The following comments and suggestions were received in response to the January 14, 2014 City Council docket items regarding Civic Engagement, including the *Draft Handbook, Implementation Plan, and Draft Resolution.*

Additional non-substantive comments (i.e., punctuation, grammar, hyperlinks, etc.) have been incorporated into the handbook. Recommendations for substantive changes to the handbook and other documents are summarized in a memorandum for City Council consideration on January 25, 2014.

Nate Macek, December 31, 2013
I reviewed the revised draft handbook today—again, great work. I note, however, that the hyperlinks to the various resources on pages A-8 and A-9 are still not clickable from the PDF. Maybe you can work with your communications staff to make the links workable in the PDF?

Response: final draft will have clickable hyperlinks.

Poul Hertel, January 12, 2014
Why is this comment that I submitted not included or considered in you package to the City Council?

"Specifically, comments submitted by individuals or civic/ other associations, which generates internal city responses are not shared with those entities. (This has certainly been my experience). Professional courtesy suggests that sharing of responses with the originators will encourage and foster dialogue instead of encouraging the City to marginalize the person or organization. Requiring that the City share generated documents generated with originators in response to their tenets would discourage personalizing the issue and afford the originators an opportunity to respond."

Response: this comment, originally posted in July 2013 was responded to at that time. See memo for recommended change to Handbook.

Amy Slack, December 20, 2013
Please remove my name for the list of persons contributing to the handbook. I (reluctantly) attended one meeting. I refused to participate in the manner desired and left early.

Response: Done

Janet King, Comments Distilled over multiple emails (December 2013 - January 2014)

Response: See memo for recommended changes to Handbook, Implementation Plan and Resolution.

GENERAL

The City of Alexandria's Principles of Civic Engagement are the centerpiece and frame of reference for all civic engagement processes, documents, and communications. Simple and straightforward, they emerged from the first "What's Next" session and were the point of departure for all subsequent "What's Next" meetings and e-communications. As such they are the most vetted and should therefore be the most visible as this endeavor moves forward. The Principles, not the Handbook, must be the focus – the Handbook's intended purpose being the setting forth of processes and practices for use by city staff and officials as they relate to citizens. The Handbook supports the Principles and would be subject to change when its content is identified as not fulfilling the intent of the Principles. The Principles and any abbreviated, essential content of the Handbook would be used for citizen communication. To evidence the commitment to these Principles, I feel strongly that they should be prominently posted in all public

gatherings (lobby of city hall etc) and meeting venues - and in all communications that will set the stage for civic engagement. In the Handbook, Resolution, and Implementation Plan then the Principles should be so identified – as the centerpiece and frame of reference.

The Civic Engagement Principles are those **specific** principles adopted by the community as defined by the "What's Next" endeavor, and therefore, these words should be capitalized as should the word "Principles" throughout the Resolution and Implementation Plan - and Handbook.

Handbook

I feel very strongly about the Principles being at the top of every evaluation form/at. Very importantly, each evaluation should be seen as an opportunity to gain citizen feedback on how the Principles are being served. To do this, and also better serve the intent for measurement, I suggest that at each engagement opportunity, the evaluation provide for a rating of the citizen's experience in terms of each relevant (to the engagement/meeting/project) Principle employing a scale of 1-10 (or 1-5). Beneath each numeric rating, a space would be provided to document the citizen's recommendations that would improve her/his rating. By so doing, the City demonstrates its commitment to the Principles and to improving processes that serve them.

Also, related to the opening pages of the Handbook, I think that all city officials should be separated from "community participants" - words which I believe convey the meaning of resident/citizens. And the boards and commission member should be separated as well – for, while they may think of themselves as only citizens from time to time, they also, very importantly, served in an official capacity. The "community participants" should be only those who have no official capacity but that of citizen/community participant. This is a fairer, cleaner way of portraying participation.

Resolution

- First paragraph - revise as follows: ""Establish Civic Engagement Principles and supporting processes as set forth in the Alexandria Handbook for ----
- Under the **WHEREAS** - the second statement should be something to this effect (Do not use the word "generate"): "Creates and encourages a fully informed public that embraces the commonly held City of Alexandria's Principles of Civic Engagement and the processes that support them while encouraging full participation.
- Page 2 –Number 2 – what is the "decision-making body"?
- Page 2 – Number 4 – first bullet – revise as follows: "Assessing community evaluation of performance vis a vis each Civic Engagement Principle and providing a mechanism for continuous improvement of processes supporting them""
- Page 2 – Number 4 – sixth bullet: revise last phrase to read: "further measurement and insights into the quality of the civic engagement process as a whole and of each department performance in pursuit of the Civic Engagement Principles"
- Page 2. Number 5 Revise as follows: Direct the Civic Engagement Interdepartmental Working Group to advise city departments, the City Manager, and City Council in these assessment processes and to develop a proposed plan for future annual review of civic engagement performance in collaboration with the community.

Implementation Plan

- Page 4 – First Paragraph: The sense one has from this paragraph is that additional resources may be needed to perform. No augmentation of the resources/budget should be necessary for the City to perform what would have been already expected, effective civic engagement practices. Bringing the city into compliance with these expectations may require adjustment – but in this time of sever budget concerns – augmentation as suggested by this language is not a prudent message or impression to convey/suggest.

  But the phrasing offered here suggests that the implementation might be, forgive the term, "held hostage" until such resources are provided. I cannot believe that this is what is intended; therefore the language in this section might be subject to revision to assure that others do not construe such a meaning.

- Page 4, Second Paragraph, fifth line: "rather than through a central administrative function". Clearly, the departments will take full responsibility for furthering the Principles and supporting processes, but the oversight and leadership must be in the Office of the City Manager. There is confusion with the Office of Communications and Public Information also set out in the Implementation Plan – but the clear "owner" (role) of central management and ultimate assessor of the effectiveness of the City's Civic Engagement rests with the City Manager – in support of the City Council.

I feel that this document should be revised to make clear the roles for there are many conflicting statement. The first sentence of Page 3's second paragraph beneath II. Organization Structure and Resources makes the role of the City Manager's Office clear –I believe this becomes muddled as one reads on as evidence by the above example and furthered by the bulleted statements beneath the sentence beginning :"In summary" at the bottom of page 4.

City Manager – beneath the first 2 bullets

1. Move from page 5 – under "Civic Engagement Coordination": "Manage performance accountably" (as the role of the performance management staff)
2. Add: Assess Overall Performance in service to the City's Civic Engagement Principles – to include departments' performance and the need for process improvement.

- Second "role" entry: Civic Engagement Coordination is not an office – but a function. It may be meant to read: "Office of Communication and Public Information" (note movement of its 5th bullet to the Office of the City Manager).
- Third entry: Departments/Project Management Staff – what is the project management staff? Clarify.
- Second bullet _ "Apply the principles" (which should be capitalized as Principles – per e-mail of 1/11) **– this is a role of all offices including the Office of the City Manager. Every function in every city office must apply and be in compliance with the Civic Engagement Principles.**

Training

- Page 5 First sentence; "members of the community" – what is envisioned here? Is there a role missing? If so, I would like to see the statement introduced to explain this.
- Likewise – second paragraph, second line: "other stakeholders" – who?
- What I find missing is the elements focused on making widely visible the Civic Engagement Principles – as in poster, framed in the lobby of City Hall – Chambers – meeting rooms – in each department - portable for use off-site. Also, flyers – handouts for the community – for the

Handbook due to its size and detail will be useful only within the City government and among those serving in official capacities.

- Training Sessions
  1. Number 2 – change “difficult participants” to “difficult situations”
  2. Add: Negotiation skills

Communication Plan

- City’s Civic Engagement – insert “Communications” Coordinator in the OCPI; to the extent this is necessary, replicate it in other locations in this document.
- Page 7 After “Adoption of” – add: Civic Engagement Principles” before “Handbook” – and replicate this entry to be consistent – making it clear that it is the first element (and as I have said) and driving force of the entire Civic Engagement processes – supporting documentation (Handbook etc.). – and so it would be for all of the subsections that follow this heading/subsection. Very importantly in “Branding” – this same prominence of the Civic Engagement Principles must be clear.
- One obvious thought is that the Principles must be put in the training section; a brief publication for the public needs to be listed - and in the Press Release - and for all publicity, the Principles will be the first thing "out of the shoot" - again making it clear that all else supports them. The branding would be framed around them - and we know that they will be at the top of the Evaluation Forms.