
- Be sure that honorees' names are spelled right (as well as Councilmembers) and that you haven't left anybody out.
- Match the signature lines of all the Councilmembers signing with the names in "Now therefore" line of the commendation.

Handy List of "Commendable" Adjectives

Admirable	Marvelous
Celebrated	Noble
Committed	Note-worthy
Dedicated	Outstanding
Devoted	Prominent
Distinguished	Remarkable
Enthusiastic	Renowned
Esteemed	Respected
Excellent	Selfless
Exceptional	Special
Exemplary	Superb
Extraordinary	Supportive
Fantastic	Talented
Fine	Terrific
Great	Tremendous
Hard-working	Unique
Highly regarded	Valuable
Honorable	Venerable
Important	Well-known
Impressive	Wonderful
Invaluable	

WHEREAS: (Statement 1: Explains historical aspects such as a founding date, date of hire, etc); and.

WHEREAS: (Statements 2 and 3: Describes significant accomplishments or other important points); and

WHEREAS: (same as above); and

WHEREAS: (Statement 4: Explains the significance of the person/event to the San José community);

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Sam Liccardo, Mayor of the City of San José, together with (if appropriate) Councilmember(s) _____ and our colleagues on the City Council, on this ____ day of _____ 201_, do hereby proclaim/recognize and commend the

NAME OF ORGANIZATION / INDIVIDUAL

for its ……...

SIGNATURE BLOCK – DEPENDING ON NUMBER OF SIGNERS

Step 1:

- Adjust the margins.
  Top: 1.93" – 1.95"
  Bottom: 1"
  Left: 1.2"
  Right: 1.3"
- Adjust the font type to **Times New Roman**.
- Alignment should be **justified.**

Step 2:

- The name of the organization / individual:
  Bold
  All caps
  Size: 18 – 20 pt.
  No diacritic
- Alignment should be in the **center.**

Step 3:

- Spacing between each of the "WHEREAS" paragraphs should be 8 pt.
- Spacing above and below the name of the organization / individual should be 5 pt.

Step 4:

- If full council signature, signatures should align to the left.
- If it's not full council, indent the signature lines by **0.5 inches from the left.**
- Place on the seal and ribbon.