



# City of Long Beach – Public Records Act Program

**Ethics Commission Meeting – May 10, 2023**

# Overview

- California Public Records Act
- Challenges
- City Support Team
- PRA requests – by the numbers
- Current Efforts
- Future Efforts

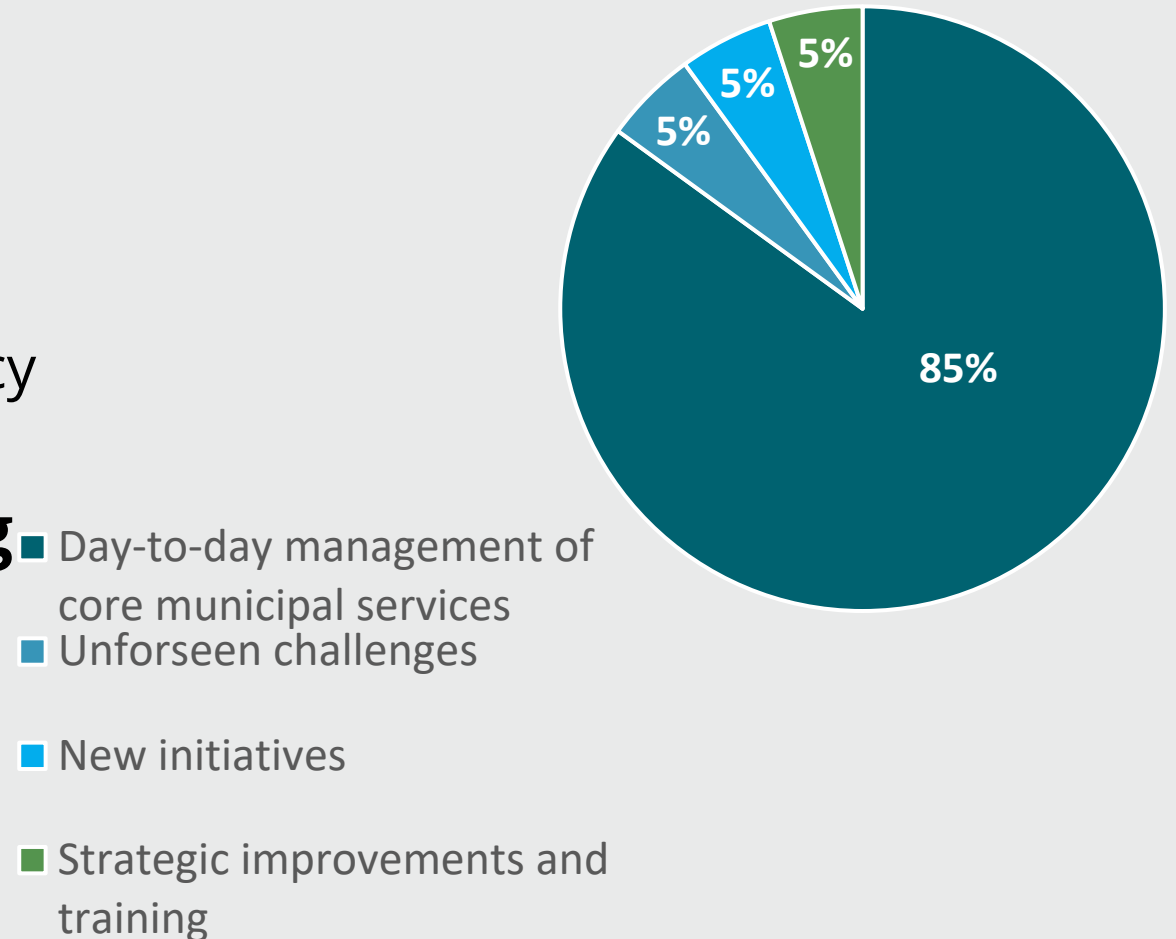
# California Public Records Act (PRA)

- The purpose of the law is transparency - to give the public access to information that enables them to monitor the functioning of their government.
- The PRA's fundamental rule is that governmental records shall be disclosed to the public, upon request, unless there is a legal basis not to do so.
- Cal Gov Code 7922.535(a)
  - Each agency, upon a request for a copy of records, shall, **within 10 days from receipt of the request**, determine whether the request, in whole or in part, seeks copies of disclosable public records in the possession of the agency and **shall promptly notify the person making the request of the determination and the reasons therefor**. If the agency determines that the request seeks disclosable public records, the agency shall also state the estimated date and time when the records will be made available.
- Cal Gov Code 7922.530
  - Each local agency, upon a request for a copy of records that reasonably describes an identifiable record or records, **shall make the records promptly available to any person**.

# Challenges

- **COVID-19**
- **Staff vacancies**
  - Staff turnover / transitions
- **Staff workloads and capacity**
  - Due to vacancies, turnover
  - High demands – core services, emergency responsiveness, projects and programs
- **Burnout followed by overwhelming nature of requests**
- **Understanding**

Typical Allocation of Management Staff's Time



# City Support Team

- **PRA Program Oversight Team – City Manager’s Office**
  - Deputy City Manager
  - Assistant Administrative Analyst
  - Clerical Support (seasonal/temporary)
- **City Attorney Office**
- **Police Department**
  - **In Fiscal Year 2019, the City Council approved creating a PRA Division consisting of:** (1) Administrator, (1) AA III, (2) AAA, (6) Administrative Aide IIs
  - This group manages standard PRA requests and Critical Incident Requests which are more voluminous in nature.
- **Citywide – nearly 50 liaisons, including back-up support staff**

# PRA Requests – By the Numbers

- The entire City of Long Beach organization (including Harbor, Utilities and the Long Beach Police Department) see on average over 6,000 PRA requests annually. Many of these requests involve multiple detail points over many years, making them time intensive to fulfill.
- Example requests:
  - *Hello, could you please provide me with annual financial records for the Queen Mary, specifically annual revenue and expenditures, as far back as exists since the ship arrived in Long Beach in 1967. Thank you.*
  - *List of PRA requests submitted to City between January 2021 and April 2023. I am requesting the date submitted , the name of the requestor and the date the request was completed . I am also requesting a short description of the request and department assigned to complete request*

# Current Efforts

- Ongoing in-house training program on various topics based on challenges observed by the PRA Oversight Team and challenges expressed by liaisons and staff.
- Professional training support for PRA Oversight Team to maximize support provided to departments.
- Monthly reports to Department Heads on 60+ day PRA requests.
- Review of daily reports by PRA Oversight Team.
- Direct support on challenging PRAs, guidance on how to interpret scope of requests, and problem solving to alleviate staff impacts – by both PRA Oversight Team and City Attorney Office

# Future Efforts

- Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Proposal – *Office of Ethics and Transparency*
  - Belief that the Ethics and PRA programs are both rooted in the spirit of government transparency
- Leadership Training
  - Department Heads – City Attorney
  - Citywide Directors – Deputies, City Attorney and Manager
- Training Program
  - Enhance PRA Training Program by creating a robust library of various training modules uploaded to the City's new LEARN program which is available any time as staff needs arise.
- Ongoing empathy, encouragement, support, and accountability





**Thank you**

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