

Washoe County Communication Policy
Approved January 7, 2008

Introduction

The Board of County Commissioners, elected and appointed officials, and staff of Washoe County believe in simplicity, accuracy and clarity in communications with the public and each other and encourage the open exchange of ideas and information. To that end, the Board has adopted a set of standards for how communication should occur in our organization.

The Board of County Commissioners has established that only the County Manager works directly for the Commission, and the County Manager is therefore accountable for staff's performance of these standards.

1. Commissioner to Commissioner Communications

- 1.1 County Commissioners are committed to demonstrating open, honest, and respectful communications with each other and with staff and the public we all serve.
- 1.2 Communication among Commissioners outside of public meetings shall comply with the Nevada Open Meeting Law.
- 1.3 Any Commissioner may place an item on the County Commission agenda by so requesting in a public meeting or by contacting the County Manager's Office; all Commissioners will be advised by the County Manager's Office as soon as reasonably possible, of any Commissioner's request to place an item on the agenda.
- 1.4 The Chairman, or in his/her absence, the Vice Chairman, will address any issues or concerns regarding communication protocols involving other Commissioners.

2. Commissioner to Staff Communications

- 2.1 Because the Board holds the County Manager accountable to exercise the authority and responsibility to manage the staff, and in order to provide for effective communication and direction to staff, Commissioners and their support staff (Interns/Aides) will go through the County Manager or Assistant County Managers to request staff assistance or to give staff direction in appointed departments. Commissioners will go through elected department heads with any requests in their areas of responsibility. In the event of an emergency that will not permit a Commissioner to go through the Manager or Assistant Managers, Commissioners may request staff assistance or provide limited direction to Department Heads, with a copy to the County Manager as soon as is reasonably possible.
- 2.2 In no case should individual Commissioners or their support staff (Interns/Aides) give direction to, or seek substantial staff assistance* directly from employees other than Department Heads or their own support staff without first contacting management staff. This does not preclude Commissioners from requesting simple information or asking questions on behalf of constituents, but this should be limited, and requests should always be copied to the County Manager so that problem areas can be

- identified and efficiency and accountability for performance can be centralized with the Manager.
- 2.3 In order to utilize staff resources most efficiently, Commissioners will make every effort to avoid making identical requests of multiple staff members.
 - 2.4 In the event that a matter is confidential and cannot be communicated to the County Manager, Assistant County Manager or Department Head, the District Attorney's Office should be consulted through the Chairman.
 - 2.5 Staff members will apprise their Department Head, the County Manager and Assistant County Manager, as appropriate, whenever they communicate with a Commissioner on official County business, so that open, honest, transparent, and efficient management of information can occur.
 - 2.6 When a request by a Commissioner or their support staff (Interns/Aides) is made, staff members will demonstrate thorough and responsive follow-up. Requests from Commissioners will be prioritized for action as the highest priority requests, unless identified as lower priority by the requesting Commissioner.
 - 2.7 Staff members will, as soon as possible, advise Commissioners through appropriate channels of any communications from the public, other staff, or outside agencies that may affect their districts and/or their constituents.
 - 2.8 Staff members will go through their appropriate Department Head, with a copy to the County Manager and Assistant County Manager in appointed departments, when communicating with Commissioners, unless the matter pertains to a complaint they have filed with the County's protected fraud and abuse hotline or they have gone through the full grievance process and remain unsatisfied with the administrative remedies provided. In either of these exceptions, Commissioners will immediately notify the County Manager and District Attorney's Office of the communication.
 - 2.9 Staff members will use clear, accurate and timely communication to ensure that Commissioners have information they need in order to effectively fulfill all their responsibilities as Commissioners.

3. Staff to Citizen Communications

- 3.1 Staff members will use clear, accurate and timely communication with the public and with outside agencies.
- 3.2 Staff members will advise Commissioners and their support staff of contact on official matters with constituents in their Districts as soon as is reasonably possible.

* "*substantial staff assistance*" is defined as staff effort requiring more than one employee's time, or more than two hours.