

Administrative Policy 10-01 (Updated 6/1/23)

The City desires to continue the historically established practice of solemnizing its Council meetings by beginning with an invocation, and desires to do so only in a manner consistent with established legal precedents. This policy is adopted to apply to the Invocation given at any City Council Meeting. Anyone, regardless of whether they are a clergy member, who wishes to provide the Invocation may volunteer to do so by advising the City Clerk of their desire to volunteer, and will be scheduled on a first come, first served basis. Only one invocation will be scheduled at each meeting.

The City is mindful of its obligation to avoid violations of the Establishment Clause to the United States Constitution, while at the same time not engaging in censorship or otherwise violating established First Amendment rights. Accordingly, any person wishing to provide the Invocation is reminded that the purpose of the Invocation is to solemnize the proceedings about to occur. Persons may express themselves as they deem appropriate for this purpose, including, without limitation, by a moment of silence, chanting, singing, poetry reading, or prayer. The City is not in a position to provide legal advice to persons providing the Invocation, but such persons are advised of the United States Supreme Court decision in *Town of Greece, N.Y. v. Galloway* (2014) 572 U.S. 565. Persons wishing to provide the Invocation are asked to be mindful the Court's ruling in this case, and are requested to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with the law. The City believes this means that while an Invocation may be sectarian, this does not mean no constraints exist regarding its content. Moreover, that an Invocation cannot denigrate those who do not share the speakers beliefs or religious minorities, proselytize, or threaten damnation. Persons providing an Invocation are reminded that the audience of the Invocation is not the general public, and rather is primarily the City Council; and, that the Invocation is not an effort to promote religious observance among the public, and instead its purpose is to accommodate the spiritual needs of lawmakers and connect them to a tradition dating to the time of the Framers of the Constitution.

All persons who sign up to give the Invocation shall be given a copy of this policy.