

OFFICIAL LEGISLATIVE ANALYSIS

CITY OF SHEFFIELD LAKE, OHIO

Resolution No. _____

Council Policy Governance Act

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Prepared for: Sheffield Lake City Council

Date: _____

QUICK SUMMARY

Item	Summary
Purpose	Establishes a permanent system for City Council to adopt, classify, maintain, review, amend, suspend, repeal, publish, and index official Council Policies.
Fiscal Effect	No direct appropriation, tax increase, debt authorization, or expenditure. Future software or repository costs would require separate Council authorization.
Administrative Effect	Creates the Official Council Policy Register, requires policy numbering and classification, establishes review procedures, and authorizes an electronic Council Governance Knowledge Repository.
Effect on Council Authority	Strengthens Council's ability to express formal legislative policy on governance matters that do not require enactment as ordinances.
Effect on Mayor / Administration	Does not remove executive authority or amend the Charter. Provides structured legislative expectations for administrative practices where consistent with law.
Effect on Existing Law	Does not supersede the Charter, Ohio law, Codified Ordinances, or Council Rules. Council Policies remain subordinate to higher legal authority.

Effect on Citizens	Creates no criminal penalties, taxes, fees, licensing requirements, or private causes of action. Improves public access to Council policy documents.
Implementation	Implemented over time. Existing policies may be reviewed and incorporated into the Register by later Council action.
Long-Term Benefit	Preserves institutional memory, improves transparency, strengthens internal controls, and creates a durable policy framework for future Councils.

The Problem

City Council currently possesses only two practical methods for expressing legislative intent:

- adopting an ordinance;
- adopting a resolution.

Neither option is well suited for many governance matters.

Many subjects do not require criminal penalties, taxation, licensing, appropriations, or regulation of the public, yet they still require consistent legislative direction.

Examples include:

- internal financial controls;
- procurement expectations;
- reporting standards;
- committee procedures;
- strategic planning;
- technology governance;
- legislative drafting standards;
- transparency practices;
- document retention expectations.

Because there is presently no formal system for these matters, legislative expectations often exist only through:

- custom;
- verbal discussions;
- institutional memory;
- scattered resolutions;

- committee minutes;
- individual recollections.

As elected officials and employees change, this institutional knowledge is frequently lost.

Purpose of the Legislation

The ordinance establishes a permanent **Council Policy Governance System** that allows Council to adopt official legislative policies without unnecessarily expanding the City's codified ordinances.

The legislation creates:

- standardized Council Policies;
- a permanent Policy Register;
- formal policy classifications;
- policy numbering;
- policy review procedures;
- governance documentation standards;
- electronic publication requirements;
- long-term preservation of legislative history.

What Is a Council Policy?

A Council Policy is **not a law**.

Instead, it is an official legislative expression describing how Council expects municipal government to conduct itself in areas that do not require enactment by ordinance.

Council Policies:

- establish expectations;
- improve consistency;
- strengthen accountability;
- preserve legislative intent;
- improve internal controls;
- guide future Councils.

Unlike ordinances, Council Policies do **not**:

- create crimes;
- establish taxes;
- impose licensing requirements;
- regulate private citizens;
- create private causes of action.

Major Features

The ordinance introduces numerous governance improvements, including:

Official Policy Classification System

Policies are organized into standardized subject areas such as:

- Financial Management
- Governance
- Risk Management
- Information Technology
- Human Resources
- Parks
- Utilities
- Strategic Planning
- Public Information
- Infrastructure

This creates an organized legislative library rather than a collection of unrelated documents.

Directive and Guidance Policies

The ordinance distinguishes between:

Directive Policies

These establish mandatory legislative expectations.

Guidance Policies

These express long-term legislative philosophy, goals, and recommended practices.

This distinction improves clarity while preserving appropriate administrative flexibility.

Official Council Policy Register

The Clerk of Council must maintain a permanent indexed register containing:

- every active policy;
- amendment history;
- repeal history;
- review dates;
- classifications;
- policy ownership;
- legislative notes;

- historical revisions.

The Register becomes the City's permanent legislative policy repository.

Periodic Policy Review

Rather than allowing policies to become obsolete, every policy is reviewed on a scheduled basis.

The legislation establishes:

- review cycles;
- review reports;
- recommendations;
- historical documentation;
- continuous improvement.

This prevents outdated governance practices from remaining in place indefinitely.

Policy Ownership

Every policy must identify the office responsible for monitoring implementation.

Responsibility follows the office—not the individual employee.

This strengthens accountability while preserving continuity as personnel change.

Knowledge Repository

One of the ordinance's most innovative features is the creation of an electronic Council Governance Knowledge Repository.

Rather than maintaining isolated PDF files, governance documents may be organized into an electronic knowledge system featuring:

- hyperlinks;
- cross references;
- searchable content;
- legislative history;
- version control;
- public accessibility.

The intent is to preserve institutional knowledge while making municipal governance easier for both elected officials and the public to understand.

Benefits to Future Councils

This ordinance is intended to benefit not merely the current Council, but future Councils for decades to come.

Benefits include:

- preservation of institutional memory;
- greater consistency;
- improved transparency;
- reduced duplication;
- better legislative organization;
- improved public accessibility;
- stronger oversight;
- easier onboarding of newly elected officials;
- reduced dependence on informal practices.

Relationship to Existing Law

The ordinance expressly recognizes that Council Policies remain subordinate to:

1. United States Constitution
2. Ohio Constitution
3. Ohio Revised Code
4. Sheffield Lake Charter
5. Codified Ordinances
6. Rules of Council

Council Policies supplement—not replace—existing municipal law.

Fiscal Impact

The legislation has little or no immediate fiscal impact.

Implementation primarily consists of:

- organizing governance documents;
- maintaining an electronic policy register;
- conducting periodic reviews;
- publishing policies electronically.

Any future software selected for the Knowledge Repository may be implemented incrementally as funding permits.

Administrative Impact

The legislation improves administration by:

- clarifying Council expectations;
- organizing governance documents;
- reducing ambiguity;
- standardizing policy drafting;
- documenting legislative intent;
- encouraging continuous improvement;
- establishing consistent review procedures.

Transparency

A significant objective of the legislation is increasing public accessibility.

Citizens will be able to locate Council Policies more easily than searching through years of meeting minutes, resolutions, and ordinances.

The electronic Knowledge Repository encourages a more transparent and understandable municipal government.

Long-Term Vision

The Council Policy Governance Act recognizes that municipal government is more than a collection of ordinances. Effective governance also depends upon documented expectations, institutional memory, and continuous improvement.

This legislation establishes a governance framework intended to evolve over time, allowing future Councils to add policies, improve existing practices, adopt new technologies, and preserve legislative knowledge without repeatedly expanding the City's codified ordinances.

In many respects, the ordinance applies modern knowledge management principles to municipal governance, creating an organized, searchable, and enduring legislative framework that can serve Sheffield Lake for generations.

Conclusion

The Council Policy Governance Act does not create new regulatory authority over citizens, nor does it diminish the authority of the Charter or Codified Ordinances. Instead, it provides City Council with a structured mechanism to document, organize, maintain, and communicate its legislative policies in a transparent, consistent, and enduring manner.

By creating a formal Council Policy Governance System, the ordinance seeks to preserve institutional knowledge, strengthen legislative oversight, improve accountability, and provide future elected officials with a lasting framework for effective municipal governance.