

To: All Newburyport City Councillors
From: Cllr Afroz Khan and Cllr Heather Shand
CC: Richard Jones, Newburyport City Clerk
Mark Kavanaugh, Newburyport IT Director
Date: November 23, 2020
Re: City Council Use of City of Newburyport Email Account

The purpose of this communication is to request that City Council members consider adopting the use of a city email address versus a separate email from other non-municipal services. Currently, contact information is available for each councillor by selecting their name from the City Council's landing page from the city's website. Each councillor has a dedicated page where relevant details can be found including phone number, email address and committee assignments. The email address listed per councillor varies between those who have a cityofnewburyport.com email to those who have their own email for city council via other email services. While this method is transparent and adequate, there are a few problematic aspects to this practice.

1. Open Meeting Law - A key aspect that has been noted over time is that residents may note all of our emails in their communication which makes it critical on the councillors part to not respond via "Reply All". Oftentimes this engagement inadvertently occurs and can lead to a violation of open meeting laws.
2. Public Records Law – As public officials employed by the city any correspondence related to our role of elected official is public record. According to "A Guide to Massachusetts Public Records Law" located on the Secretary of State's website, "Public records , including emails made or received in an individual's capacity as a government employee, must be maintained and kept in a manner that allows access by the general public, as they are subject to mandatory disclosure upon request. Whenever original public records are created outside the government offices, they shall be transferred on a regular and frequent basis to secure storage by the entity."
3. Accessibility and Consistency – Many residents have noted that the practice of first initial last name @cityofnewburyport.com does not work for all councillors as it does for city employees. The lack of consistency can be confusing for residents.

The decision to make this a policy or a rule can be further discussed by the city council to define future best practices. Once all city councillors adopt a cityofnewburyport.com email address we can explore methods for ease of access by residents through a dedicated email address noted as citycouncil@cityofnewburyport.com or through an online form where a checkbox can be used for specific councillors or a checkbox for ALL. Both of these options are done by many other communities in the Commonwealth and would only serve to benefit our representation here in Newburyport.

