



**CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH
CITY COUNCIL MEETING – COUNCIL MEMBER ITEMS REPORT**

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: TONY STRICKLAND, MAYOR
GRACEY VAN DER MARK, MAYOR PRO TEM

DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 2023

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO PREPARE AN INVOCATION POLICY

The City has nearly always allowed invocations by religious leaders at the beginning of each City Council Meeting. This is a good and laudable practice and a good reminder to the City Council, other City leadership, and the community of the important role of government and decision-making. However, in very recent years, the Greater Huntington Beach Interfaith Council, which the City has utilized for invocations, has become highly political and invocations at times have become political soapboxing opportunities. The City should return the invocations to opportunities for faith-based, and faith-focused speech - which is a specific, limited exercise of particular speech. In doing so, the City should have an approved policy for the constituting of a list of religious associates or leaders, maintaining that list, evaluation of religious associates or leaders, and rotation system for religious leaders at City Council meetings to offer an invocation.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Direct the City Manager to work with the City Attorney to return to the City Council with a Resolution for a City Council policy for the constituting of a list of religious associates or leaders, maintaining that list, evaluation of religious associates or leaders, and rotation system for religious leaders at City Council meetings to offer an invocation. The City Attorney should ensure that whatever policy is returned to Council for a vote is compatible with Constitutional principles of government involved/restricted speech and exercise of religion. In doing so, modifications or adjustments to this proposal are welcome from the City Attorney.