

POLICY AND PROCEDURE REGARDING INVOCATIONS
TO BE HELD IN THE CITY OF SEGUIN COUNCIL CHAMBER

- A) Invocations to be held in the City of Seguin Council Chamber are meant to solemnize the proceedings of Council, along with the pledges to the American and Texan flags, without being considered an action of Council. This distinction is expressed by placement of the invocation and pledges in advance of the Council's weekly agenda items.

- B) The City Council opts to delegate the duties of coordinating invocations to be held in Council Chamber to the City Secretary.

- C) The City Secretary's Office, with assistance from the Legal Department when needed, shall be responsible for the following:
 - 1) Surveying, by way of Yellow Pages and/or other comparable methods (e.g. internet, listings with local chambers of commerce, etc.), the existence of various churches, mosques, temples, and other religious institutions within Seguin or its Extraterritorial Jurisdiction;
 - 2) Compiling a list of all religious institutions surveyed;
 - 3) Establishing a method for randomly selecting religious leaders from the list, who shall be invited to attend a session City Council and provide an invocation;
 - 4) Implementing the method of random selection in a manner that produces a record of procedure and result;
 - 5) Ensuring that invitations communicated to religious leaders are made far enough in advance (e.g. more than 1 month) to provide each religious leader a bona fide opportunity to attend his/her respective session of City Council;

- 6) Reserving a particular date for each invited religious leader, regardless of whether that particular religious leader is able to attend City Council;
 - 7) Communicating the freedom that each religious leader enjoys in delivering his/her respective invocation, which shall be the same freedom granted any citizen during the Public Comment portion of the agenda;
 - 8) Communicating that the invitation extended to the religious leader is part of the City's effort to establish a program of invocations that does not proselytize or advance any one, or disparage any other, faith or belief.
 - 9) Maintaining a copy of any written correspondence sent to religious leaders, including but not limited to written invitations, in step with the retention schedules published by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission;
 - 10) Updating the list of institutions periodically;
 - 11) Ensuring that the methods used to coordinate invocations do not serve to prescribe a particular form of religious worship to the detriment of others;
 - 12) Ensuring that the methods used to coordinate invocations do not serve to substitute a "civic religion" for those sectarian religions represented by the religious leaders who are invited to provide invocations; and
 - 13) Maintaining a calendar of invocations based on the invitations extended by the City.
- D) Based on the calendar provided by the City Secretary, the Mayor shall announce, in open session, an invitation for the religious leader holding the reservation for that date to come forward and provide an invocation. The Mayor's announcement shall include the religious leader's name, title, and the name of the religious institution with which he or she is affiliated. If that religious leader is not in attendance, then a Council Member may perform an invocation or hold a moment of silence. Invocation under this

Section shall be conducted in a manner that does not proselytize or advance any one, or disparage any other, faith or belief.

- E) No invocation speaker shall receive compensation for his or her service, which shall be strictly voluntary.
- F) Questions regarding the authenticity of a religious institution that is listed by the City Secretary shall be resolved by determining whether that organization would legitimately qualify for I.R.C. §501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. If that religious institution would *not* qualify for such status, then it shall be removed from the City Secretary's list.
- G) Any concerns regarding the implementation, interpretation, or modification of these Policies may be directed to the City Manager for the City of Seguin.

ADOPTED this the 16th day of July 2024

DONNA DODGEN
MAYOR

ATTEST: _____
Kristin Mueller
City Secretary