



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

February __, 2018

Ben Noble, Director, City Budget Office
City of Seattle, Washington

Re: City Council Expectations for the City Budget Office Director

Dear Mr. Noble,

Congratulations on your re-appointment by Mayor Durkan to serve as the Director of the City Budget Office (CBO) for a term through December 31, 2021.

This letter is filed under appointment record 906, which contains your appointment file.

The Council expectations, listed below, are intended to enhance the CBO director's accountability to the Legislative Branch. The expectations also provide a basis for Council evaluation of the director if, and when, you are brought forward for reconfirmation. Council expectations are intended to add to the Mayor's expectations and the director responsibilities established in the City Charter and Seattle Municipal Code.

Timely, complete, and accurate information is critical to the Council's work, in particular during the budget process. The Council appreciates your willingness to explore how to improve communication during the budget process.

City Council General Expectations for the City Budget Office Director

A. Relationship with Council. The director is expected to maintain a constructive working relationship with the Council, as demonstrated by:

1. Prompt and complete responses to Council information inquiries.
2. Pro-active updates on policy development, operational concerns and financial matters of significance, so that the Council is informed of significant changes or controversies before the information reaches the media and/or the Executive submits a request for Council action.
3. Dependable implementation of formal policy direction provided by the Council.
4. Assistance in the research and development of Council policy initiatives.

B. Management Skills. The director is expected to demonstrate strong management skills, with particular focus on:

1. Public Communication: make information available so that the public can track the City's budget and the department's performance in citywide budget and fiscal management.
2. Organizational and Personnel Management:
 - a. Coordinate with other City departments, and proactively manage expenditures
 - b. Provide and maintain an inclusive work environment that offers equitable opportunities for all
 - c. Offer professional development of existing staff

City Council Specific Expectations for the City Budget Director from 2018 to 2021

During the 2018-21 term, the director is expected to provide regular progress reports on the following Council expectations:

A. Collaboration with Council. Collaborate with Council on policy or budget projects with cross-departmental or citywide impact; develop, implement and communicate to the Council a clear process for engaging Department Directors and finance staff in the development of the Mayor's Proposed Budget and of major budget proposals.

B. Race and Social Justice. Advance the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative, employ criteria sensitive to race and social justice concerns in developing and administering the City Budget and in guiding departments as they deliver programs and services to the City's residents and businesses.

C. Annual Budget -- Preparation and Delivery. Prepare the Mayor's Proposed Budget and Capital Improvement Program (CIP), giving guidance to City departments, offices, boards, and commissions in the preparation of their proposed budgets; identify clear rationale for budget decisions and recommendations; deliver the Proposed Budget to the Council in a timely and consistent manner. Update the City's budget information system to improve efficiency and the ability to communicate with the Council Budget Information System or its successor.

D. Annual Budget -- Execution and Administration. Supervise the execution and administration of the annual budget, providing guidance and technical assistance to CBO staff and city departments in the implementation of the Mayor's and the Council's priorities.

E. Annual Budget. Improve the annual budget process by: Creating an environment of open and timely communication and transparency during the annual City Council budget review process, allowing for open communication about departmental budget submissions and the Mayor's Proposed Budget among the CBO, the City Council and City departments. Ensure timely, accurate, and complete information is provided to the City Council.

F. Improving the use of the annual budget as a tool for carrying out City policies and priorities. Strengthen CBO's role in working with departments to provide City services more efficiently, in order to expand the resources available to address new priorities, and help promote long-term growth in the local economy.

G. Use of Debt -- Policy Options. In conjunction with the Director of Finance, appropriately manage the City's use and issuance of debt, and provide Council with policy options for the efficient use of short-term and long-term debt.

H. Oversight of City Spending. Improve ongoing CIP reporting to facilitate real-time review of project expenditures, and ongoing spending by City departments. Work with the Department of Finance and Administrative Services to improve the availability, timeliness, and usefulness of all types of expenditure reporting under the new Summit 9.2 financial management system. As an accompaniment to revenue forecast updates, report to the Council on departmental expenditures compared to current budget and projected ending balances for major funds.

I. City Financial Information. During the Mayor's budget development process, the City Council's budget review process and throughout the year, provide clear, consistent and accurate information about the City's budgetary and financial outlook, in conjunction with the Director of Finance and/or Department Directors, as appropriate.

J. Long-Term Financial Planning. Design and implement financial planning mechanisms to provide the City with strategic financial analysis related to revenues, debt, long term financial planning by fund, expenditure cost drivers and emerging trends in City demand for resources.

K. Levy Oversight. Monitor City performance in the delivery of projects promised to the public in the creation of the Seattle Park District and through voter-approved levies such as Move Seattle. Report to the Council at least twice a year on the revenues collected, expenditures to date, and the status of each project.

L. Labor Relations. Conduct research and analysis on (i) how City services are delivered, (ii) sustainable growth rates for labor and benefit expenses and (iii) labor and benefit expense cost drivers, and provide advice and guidance on these issues to the City's Labor Relations Division.

M. Budget Reserves. Provide guidance and policy options to the City's elected officials with the goal of enhancing the City's budgetary reserves.

N. Inter-jurisdictional Relationships. Serve as an effective local and regional representative for the City on budget and financial management issues.

O. Budget Structure. Review citywide Budget Control Level (BCL) and Program structure to ensure consistent, logical standards regarding appropriate size, service offering and descriptiveness of the City's BCLs and Programs.

P. Budget Presentation -- Budget Book. Improve the City's budget book and departmental budget presentations to increase clarity, understanding and transparency of the Mayor's Proposed Budget, with clear descriptions of changes proposed, cost drivers, policy impacts and impacts to City programs, services and personnel. Connections between budget proposals and the relevant performance measures should be clear. Particular attention should be paid to the need to reflect the changes in budget structure adopted in late 2017 as part of the Summit Reimplementation project in a way that provides transparency and a sense of continuity.

The Seattle City Council looks forward to working cooperatively with the director to ensure that the CBO continues to provide the City with a reliable, sustainable budget.

Sincerely,

Sally Bagshaw, Chair,
Finance and Neighborhoods Committee

Bruce Harrell
Council President

Cc: Seattle City Council Members