



## Travis County Commissioners Court Agenda Request

**Meeting Date:** Tuesday, November 18, 2014  
**Prepared By/Phone Number:** Deece Eckstein, 854-9754  
**Elected/Appointed Official/Dept. Head:** Deece Eckstein, 854-9754  
**Commissioners Court Sponsor:** Judge Biscoe

### **AGENDA LANGUAGE:**

CONSIDER AND TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION ON APPROVAL OF THE "POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, 84<sup>th</sup> TEXAS LEGISLATURE" DOCUMENT.

**BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF REQUEST AND ATTACHMENTS:** The Regular Session of the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature will convene on Tuesday, January 13, 2015. For the last three sessions, the Commissioners Court has approved a "Policies and Procedures" document that gave direction to the Intergovernmental Relations Office, legislative consultants, and other Travis County staff in how to shape and implement the Court's legislative agenda.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:** IGR recommends that the Commissioners Court approve the "Policies and Procedures, 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature" document.

**ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES:** Soon after the IGR Office was created in 2008, the Court's Legislative Subcommittee asked the IGR Coordinator to prepare a document formalizing the procedures to be used in aggregating and vetting policy initiatives for presentation to the Court and advancing the County's legislative agenda as adopted by the Court. A Policies and Procedures document was adopted at the beginning of the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislature in 2009, and refined for the legislative sessions in 2011 and 2013. Proposed changes for 2015 are incorporated into a "clean" copy of the proposed final document in the backup.

Two important changes are proposed. The revised document:

- ★ restates the Court's intent that information and input about legislative proposals affecting all County departments, including those overseen by other Elected and Appointed Officials, be shared with the Court through the Intergovernmental Relations Office; and,
- ★ emphasizes the Court's opposition to unfunded mandates and encourages all County departments, including those overseen by other Elected and Appointed Officials, to advise the Intergovernmental Relations Office of likely fiscal impacts of proposed legislation.

**FISCAL IMPACT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:** N/A

**REQUIRED AUTHORIZATIONS:** None.

**NAMES, PHONE NUMBERS AND EMAIL ADDRESSES OF PERSONS WHO MIGHT BE AFFECTED BY OR BE INVOLVED WITH THIS REQUEST:**

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**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. PROPOSED Policies and Procedures, 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, for action by the Court, November 18, 2014.

# **Policies and Procedures, 84th Texas Legislature**

## **TRAVIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT**

The 84th Texas Legislature will meet from January 13 through June 1, 2015. During that time, Commissioners Court will actively engage in the legislative process, through its Intergovernmental Relations Office, to protect and advance the interests of the people of Travis County.

### **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

1. The Intergovernmental Relations Office coordinates participation in the legislative process by Travis County government. All County offices and departments should work through the IGR Office to advise the Court of legislative priorities and issues affecting them.
2. The Commissioners Court opposes unfunded mandates. All County offices and departments should keep IGR informed of budgetary or legislative proposals that will impose significant costs upon the taxpayers of Travis County.
3. The Commissioners Court will adopt a Legislative Agenda, to be revised and updated throughout the course of the session. Legislative updates will be a regular item on the Court agenda during the session.
4. As necessary during the session, Commissioners Court will evaluate whether to schedule Work Sessions or additional Voting Sessions dealing with legislative matters.
5. The Legislative Agenda will serve as the working document to monitor the County's legislative efforts. From time to time, the agenda will also include specific bills or resolutions on which the Court is requested to take action. The Court may also discuss, but not take action upon, other pieces of legislation.
6. The Court will adopt a legislative agenda item or take action on a specific piece of legislation only when at least four members of the Court favor such action.

7. The Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) Coordinator will provide information regularly to the Court on the session and on the status of legislation affecting Travis County.
8. The IGR Coordinator will communicate frequently with the Legislative Subcommittee of the Commissioners Court on time-sensitive developments in the legislative process.
9. The IGR Coordinator will serve as a liaison between the Commissioners Court and the legislative consultants and members of the Travis County legislative delegation during the session.
10. The IGR Coordinator, in collaboration with the legislative consultants and members of the Travis County legislative delegation, will solicit the participation of members of the Court and key staffers in advancing the County's legislative goals.

## **PRIORITIES, POLICY POSITIONS, AND POSITIONS ON OTHER PROPOSALS**

Commissioners Court will consider and take appropriate action on three categories of legislative issues:

1. **Legislative priorities** for Travis County as identified by the Court, contained in the "Priorities" section of the Travis County Legislative Agenda approved by the Court.
2. **"Policy Positions"** on legislation impacting Travis County, and upon which members of the Court or County staff wish the Court to express support or opposition; and
3. **"Positions on Other Proposals"** upon which other groups, including other county elected officials, county associations and constituent groups, have asked the Court to express support or opposition.

The procedures for each category are described herein.

## **PRIORITIES**

1. As necessary throughout the session, Commissioners Court will refine and approve its legislative priorities.
2. Travis County staff will work with the County's legislative consultants and members of the Travis County delegation to get legislation drafted. The IGR Coordinator will facilitate this process.
3. Once committee assignments are finalized, the legislative consultants will work with County staff to determine the best sponsors to carry the County's legislative agenda. The IGR Coordinator will facilitate this process.
4. The IGR Coordinator will work with the legislative consultants and members of the Travis County delegation to advance the County's legislative priorities through the legislative process.
5. The IGR Coordinator and the legislative consultants will report regularly to the Court on the status of the Travis County legislative priorities and, when necessary, will seek Court approval of changes to them.

## **POLICY POSITIONS**

1. Policy experts on the County staff will work with the IGR Coordinator to compile "Policy Positions" for inclusion in the Legislative Agenda.
2. Travis County staff will monitor all bills filed during the session that have an impact upon Travis County. The IGR Coordinator will facilitate this process. In addition, the IGR Coordinator will maintain active contact with the Conference of Urban Counties, the Texas Association of Counties, the County Judges and Commissioners Association of Texas and other groups which are following legislative issues of import to the County.
3. When a specific piece of legislation addresses a Policy Position, the policy experts on the County staff will recommend that it be supported or opposed as appropriate. Policy experts will meet weekly during the session to exchange information and highlight key issues. The IGR Coordinator will facilitate this process.

4. Recommendations to support or oppose a specific piece of legislation will be vetted through County Managers by the IGR Coordinator. Back-up materials will be prepared that:
  - a. Summarize the legislation and its effect, including fiscal impact, on Travis County;
  - b. State the pros and cons of the legislation from the County's perspective; and
  - c. Recommend the position that Commissioners Court take in support of or opposition to the legislation.
5. On a weekly basis, the IGR Coordinator and the legislative consultants will present these recommendations to the Commissioners Court.
6. Once the Commissioners Court takes a position on a particular piece of legislation, the IGR Coordinator and the legislative consultants will implement the Court's decision.
7. The IGR Coordinator and the legislative consultants will report regularly to the Commissioners Court on the status of the legislation on which it has taken a position.

## **POSITIONS ON OTHER PROPOSALS**

1. During the legislative session, other entities – including other county elected officials, other counties, associations of counties, groups in which the County participates, constituents and other stakeholders – will approach the Commissioners Court and ask it to support or oppose particular pieces of legislation.
2. These requests will be placed on the Court's agenda. The IGR Coordinator will facilitate this process. Back-up materials will be prepared that:
  - a. Summarize the legislation, its effect on interested parties, and its relevance to Travis County;
  - b. State the pros and cons of the legislation from the County's perspective, including fiscal impacts on County operations;
  - c. Include draft language for a resolution expressing the County's position; and

- d. Recommend the action that Commissioners Court take in support of or opposition to the legislation.
3. Once the Commissioners Court takes action, the IGR Coordinator and the legislative consultants will implement the Court's decision.
4. The IGR Coordinator and the legislative consultants will report regularly to the Commissioners Court on the status of the legislation on which it has taken a position and, when appropriate, will recommend further action to the Court.

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