



## MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of County Commissioners (BCC), Clackamas County  
FROM: Gary Schmidt, County Administrator  
RE: BCC Letter Writing Policy 2023  
DATE: February 9, 2023

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The Clackamas County Board of Commissioners frequently receives requests from staff or partners to contribute a formal letter in support or opposition of a specific initiative or project.

At times, Commissioners are asked individually, to craft a letter for the same reasons.

In order to provide clarity in the differences between a letter representing the Board's collective view on an issue, and the views of one individual Commissioner, the attached Letter Writing Policy was developed and formally adopted by the Board in 2016. The policy was affirmed in 2018.

The Board has asked to review the current Letter Writing Policy and discuss with staff any amendments or changes they would like to propose.

## Commissioner Letter Writing Policy

March 2016 (approved March 29, 2016 @ Issues); (affirmed October 2, 2018 @ Issues);

Edited for punctuation/wording 2-2-23.

**Objective:** To ensure that Board letters are handled consistently, and include an opportunity for Board review and discussion when appropriate and necessary.

### A. Letters written “on behalf of” the full Board –

- 1) A Policy Advisor (PA) will work with requesting or relevant department on the responsibility of the letter writing process and does the following:
  - a. Identifies a due date.
  - b. If a letter is requested, inform requester that BCC will review at next available Issues meeting.
  - c. Request a draft letter from appropriate staff or department.
  - d. Review for content and format.
  - e. Provide letter to Administrator’s Policy Advisor to place on next scheduled Issues session.
- 2) A Commissioner will present the letter for review at the next available meeting.
- 3) If there is a majority (4-1 or 3-2), the Chair may sign the letter “on behalf of.”
- 4) If there is not a majority:
  - a. The Board may decide not to send the letter on behalf of the Board.
  - b. The content of the letter is edited to reflect an individual position only with an appropriate signature (go to B. below).
- 5) Once sent, the letter is to be copied and stored per office retention policy. Policy Advisors, Board Clerk and staff will determine the best person to actually send the letter.

### B. Letters written by an individual Commissioner –

- 1) The individual Commissioner instructs their PA to draft letter as prescribed in 1) a-d above, with the exception of 1.e.
- 2) The letter may be written on County letterhead.
- 3) The letter must include a qualifying statement(s) reflecting the individual Commissioner position only, with appropriate signature block used.
- 4) No prior Board approval is needed. However, it is recommended that the Commissioner notify fellow Board members via email or public meeting that the letter has been sent.

- 5) The PA sends the letter and ensures the letter is copied and stored per office retention procedures.

**C. Minor Letters of Congratulations, Thank You or Appreciation –**

- 1) A letter may be sent “on behalf of” the Board without prior Board approval if the letter is a simple, non-policy related acknowledgment such as a thank you letter or an appreciation letter.

**D. Legislative Support Letters written “on behalf of” the full Board–**

- 1) A letter may be sent “on behalf of” the Board, without review by the full Board, when the letter is addressed to the legislative delegation in support of a previously agreed upon state legislative agenda item, only during the legislative session.
- 2) Any new or previously undiscussed legislative item must come before the full Board. PGA/Legislative Affairs staff will draft a letter and add it to the next available “Issues” discussion.

**E. Legislative Letters from an Individual Commissioner**

- 1) Individual Commissioners may sign letters in support or opposition to non-county legislative agenda issues.
- 2) Individual Commissioners should not write a dissenting letter or provide dissenting testimony that is in opposition to the County’s legislative agenda or other board approved positions.
- 3) Letters will note that opinion is that of individual the Commissioner, not the entire BCC.
- 4) Letters do not require prior approval from all BCC. Signed letters/testimony will be shared with BCC and PGA electronically in a timely manner.