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**From:** Jeff Niten  
**Sent:** Friday, February 21, 2025 11:45 AM  
**To:** Rebecca Guillen; Sienna Spencer-Markles; Jennifer Joki  
**Subject:** FW: Council comments

Response to PRR.



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**From:** Jeff Niten <JNiten@mltwa.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 19, 2025 3:16 PM  
**To:** Jeff Niten <JNiten@mltwa.gov>  
**Subject:** Council comments

Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem and Council members,

Please do not reply “all” to this email.

I struggled to write this email, but after giving it time I think this needs to be said. It’s troubling to me is that some of our team members, particularly younger members, have become very reluctant to present to City Council. Many members of the team watch the you tube video of the Council meetings on Friday’s following regularly scheduled meetings, and they aren’t interested in presenting to Council when given the opportunity. One of my responsibilities is developing more junior team members so they have the opportunity for promotion and have the experience to lead divisions, departments or organizations in the future. These team members are going to be nervous when asked to speak with City Council, that’s normal, but when team members are refusing that opportunity, it tells me something. All I would ask is that Council members make comments critical of communication on the budget or any other presentation, if a Council member thinks it needs to be said in a public forum, to me and not to other members of the team. They are only doing what I ask of them.

Following the City Council work session last week, I reflected a bit on the comments, particularly during the LTAC discussion about “shock” and how “no one consulted Council”. How the team is “stepping on Council” and Council is “surprised” about the LTAC funding level. How we “arbitrarily” changed the funding level. Criticism of me, even in public, is not a concern, that’s part of the job and I accept that. If you don’t think I’m adequately representing the goals and vision of Council then asking for my resignation or making a motion in a public meeting to terminate my contract with or without cause is also something well within your authority and is viewed as perfectly legitimate by the professional city management community.

I'm positive Council knows this, but the City Manager has a responsibility to develop budget recommendations focused on achieving City Council goals, in this case additional, and more varied, community events implementing adopted Council goals for Growing Our Vibrant Community and An Informed and Engaged Community. My recommended budget is based on available and projected resources, discussions with City Council, listening to member discussions during Council meetings, paying close attention to each Council members public statements, and bringing the internal team together to focus on how we can achieve Council's shared goals. The document City Council reviews are my recommendation, but a Council majority clearly has final authority to approve or modify my budget proposals if I'm off base or missed something Council thinks important, or for any reason. These things are presented, debated and decided in a public setting, not beforehand in private. That said, City Council did review Special Revenue Funds on October 3 although numbers were not available, November 7 and again on November 21. The budget numbers presented for LTAC is a recommendation that Council debated on November 7 and approved November 21. From my perspective it's difficult to characterize that as a surprise. I try very hard to communicate with each Council member equally in as detailed a manner as I can. Transparency is a value that's personally important to me. I am very hesitant to challenge comments like those above in public because in doing so the perception may be that I am challenging the authority of the elected City Council. That should not and cannot be the perception.

Please call or stop by if you'd like to discuss. As you all know I am available to you at your convenience.



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