

# LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION FOR SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

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**DATE:** FEBRUARY 14, 2018   
**FROM:** KATHLEEN ROLLINGS-McDONALD, Executive Officer  
MICHAEL TUERPE, Project Manager  
**TO:** LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

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**SUBJECT:** Agenda Item #7: Review and Consideration of Policy Related to Retention of Electronic Communications (Continued from January 17, 2018)

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Commission:

1. Approve the proposed Electronic Communications Policy as outlined in the January 17, 2018 Staff Report for Agenda Item 11, Attachment #2;
2. Approve the proposed amendment to the Records Retention Policy as outlined in the January 17, 2018 Staff Report for Agenda Item 11, Attachment #3;
3. Authorize the Executive Officer to establish and remove Email addresses for Commissioners, when applicable, with the County Information Services Department utilizing the Microsoft 365 Platform and the existing County retention schedule; and,
4. Adopt LAFCO Resolution No. 3258 reflecting the changes to the Policy and Procedure Manual, and direct the Executive Officer to distribute to affected and interested parties and to update the Commission Website.

## **SUMMARY:**

At the January 2018 hearing, the Commission continued review and consideration of adopting a policy related to retention of electronic communications. The January staff report and its attachments are included as an attachment to this report. The only

changes to the January report are outlined below and do not affect the Policy changes proposed.

Since that time, County Information Services Department (ISD) has notified LAFCO staff that utilizing the LAFCO staff email extension (@lafco.sbcounty.gov) is not an option for Commissioners. This is because Commissioners would not be accessing the email system from a County-approved terminal.

Therefore, the County has recommended utilizing its license for Microsoft 365, a platform similar to Gmail Business which allows the option to customize an email extension. Additionally, with Microsoft 365, as with Gmail Business, the user has the option to access the emails on a mobile device. The Microsoft 365 accounts would still fall under the County's retention schedule as identified in the proposed policy as presented for the January hearing.

Staff's recommendation is that the Commission have emails subject the County's retention schedule. Therefore, staff is recommending that the Commission choose Microsoft 365 as its email platform via County ISD.

### **CONCLUSION:**

At this time, staff is requesting that the Commission provide any additional changes, corrections or amendments to the proposed policies. Finally, staff recommends that the Commission take the actions outlined on page one which are to:

- Adopt the Electronic Communications Policy as proposed.
- Amend the Records Retention Policy as proposed.
- Authorize the Executive Officer to establish and remove Email addresses for Commissioners, when applicable, with the County Information Services Department using the County as its Email platform.
- Adopt the resolution reflecting these changes to the Policy and Procedure Manual.

KRM/MT

Attachments:

Staff Report dated January 10, 2018 for -- Review and Consideration of Policy Related to Retention of Electronic Communications with Attachments.

# LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION FOR SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

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**DATE:** JANUARY 10, 2018   
**FROM:** KATHLEEN ROLLINGS-McDONALD, Executive Officer  
MICHAEL TUERPE, Project Manager  
**TO:** LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION

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**SUBJECT:** Agenda Item #11: Review and Consideration of Policy Related to  
Retention of Electronic Communications

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that the Commission:

1. Approve the proposed Electronic Communications Policy as included in Attachment #1;
2. Approve the proposed amendment to the Records Retention Policy as included in Attachment #2;
3. Authorize the Executive Officer to establish and remove Email addresses for Commissioners, when applicable, with the County Information Services Department; and,
4. Adopt LAFCO Resolution No. 3258 reflecting the changes to the Policy and Procedure Manual, and direct the Executive Officer to distribute to affected and interested parties and to update the Commission Website.

## **SUMMARY:**

In March 2017, the California Supreme Court ruled in *City of San Jose v. Superior Court*<sup>1</sup> (*City of San Jose*) that electronic messages sent or received on public officials' private devices or in private accounts are subject to disclosure under the California

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<sup>1</sup> *City of San Jose v. Superior Court*, Cal. 4<sup>th</sup>, 214 Cal.Rptr.3d 274. Decided March 2, 2017.

Public Records Act (“PRA”), which had originally been designed to cover paper documents (copy of decision included as Attachment #1 to this report). LAFCO staff recommends that the Commission consider and adopt the proposed Electronic Communications Policy as well as amend its Records Retention Policy. Pursuant to the proposed Electronic Communications Policy, each Commissioner would be assigned a LAFCO Email address.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The PRA requires disclosure of public records, which “includes any writing containing information relating to the conduct of the public’s business prepared, owned, used, or retained” by an agency. This is regardless of physical form or characteristics. Earlier cases determined that voicemails, Emails, and text messages are “writings” under the PRA. *City of San Jose* extended the definition of a “writing” to include “other electronic platforms,” which likely encompasses electronic communication via Email, text, and social media, which must relate in some substantive way to the conduct of the public’s business. Of note, communications that are primarily personal, containing no more than incidental mentions of agency business, generally will not constitute public records.

However, *City of San Jose* does not mention social media or text messages. LAFCO does not have or maintain any social media accounts or participate on any social media platforms. However, personal social media accounts, as with personal Email accounts and texts, could be subject to the PRA if LAFCO business is conducted on such accounts.

The court did acknowledge the inherent balance that must be struck between the public’s rights of access and an individual employee’s or official’s right of privacy, and sought to offer some limited guidance for how searches should be conducted for records sent or received on nongovernmental accounts that pertain to the public’s business.

### **DISCUSSION:**

In light of the *City of San Jose* case, LAFCO’s legal counsel (Best, Best, & Krieger) prepared a sample electronics message policy. This sample policy was shared among several dozen of BB&K’s public agency clients, keeping the cost to the Commission at a minimum. LAFCO staff has modified the sample policy to meet the circumstances of this Commission and its staff. Attachment #2 to this staff report is the draft Electronic Communications Policy.

Public agencies may reasonably rely on officials and employees to search their own personal files, accounts, and devices for responsive material when a records request is received. The Court emphasized that employees/officials do not lose all privacy rights. The proposed policy identifies that when a records request is received, the LAFCO

Clerk will communicate the request to the “LAFCO official” which is defined by the policy to be any commissioner, employee of LAFCO, or a person assigned an Email account through LAFCO. The policy will be to rely on the LAFCO official to search their own personal files – LAFCO will neither seize nor search a LAFCO official’s personal device to comply with a public records request.

The California Supreme Court also discussed an employee or official submitting an affidavit that would give the local agency, requester, and ultimately the trial court reassurance that responsive records were appropriately searched on nongovernmental accounts. Such an approach must also strike “an appropriate balance” with the individual’s right of privacy in their personal affairs. The policy as presented includes the requirement for such a statement and a sample template for signature (included as a part of Attachment #2)

### **Email Platform for Commissioners**

The draft Electronic Communications Policy identifies that all LAFCO Commissioners and staff shall be assigned a LAFCO electronic messaging account (Email account). This would promote the isolation of LAFCO business onto a single platform, and reduce the risk of LAFCO business on personal or other public Email. Staff’s analysis identifies two viable options for Commissioner Email accounts. The first option would be obtaining Email addresses from the County; currently LAFCO contracts with County Information Services Department (ISD) for LAFCO staff Email access and retention. The second option would be to obtain Commissioner Email addresses from Google’s Gmail Business platform. The similarities of both platforms are as follows:

- Ample storage
- Outbound footer (legal statement) can be placed on the Email. This would be in line with the proposed policy.
- Allows for syncing of appointments to Outlook calendar.
- When a PRA Request is received, LAFCO official searches Emails and provides the documents.

The chart below identifies the differences between County and Gmail Business Email platforms:

	<b>County ISD</b>	<b>Gmail Business</b>
<b>Email on mobile device</b>	Is available as a separate charge to LAFCO	Yes
<b>Chat capable</b>	No	Yes
<b>Retention of permanently deleted items</b>	Accessible for 6 months then automatically purged per County Policy schedule	Gmail automatically purges based upon LAFCO setting (i.e. 2 years)

<b>Cost, per user, per month</b>	\$15	\$10
<b>Email address extension</b>	That of staff: @lafco.sbcounty.gov	customizable
<b>When a Commissioner leaves LAFCO service</b>	County ISD will place contents onto storage device and delete account	Clerk would need to access account and place contents onto storage device for retention, then inactivate account

Staff is recommending that the Commission select the County as its Email platform without the added cost for access directly on a mobile device. As identified above, the County has an adopted policy for electronic communications retention and permanent deletion based upon its retention schedule. Second, there would be consistency throughout the agency for all LAFCO officials - same Email extensions, retention schedules, and Email server. Third, when a Commissioner leaves LAFCO, County ISD can provide LAFCO staff with the Email contents on an electronic medium, rather than the Email administrator directly accessing the former Commissioner's account to copy the Email contents. Lastly, if this is the platform chosen by the Commission, then the three Commissioners from the County Board of Supervisors would not necessarily require an additional Email that pertains specifically to LAFCO.

As a part of this process, it is the expectation of the policy that Commissioners and staff use or copy (cc) their LAFCO Email account for all communications related to LAFCO business. Further, LAFCO staff is recommending that a footer message be placed at the bottom of personal or other public agency Email addresses that directs LAFCO business to the LAFCO Email addresses. Staff is recommending that the language of the footer be:

**CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE:**

***This Email address is intended for LAFCO business.** This Email and any files or attachments transmitted with it may contain privileged or otherwise confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient, or believe that you may have received this communication in error, please advise the sender via reply Email and immediately delete the Email you received.*

**Records Retention Policy**

Attachment #3 to this staff report is the draft amendment to the Commission's Records Retention Policy. The basis of the amendment is to adopt the records retention policy for electronic communications of the County of San Bernardino as the Commission's official retention schedule for electronic communications.

Upon leave of service from LAFCO, the LAFCO Email administrator will request that County ISD close the LAFCO official's Email account and for the County ISD to copy the contents from the Email account onto an electronic medium (CD, DVD, USB flash drive) provided to LAFCO to be retained in accordance with the Commission's Record Retention Policy.

**CONCLUSION:**

Communications related to the conduct of public business are not excluded from being public records under the California Public Records Act simply because they were sent or received using a personal account or personal device. The California Supreme Court stated it is the local agency itself that is in the best position to adopt policies that will reduce the likelihood of public records being held in the private accounts of employees or officials that pertain to the public's business.

Staff has reviewed this new court directive and provided its analysis of the new policy to be adopted for the Commission. At this time, staff is requesting that the Commission provide any additional changes, corrections or amendments to the proposed policies. Finally, staff recommends that the Commission:

- Adopt the Electronic Communications Policy as proposed.
- Amend the Records Retention Policy as proposed.
- Authorize the Executive Officer to establish and remove Email addresses for Commissioners, when applicable, with the County Information Services Department using the County as its Email platform.
- Adopt the resolution reflecting the changes to the Policy and Procedure Manual.

KRM/MT

Attachments:

1. California Supreme Court Ruling in *City of San Jose v. Superior Court* Cal. 4<sup>th</sup>, 214 Cal.Rptr.3d 274, Decided March 2, 2017
2. Draft Electronic Communications Policy
3. Draft Records Retention Policy (with track changes)
4. Draft LAFCO Resolution No. 3258

**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF CALIFORNIA**

CITY OF SAN JOSE et al.,	)	
	)	
Petitioners,	)	
	)	S218066
v.	)	
	)	Ct.App. 6 H039498
THE SUPERIOR COURT OF SANTA,	)	Santa Clara County
CLARA COUNTY,	)	Super. Ct. No. 109CV150427
Respondent;	)	
	)	
TED SMITH,	)	
	)	
Real Party in Interest.	)	
	)	
_____	)	

Here, we hold that when a city employee uses a personal account to communicate about the conduct of public business, the writings may be subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act (CPRA or Act).<sup>1</sup> We overturn the contrary judgment of the Court of Appeal.

**I. BACKGROUND**

In June 2009, petitioner Ted Smith requested disclosure of 32 categories of public records from the City of San Jose, its redevelopment agency and the agency’s executive director, along with certain other elected officials and their

<sup>1</sup> Government Code section 6250 et seq. All statutory references are to the Government Code unless otherwise specified.

staffs.<sup>2</sup> The targeted documents concerned redevelopment efforts in downtown San Jose and included emails and text messages “sent or received on private electronic devices used by” the mayor, two city council members, and their staffs. The City disclosed communications made using City telephone numbers and email accounts but did not disclose communications made using the individuals’ personal accounts.

Smith sued for declaratory relief, arguing CPRA’s definition of “public records” encompasses all communications about official business, regardless of how they are created, communicated, or stored. The City responded that messages communicated through personal accounts are not public records because they are not within the public entity’s custody or control. The trial court granted summary judgment for Smith and ordered disclosure, but the Court of Appeal issued a writ of mandate. At present, no documents from employees’ personal accounts have been collected or disclosed.

## II. DISCUSSION

This case concerns how laws, originally designed to cover paper documents, apply to evolving methods of electronic communication. It requires recognition that, in today’s environment, not all employment-related activity occurs during a conventional workday, or in an employer-maintained workplace.

Enacted in 1968, CPRA declares that “access to information concerning the conduct of the people’s business is a fundamental and necessary right of every person in this state.” (§ 6250.) In 2004, voters made this principle part of our Constitution. A provision added by Proposition 59 states: “The people have the right of access to information concerning the conduct of the people’s business, and, therefore, . . . the writings of public officials and agencies shall be open to public scrutiny.” (Cal. Const., art. I, § 3, subd. (b)(1).) Public access laws serve a

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<sup>2</sup> These parties, sued as defendants below and the petitioners here, are collectively referred to as the “City.”

crucial function. “Openness in government is essential to the functioning of a democracy. ‘Implicit in the democratic process is the notion that government should be accountable for its actions. In order to verify accountability, individuals must have access to government files. Such access permits checks against the arbitrary exercise of official power and secrecy in the political process.’ ”

*(International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers, Local 21, AFL-CIO v. Superior Court (2007) 42 Cal.4th 319, 328-329 (International Federation).)*

However, public access to information must sometimes yield to personal privacy interests. When enacting CPRA, the Legislature was mindful of the right to privacy (§ 6250), and set out multiple exemptions designed to protect that right. *(Commission on Peace Officer Standards & Training v. Superior Court (2007) 42 Cal.4th 278, 288 (Commission on Peace Officer Standards); see § 6254.)*

Similarly, while the Constitution provides for public access, it does not supersede or modify existing privacy rights. (Cal. Const., art. I, § 3, subd. (b)(3).)

CPRA and the Constitution strike a careful balance between public access and personal privacy. This case concerns how that balance is served when documents concerning official business are created or stored outside the workplace. The issue is a narrow one: Are writings concerning the conduct of public business beyond CPRA’s reach merely because they were sent or received using a nongovernmental account? Considering the statute’s language and the important policy interests it serves, the answer is no. Employees’ communications about official agency business may be subject to CPRA regardless of the type of account used in their preparation or transmission.

A. *Statutory Language, Broadly Construed, Supports Public Access*

CPRA establishes a basic rule requiring disclosure of public records upon request. (§ 6253.)<sup>3</sup> In general, it creates “a presumptive right of access to any record *created or maintained* by a public agency that relates in any way to the business of the public agency.” (*Sander v. State Bar of California* (2013) 58 Cal.4th 300, 323, italics added.) Every such record “must be disclosed unless a statutory exception is shown.” (*Ibid.*) Section 6254 sets out a variety of exemptions, “many of which are designed to protect individual privacy.” (*International Federation, supra*, 42 Cal.4th at p. 329.) The Act also includes a catchall provision exempting disclosure if “the public interest served by not disclosing the record clearly outweighs the public interest served by disclosure.” (§ 6255, subd. (a).)

“When we interpret a statute, ‘[o]ur fundamental task . . . is to determine the Legislature’s intent so as to effectuate the law’s purpose. We first examine the statutory language, giving it a plain and commonsense meaning. We do not examine that language in isolation, but in the context of the statutory framework as a whole in order to determine its scope and purpose and to harmonize the various parts of the enactment. If the language is clear, courts must generally follow its plain meaning unless a literal interpretation would result in absurd consequences the Legislature did not intend. If the statutory language permits more than one reasonable interpretation, courts may consider other aids, such as the statute’s purpose, legislative history, and public policy.’ [Citation.] ‘Furthermore, we consider portions of a statute in the context of the entire statute and the statutory scheme of which it is a part, giving significance to every word, phrase, sentence, and part of an act in pursuance of the legislative purpose.’ ” (*Sierra Club v. Superior Court* (2013) 57 Cal.4th 157, 165-166.)

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<sup>3</sup> CPRA was modeled on the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. § 552). (*San Gabriel Tribune v. Superior Court* (1983) 143 Cal.App.3d 762, 772.)

In CPRA cases, this standard approach to statutory interpretation is augmented by a constitutional imperative. (See *Sierra Club v. Superior Court*, *supra*, 57 Cal.4th at p. 166.) Proposition 59 amended the Constitution to provide: “A statute, court rule, or other authority, including those in effect on the effective date of this subdivision, shall be *broadly* construed if it furthers the people’s right of access, and *narrowly* construed if it limits the right of access.” (Cal. Const., art. I, § 3, subd. (b)(2), italics added.) “ ‘Given the strong public policy of the people’s right to information concerning the people’s business (Gov. Code, § 6250), and the constitutional mandate to construe statutes limiting the right of access narrowly (Cal. Const., art. I, § 3, subd. (b)(2)), “all public records are subject to disclosure unless the Legislature has *expressly* provided to the contrary.” ’ ’ ” (*Sierra Club*, at p. 166.)

We begin with the term “public record,” which CPRA defines to include “any writing containing information relating to the conduct of the public’s business prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency regardless of physical form or characteristics.” (§ 6252, subd. (e); hereafter “public records” definition.) Under this definition, a public record has four aspects. It is (1) a writing, (2) with content relating to the conduct of the public’s business, which is (3) prepared by, *or* (4) owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency.

1. *Writing*

CPRA defines a “writing” as “any handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostating, photographing, photocopying, transmitting by electronic mail or facsimile, and every other means of recording upon any tangible thing any form of communication or representation, including letters, words, pictures, sounds, or symbols, or combinations thereof, and any record thereby created, regardless of the manner in which the record has been stored.” (§ 6252, subd. (g).) It is undisputed that the items at issue here constitute writings.

In 1968, creating a “writing” could be a fairly involved process. Typically, a person would use an implement to type, or record words longhand, or would

dictate to someone else who would write or type a document. Writings were generally made on paper or some other tangible medium. These writings were physically identifiable and could be retrieved by examining the physical repositories where they were stored. Writings exchanged with people outside the agency were generally sent, on paper, through the mail or by courier. In part because of the time required for their preparation, such writings were fairly formal and focused on the business at hand.

Today, these tangible, if laborious, writing methods have been enhanced by electronic communication. Email, text messaging, and other electronic platforms, permit writings to be prepared, exchanged, and stored more quickly and easily. However, the ease and immediacy of electronic communication has encouraged a commonplace tendency to share fleeting thoughts and random bits of information, with varying degrees of import, often to broad audiences. As a result, the line between an official communication and an electronic aside is now sometimes blurred. The second aspect of CPRA's "public records" definition establishes a framework to distinguish between work-related and purely private communications.

## 2. *Relating to the Conduct of the Public's Business*

The overall structure of CPRA, with its many exemptions, makes clear that not everything written by a public employee is subject to review and disclosure. To qualify as a public record, a writing must "contain[] information relating to the conduct of the public's business." (§ 6252, subd. (e).) Generally, any "record . . . kept by an officer because it is necessary or convenient to the discharge of his official duty . . . is a public record." (*Braun v. City of Taft* (1984) 154 Cal.App.3d 332, 340; see *People v. Purcell* (1937) 22 Cal.App.2d 126, 130.)

Whether a writing is sufficiently related to public business will not always be clear. For example, depending on the context, an email to a spouse complaining "my coworker is an idiot" would likely not be a public record. Conversely, an email to a superior reporting the coworker's mismanagement of an

agency project might well be. Resolution of the question, particularly when writings are kept in personal accounts, will often involve an examination of several factors, including the content itself; the context in, or purpose for which, it was written; the audience to whom it was directed; and whether the writing was prepared by an employee acting or purporting to act within the scope of his or her employment. Here, the City claimed all communications in personal accounts are beyond the reach of CPRA. As a result, the content of specific records is not before us. Any disputes over this aspect of the “public records” definition await resolution in future proceedings.

We clarify, however, that to qualify as a public record under CPRA, at a minimum, a writing must relate in some substantive way to the conduct of the public’s business. This standard, though broad, is not so elastic as to include every piece of information the public may find interesting. Communications that are primarily personal, containing no more than incidental mentions of agency business, generally will not constitute public records. For example, the public might be titillated to learn that not all agency workers enjoy the company of their colleagues, or hold them in high regard. However, an employee’s electronic musings about a colleague’s personal shortcomings will often fall far short of being a “writing containing information relating to the conduct of the public’s business.” (§ 6252, subd. (e).)<sup>4</sup>

*Coronado Police Officers Assn. v. Carroll* (2003) 106 Cal.App.4th 1001 demonstrates the intricacy of determining whether a writing is related to public

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<sup>4</sup> We recognize that this test departs from the notion that “[o]nly purely personal” communications “totally void of reference to governmental activities” are excluded from CPRA’s definition of public records. (Assem. Statewide Information Policy Com., Final Rep. (Mar. 1970) 1 Assem. J. (1970 Reg. Sess.) appen. p. 9; see *San Gabriel Tribune v. Superior Court*, *supra*, 143 Cal.App.3d at p. 774.) While this conception may yield correct results in some circumstances, it may sweep too broadly in others, particularly when applied to electronic communications sent through personal accounts.

business. There, police officers sought access to a database of impeachment material compiled by public defenders. The attorneys contributed to the database and used its contents in their work. (*Id.* at p. 1005.) However, their representation of individual clients, though paid for by a public entity, was considered under case law to be essentially a private function. (*Id.* at pp. 1007-1009; see *Polk County v. Dodson* (1981) 454 U.S. 312, 321-322.) Accordingly, the *Coronado* court concluded the database did not relate to public business and thus was not a public record. (*Id.* at pp. 1007-1009.) The court was careful to note that not all documents related to the database were private, however. Documents reflecting policy decisions about whether and how to maintain the database might well relate to public business, rather than the representation of individual clients. (*Id.* at p. 1009.) Content of that kind would constitute public records. (*Ibid.*)

### 3. *Prepared by Any State or Local Agency*

The City focuses its challenge on the final portion of the “public records” definition, which requires that writings be “prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency.” (§ 6252, section (e).) The City argues this language does not encompass communications agency employees make through their personal accounts. However, the broad construction mandated by the Constitution supports disclosure.

A writing is commonly understood to have been prepared by the person who wrote it. If an agency employee prepares a writing that substantively relates to the conduct of public business, that writing would appear to satisfy the Act’s definition of a public record. The City urges a contrary conclusion when the writing is transmitted through a personal account. In focusing its attention on the “owned, used, or retained by” aspect of the “public records” definition, however, it ignores the “prepared by” aspect. (§ 6252, subd. (e).) This approach fails to give “ ‘significance to every word, phrase, sentence, and part’ ” of the Act. (*Sierra Club v. Superior Court, supra*, 57 Cal.4th at p. 166.)

The City draws its conclusion by comparing the Act’s definitions of “local” and “state” agency. Under CPRA, “ ‘*Local agency*’ includes a county; city, whether general law or chartered; city and county; school district; municipal corporation; district; political subdivision; or any board, commission or agency thereof; other local public agency; or entities that are legislative bodies of a local agency pursuant to subdivisions (c) and (d) of Section 54952.” (§ 6252, subd. (a), italics added.) The City points out that this definition does not specifically include individual government officials or staff members, whereas individuals *are* specifically mentioned in CPRA’s definition of “*state agency*.” According to that definition, “ ‘*State agency*’ means every state office, *officer*, department, division, bureau, board, and commission or other state body or agency, except those agencies provided for in Article IV (except Section 20 thereof) or Article VI of the California Constitution.”<sup>5</sup> (§ 6252, subd. (f)(1), italics added.) The City contends this difference shows the Legislature intended to exclude individuals from the local agency definition. If a local agency does not encompass individual officers and employees, it argues, only writings accessible to the agency as a whole are public records. This interpretation is flawed for a number of reasons.

The City’s narrow reading of CPRA’s local agency definition is inconsistent with the constitutional directive of broad interpretation. (Cal. Const., art. I, § 3, subd. (b)(2); see *Sierra Club v. Superior Court*, *supra*, 57 Cal.4th at p. 175.) Broadly construed, the term “local agency” logically includes not just the discrete governmental entities listed in section 6252, subdivision (a) but also the individual officials and staff members who conduct the agencies’ affairs. It is well established that a governmental entity, like a corporation, can act only through its

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<sup>5</sup> Article IV establishes the Legislature, and article VI establishes the state’s judiciary. (Cal. Const., arts. IV, VI.) These branches of government are thus generally exempt from CPRA. (See *Sander v. State Bar of California*, *supra*, 58 Cal.4th at p. 318; *Copley Press, Inc. v. Superior Court* (1992) 6 Cal.App.4th 106, 111.)

individual officers and employees. (*Suezaki v. Superior Court* (1962) 58 Cal.2d 166, 174; *Alvarez v. Felker Mfg. Co.* (1964) 230 Cal.App.2d 987, 998; see *United States v. Dotterweich* (1943) 320 U.S. 277, 281; *Reno v. Baird* (1998) 18 Cal.4th 640, 656.) A disembodied governmental agency cannot prepare, own, use, or retain any record. Only the human beings who serve in agencies can do these things. When employees are conducting agency business, they are working for the agency and on its behalf. (See, e.g., *Cal. Assn. of Health Facilities v. Dept. of Health Services* (1997) 16 Cal.4th 284, 296-297; cf. *Competitive Enterprise Institute v. Office of Science & Technology Policy* (D.C. Cir. 2016) 827 F.3d 145, 149 [reaching the same conclusion for federal FOIA requests].) We presume the Legislature was aware of these settled principles. (See *People v. Superior Court (Zamudio)* (2000) 23 Cal.4th 183, 199.) A writing prepared by a public employee conducting agency business has been “prepared by” the agency within the meaning of section 6252, subdivision (e), even if the writing is prepared using the employee’s personal account.

The City also fails to explain how its proposed requirement that a public record be “accessible to the agency as a whole” could be practically interpreted. Even when documents were stored in filing cabinets or ledgers, many writings would not have been considered accessible to all agency employees, regardless of their level of responsibility or involvement in a particular project.

Moreover, although employees are not specifically mentioned in the local agency definition, nothing in the statutory language indicates the Legislature meant to *exclude* these individuals from CPRA obligations. The City argues the omission of the word “officer” from the local agency definition reflects a legislative intent that CPRA apply to individuals who work in *state* agencies but *not* employees in local government. The City offers no reason why the Legislature would draw such an arbitrary distinction. If it intended to impose different disclosure obligations on state and local agencies, one would expect to find this difference highlighted throughout the statutory scheme, particularly when the

obligations relate to a “fundamental and necessary right of every person in this state.” (§ 6250.) Yet there is no mention of such an intent anywhere in the Act. Indeed, under the City’s logic, CPRA obligations would potentially extend only to state *officers*, not necessarily state *employees*. The distinction between tenured public officers and those who hold public employment has long been recognized. (See *In re M.M.* (2012) 54 Cal.4th 530, 542-544.) Considering CPRA’s goal of promoting public access, it would have been odd for the Legislature to establish different rules for different levels of state employment. Contrary to the City’s view, it seems more plausible that the reference to “every state . . . officer” in the state agency definition (§ 6252, subd. (f)) was meant to extend CPRA obligations to elected state officers, such as the Governor, Treasurer, or Secretary of State, who are not part of a collective governmental body nor generally considered *employees* of a state agency.<sup>6</sup>

The City’s position is further undermined by another CPRA provision, which indicates that public records can be held by individual officials and need not belong to an agency as a whole. When it is alleged that public records have been improperly withheld, section 6259, subdivision (a) directs that “the court shall order the officer or person charged with withholding the records” to disclose the records or show cause why they should not be produced. If the court concludes “the public official’s decision to refuse disclosure is not justified,” it can order “the public official to make the record public.” (§ 6259, subd. (b).) If the court

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<sup>6</sup> In one respect the local agency definition is worded more broadly than the state agency definition. Section 6252, subdivision (a) states that the term local agency “includes” a county, city, or one of several other listed entities. In statutory drafting, the term “includes” is ordinarily one “of enlargement rather than limitation.” (*Ornelas v. Randolph* (1993) 4 Cal.4th 1095, 1101.) “The ‘statutory definition of a thing as “including” certain things does not necessarily place thereon a meaning limited to the inclusions.’ ” (*Flanagan v. Flanagan* (2002) 27 Cal.4th 766, 774.) By contrast, the definition of “state agency” is couched in more restrictive language: “ ‘State agency’ *means* every state office, officer . . .,” and other listed entities. (§ 6252, subd. (f), italics added.)

finds “that the public official was justified in refusing” disclosure, it must “return the item to the public official without disclosing its content.” (*Ibid.*) The Legislature’s repeated use of the singular word “official” in section 6259 indicates an awareness that an individual may possess materials that qualify as public records. Moreover, the broad term “public official” encompasses officials in state *and* local agencies, signifying that CPRA disclosure obligations apply to individuals working in both levels of government.

4. *Owned, Used, or Retained by Any State or Local Agency*

CPRA encompasses writings prepared *by* an agency but also writings it owns, uses, or retains, regardless of authorship. Obviously, an agency engaged in the conduct of public business will use and retain a variety of writings related to that business, including those prepared by people outside the agency. These final two factors of the “public records” definition, use and retention, thus reflect the variety of ways an agency can possess writings used to conduct public business.

As to retention, the City argues “public records” include only materials in an agency’s possession or directly accessible to the agency. Citing statutory arguments and cases limiting the duty to obtain and disclose documents possessed by others, the City contends writings held in an employee’s personal account are beyond an agency’s reach and fall outside CPRA. The argument fails.

Appellate courts have generally concluded records related to public business are subject to disclosure if they are in an agency’s actual *or constructive* possession. (See, e.g., *Board of Pilot Comrs. for the Bays of San Francisco, San Pablo and Suisun v. Superior Court* (2013) 218 Cal.App.4th 577, 598; *Consolidated Irrigation Dist. v. Superior Court* (2012) 205 Cal.App.4th 697, 710 (*Consolidated Irrigation*)). “[A]n agency has constructive possession of records if it has the right to control the records, either directly or through another person.” (*Consolidated Irrigation*, at p. 710.) For example, in *Consolidated Irrigation*, a city did not have constructive possession of documents in files maintained by subconsultants who prepared portions of an environmental impact report because

the city had no contractual right to control the subconsultants or their files. (*Id.* at pp. 703, 710-711.) By contrast, a city had a CPRA duty to disclose a consultant’s field survey records because the city had a contractual ownership interest and right to possess this material. (See *Community Youth Athletic Center v. City of National City* (2013) 220 Cal.App.4th 1385, 1426, 1428-1429 (*Community Youth*.)

An agency’s actual or constructive possession of records is relevant in determining whether it has an obligation to search for, collect, and disclose the material requested. (See § 6253, subd. (c).) It is a separate and more fundamental question whether a document located outside an agency’s walls, or servers, is sufficiently “owned, used, or retained” by the agency so as to constitute a public record. (See § 6252, subd. (e).) In construing FOIA, federal courts have remarked that an agency’s public records “do not lose their agency character just because the official who possesses them takes them out the door.” (*Competitive Enterprise Institute v. Office of Science and Technology Policy*, *supra*, 827 F.3d at p. 149.) We likewise hold that documents otherwise meeting CPRA’s definition of “public records” do not lose this status because they are located in an employee’s personal account. A writing retained by a public employee conducting agency business has been “retained by” the agency within the meaning of section 6252, subdivision (e), even if the writing is retained in the employee’s personal account.

The City argues various CPRA provisions run counter to this conclusion. First, the City cites section 6270, which provides that a state or local agency may not transfer a public record to a private entity in a manner that prevents the agency “*from providing the record directly* pursuant to this chapter.” (Italics added.) Taking the italicized language out of context, the City argues that public records are only those an agency is able to access “directly.” But this strained interpretation sets legislative intent on its head. The statute’s clear purpose is to prevent an agency from evading its disclosure duty by transferring custody of a record to a private holder and then arguing the record falls outside CPRA because it is no longer in the agency’s possession. Furthermore, section 6270 does not

purport to excuse agencies from obtaining public records in the possession of *their own employees*. It simply prohibits agencies from attempting to evade CPRA by transferring public records to an intermediary not bound by the Act's disclosure requirements.

Next, the City relies on section 6253.9, subdivision (a)(1), which states that an agency must make a public record available "in any electronic format in which *it holds* the information" (italics added), and on section 6253, subdivision (a), which requires that public records be available for inspection "during . . . office hours." These provisions do not assist the City. They merely address the mechanics of how public records must be disclosed. They do not purport to define or limit what constitutes a public record in the first place. Moreover, to say that only public records "in the possession of the agency" (§ 6253, subd. (c)) must be disclosed begs the question of whether the term "agency" includes individual officers and employees. We have concluded it does.

Under the City's interpretation of CPRA, a document concerning official business is only a public record if it is located on a government agency's computer servers or in its offices. Indirect access, through the agency's employees, is not sufficient in the City's view. However, we have previously stressed that a document's status as public or confidential does not turn on the arbitrary circumstance of where the document is located.

In *Commission on Peace Officer Standards, supra*, 42 Cal.4th at pages 289 to 290, a state agency argued certain employment information was exempt from disclosure under CPRA because it had been placed in confidential personnel files. In considering a Penal Code provision that deems peace officer personnel records confidential, we rejected an interpretation that made confidentiality turn on the type of file in which records are located, finding it "unlikely the Legislature intended to render documents confidential based on their location, rather than their content." (*Commission*, at p. 291.) Although we made this observation in analyzing the scope of a CPRA exemption, the same logic applies to the Act's

definition of what constitutes a public record in the first place. We found it unlikely “the Legislature intended that a public agency be able to shield information from public disclosure simply by placing it in” a certain type of file. (*Commission*, at p. 291.) Likewise, there is no indication the Legislature meant to allow public officials to shield communications about official business simply by directing them through personal accounts. Such an expedient would gut the public’s presumptive right of access (*Sander v. State Bar of California*, *supra*, 58 Cal.4th at p. 323), and the constitutional imperative to broadly construe this right (Cal. Const., art. I, § 3, subd. (b)(2)).

In light of these principles, and considering section 6252, subdivision (e) in the context of the Act as a whole (see *Smith v. Superior Court* (2006) 39 Cal.4th 77, 83), we conclude a city employee’s communications related to the conduct of public business do not cease to be public records just because they were sent or received using a personal account. Sound public policy supports this result.

#### B. *Policy Considerations*

Both sides cite policy considerations to support their interpretation of the “public records” definition. The City argues the definition reflects a legislative balance between the public’s right of access and individual employees’ privacy rights, and should be interpreted categorically. Smith counters that privacy concerns are properly addressed in the case-specific application of CPRA’s exemptions, not in defining the overall scope of a public record. Smith also contends any privacy intrusion resulting from a search for records in personal accounts can be minimized through procedural safeguards. Smith has the better of these arguments.

The City’s interpretation would allow evasion of CPRA simply by the use of a personal account. We are aware of no California law requiring that public officials or employees use only government accounts to conduct public business. If communications sent through personal accounts were categorically excluded from CPRA, government officials could hide their most sensitive, and potentially

damning, discussions in such accounts. The City's interpretation "would not only put an increasing amount of information beyond the public's grasp but also encourage government officials to conduct the public's business in private." (Senat, *Whose Business Is It: Is Public Business Conducted on Officials' Personal Electronic Devices Subject to State Open Records Laws?* (2014) 19 Comm. L. & Pol'y 293, 322.)

It is no answer to say, as did the Court of Appeal, that we must presume public officials conduct official business in the public's best interest. The Constitution neither creates nor requires such an optimistic presumption. Indeed, the rationale behind the Act is that it is for the *public* to make that determination, based on information to which it is entitled under the law. Open access to government records is essential to *verify* that government officials are acting responsibly and held accountable to the public they serve. (*CBS, Inc. v. Block* (1986) 42 Cal.3d 646, 651.) "Such access permits checks against the arbitrary exercise of official power and secrecy in the political process." (*Ibid.*) The whole purpose of CPRA is to ensure transparency in government activities. If public officials could evade the law simply by clicking into a different email account, or communicating through a personal device, sensitive information could routinely evade public scrutiny.

The City counters that the privacy interests of government employees weigh against interpreting "public records" to include material in personal accounts. Of course, public employees do not forfeit all rights to privacy by working for the government. (*Long Beach City Employees Assn. v. City of Long Beach* (1986) 41 Cal.3d 937, 951.) Even so, the City essentially argues that the contents of personal email and other messaging accounts should be categorically excluded from public review because these materials have traditionally been considered private. However, compliance with CPRA is not necessarily inconsistent with the privacy rights of public employees. Any personal information not related to the conduct of public business, or material falling under

a statutory exemption, can be redacted from public records that are produced or presented for review. (See § 6253, subd. (a).)

Furthermore, a crabbed and categorical interpretation of the “public records” definition is unnecessary to protect employee privacy. Privacy concerns can and should be addressed on a case-by-case basis. (See *International Federation, supra*, 42 Cal.4th at p. 329.) Beyond the definition of a public record, the Act itself limits or exempts disclosure of various kinds of information, including certain types of preliminary drafts, notes, or memoranda (§ 6254, subd. (a)), personal financial data (§ 6254, subd. (n)), personnel and medical files (§ 6254, subd. (c)), and material protected by evidentiary privileges (§ 6254, subd. (k)). Finally, a catchall exemption allows agencies to withhold any record if the public interest served by withholding it “clearly outweighs” the public interest in disclosure. (§ 6255, subd. (a).) This exemption permits a balance between the public’s interest in disclosure and the individual’s privacy interest. (*International Federation*, at pp. 329-330; *BRV, Inc. v. Superior Court* (2006) 143 Cal.App.4th 742, 755-756.) The analysis here, as with other exemptions, appropriately focuses on the *content* of specific records rather than their location or medium of communication. (See *Commission on Peace Officer Standards, supra*, 42 Cal.4th at p. 291.)<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> While admitting it invoked no CPRA exemptions in the proceedings below, the City nevertheless asks us to decide that messages in employees’ personal accounts are universally exempt from disclosure under section 6255. This issue has not been preserved and is beyond the scope of our grant of review. It also appears impossible to decide on this record. Answering threshold questions about whether employees have a reasonable expectation of privacy (see *Hill v. National Collegiate Athletic Assn.* (1994) 7 Cal.4th 1, 35), or whether their messages are covered by the “deliberative process” privilege (*Times Mirror Co. v. Superior Court* (1991) 53 Cal.3d 1325, 1339-1344) would require a fact-intensive review of the City’s policies and practices regarding electronic communications, if not the contents of the challenged documents themselves. The record here is insufficient.

The City also contends the search for public records in employees' accounts would itself raise privacy concerns. In order to search for responsive documents, the City claims agencies would have to demand the surrender of employees' electronic devices and passwords to their personal accounts. Such a search would be tantamount to invading employees' homes and rifling through their filing cabinets, the City argues. It urges no case has extended CPRA so far.

Arguments that privacy interests outweigh the need for disclosure in CPRA cases have typically focused on the sensitive content of the documents involved, rather than the intrusiveness involved in searching for them. (See, e.g., *International Federation, supra*, 42 Cal.4th 319; *Copley Press, Inc. v. Superior Court* (2006) 39 Cal.4th 1272.) Assuming the search for responsive documents can also constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy, however, this concern alone does not tip the policy balance in the City's favor. Searches can be conducted in a manner that respects individual privacy.

### C. *Guidance for Conducting Searches*

The City has not attempted to search for documents located in personal accounts, so the legality of a specific kind of search is not before us. However, the City and some amici curiae do highlight concerns about employee privacy. Some guidance about how to strike the balance between privacy and disclosure may be of assistance.

CPRA requests invariably impose some burden on public agencies. Unless a records request is overbroad or unduly burdensome, agencies are obliged to disclose all records they can locate "with reasonable effort." (*California First Amendment Coalition v. Superior Court* (1998) 67 Cal.App.4th 159, 166.) Reasonable efforts do not require that agencies undertake extraordinarily extensive or intrusive searches, however. (See *American Civil Liberties Union Foundation v. Deukmejian* (1982) 32 Cal.3d 440, 453; *Bertoli v. City of Sebastopol* (2015) 233 Cal.App.4th 353, 371-372.) In general, the scope of an agency's search for public records "need only be reasonably calculated to locate responsive documents."

*(American Civil Liberties Union of Northern Cal. v. Superior Court* (2011) 202 Cal.App.4th 55, 85; see *Community Youth, supra*, 220 Cal.App.4th at p. 1420.)

CPRA does not prescribe specific methods of searching for those documents. Agencies may develop their own internal policies for conducting searches. Some general principles have emerged, however. Once an agency receives a CPRA request, it must “communicate the scope of the information requested to the custodians of its records,” although it need not use the precise language of the request. (*Community Youth, supra*, 220 Cal.App.4th at p. 1417.) As to requests seeking public records held in employees’ nongovernmental accounts, an agency’s first step should be to communicate the request to the employees in question. The agency may then reasonably rely on these employees to search *their own* personal files, accounts, and devices for responsive material.

Federal courts applying FOIA have approved of individual employees conducting their own searches and segregating public records from personal records, so long as the employees have been properly trained in how to distinguish between the two. (See *Ethyl Corp. v. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency* (4th Cir. 1994) 25 F.3d 1241, 1247.) A federal employee who withholds a document identified as potentially responsive may submit an affidavit providing the agency, and a reviewing court, “with a sufficient factual basis upon which to determine whether contested items were ‘agency records’ or personal materials.” (*Grand Cent. Partnership, Inc. v. Cuomo* (2d Cir. 1999) 166 F.3d 473, 481.) The Washington Supreme Court recently adopted this procedure under its state public records law, holding that employees who withhold personal records from their employer “must submit an affidavit with facts sufficient to show the information is not a ‘public record’ under the PRA. So long as the affidavits give the requester and the trial court a sufficient factual basis to determine that withheld material is indeed nonresponsive, the agency has performed an adequate search under the PRA.” (*Nissen v. Pierce County* (Wn. 2015) 183 Wn.2d 863 [357 P.3d 45, 57].) We agree with Washington’s high court that this procedure, when followed in

good faith, strikes an appropriate balance, allowing a public agency “to fulfill its responsibility to search for and disclose public records without unnecessarily treading on the constitutional rights of its employees.” (*Id.*, 357 P.3d at p. 58.)

Further, agencies can adopt policies that will reduce the likelihood of public records being held in employees’ private accounts. “Agencies are in the best position to implement policies that fulfill their obligations” under public records laws “yet also preserve the privacy rights of their employees.” (*Nissen v. Pierce County, supra*, 357 P.3d at p. 58.) For example, agencies might require that employees use or copy their government accounts for all communications touching on public business. Federal agency employees must follow such procedures to ensure compliance with analogous FOIA requests. (See 44 U.S.C. § 2911(a) [prohibiting use of personal electronic accounts for official business unless messages are copied or forwarded to an official account]; 36 C.F.R. § 1236.22(b) (2016) [requiring that agencies ensure official email messages in employees’ personal accounts are preserved in the agency’s recordkeeping system]; *Landmark Legal Foundation v. Environmental Protection Agency* (D.D.C. 2015) 82 F.Supp.3d 211, 225-226 [encouraging a policy that official emails be preserved in employees’ personal accounts as well].)

We do not hold that any particular search method is required or necessarily adequate. We mention these alternatives to offer guidance on remand and to explain why privacy concerns do not require categorical exclusion of documents in personal accounts from CPRA’s “public records” definition. If the City maintains the burden of obtaining records from personal accounts is too onerous, it will have an opportunity to so establish in future proceedings. (See *Connell v. Superior Court* (1997) 56 Cal.App.4th 601, 615-616; *State Bd. of Equalization v. Superior Court* (1992) 10 Cal.App.4th 1177, 1188.)

#### D. Conclusion

Consistent with the Legislature’s purpose in enacting CPRA, and our constitutional mandate to interpret the Act broadly in favor of public access (Cal.

Const., art. I, § 3, subd. (b)(2)), we hold that a city employee's writings about public business are not excluded from CPRA simply because they have been sent, received, or stored in a personal account.

**DISPOSITION**

The judgment is reversed, and the case is remanded for further proceedings consistent with this opinion.

**CORRIGAN, J.**

**WE CONCUR:**

**CANTIL-SAKAUYE, C. J.**

**WERDEGAR, J.**

**CHIN, J.**

**LIU, J.**

**CUÉLLAR, J.**

**KRUGER, J.**

*See last page for addresses and telephone numbers for counsel who argued in Supreme Court.*

**Name of Opinion** City of San Jose v. Superior Court

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**Unpublished Opinion**  
**Original Appeal**  
**Original Proceeding**  
**Review Granted** XXX 225 Cal.App.4th 75  
**Rehearing Granted**

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**Opinion No.** S218066  
**Date Filed:** March 2, 2017

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**Court:** Superior  
**County:** Santa Clara  
**Judge:** James P. Kleinberg

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**Page 2 – S208181 – counsel continued**

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## **CHAPTER 4: ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION, SECURITY, SAFETY, AND EQUIPMENT**

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### **2. ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY** (Adopted January 17, 2018)

#### **Background and Purpose**

The Commission as the legislative body of the Local Agency Formation Commission for San Bernardino County ("LAFCO") hereby adopts the following policy regarding the conduct of LAFCO business via electronic communications by commissioners and employees. Specifically, this policy is adopted in light of the *City of San Jose* case, which held that a city employee's communications related to the conduct of public business do not cease to be public records under sent or received using a personal account or personal device.

Existing and emerging electronic communications technologies have become an integral part of the ability of Commission officials and staff members to efficiently and effectively conduct Commission business. Such technology has the potential to enhance communications with the public and provide a higher level of service to the citizens of the Commission. However, with such technology in the work environment, the Commission must ensure it continues to meet its legal obligations with respect to transparency in the conduct of the people's business, including in the area of public records disclosure and retention requirements. To that end, the following policy and procedures will be followed.

#### **Definitions**

For purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

"LAFCO" means the Local Agency Formation Commission for San Bernardino County.

"LAFCO official" for this policy shall mean any commissioner, employee of LAFCO, or person assigned an LAFCO electronic messaging account.

"LAFCO business" shall be construed broadly to mean information relating to the conduct of the public's business or communications concerning matters within the subject matter of LAFCO's jurisdiction, including, but not limited to, pending or potential LAFCO projects, past or prospective LAFCO agenda items, or LAFCO budgets or expenditures involving LAFCO funds. Resolution of the question will involve an examination of several factors, including: (a) the content itself; (b) the context in, or purpose for which, it was written; (c) the audience to whom it was directed; (d) the purpose of the communication; and (e) whether the writing was

prepared by an LAFCO official acting or purporting to act within the scope of his or her employment.

"Electronic communications" includes any and all electronic transmission, and every other means of recording upon any tangible thing in any form of communication or representation, including letters, words, pictures, sounds, or symbols, or combinations thereof, and any record thereby created, regardless of the manner in which the record has been stored. Without limiting the nature of the foregoing, "electronic communications" include e-mails, texts, voicemails, and also include communications on or within commercial applications (apps) such as Facebook Messenger, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.

"Electronic messaging account" means any account that creates, sends, receives or stores electronic communications.

### **Policy**

1. All LAFCO officials shall be assigned a LAFCO electronic messaging account.
2. LAFCO accounts shall be used to conduct LAFCO business. LAFCO officials shall not use personal accounts for the creation, transmission or storage of electronic communications regarding LAFCO business.
3. All LAFCO officials shall, within 30 days following the adoption of this policy, search all private, nongovernmental electronic messaging accounts to which they have user access and locate any electronic communications that might constitute a "public record", because it involved "LAFCO business", as set forth above. All such communications shall be forwarded to the LAFCO official's LAFCO-provided account. To the extent the LAFCO official believes that any part of such communications contain personal matter not related to the conduct of the public's business, the LAFCO official shall provide a declaration, as set forth in paragraphs 10 and 11, below.
4. The LAFCO account, along with the attendant access to LAFCO's account server, are solely for LAFCO and LAFCO official's use to conduct LAFCO business and shall not be used for personal business or political activities. Incidental use of LAFCO electronic messaging accounts for personal use by LAFCO officials is permissible, though not encouraged.
5. If an LAFCO official receives an electronic message regarding LAFCO business on his/her non-LAFCO electronic messaging account, or circumstances require such person to conduct LAFCO business on a non-LAFCO account, the LAFCO official shall either: (a) copy ("cc") any communication from a LAFCO official's personal electronic messaging account to his/her LAFCO electronic messaging account; or (b) forward the

associated electronic communication to his/her LAFCO account no later than 10 days after the original creation or transmission of the electronic communication.

6. LAFCO officials shall endeavor to ask persons sending electronic communications regarding LAFCO business to a personal account to instead utilize the LAFCO official's account, and likewise shall endeavor to ask a person sending an electronic communication regarding non-LAFCO business to use the LAFCO official's personal or non-LAFCO electronic messaging account.
7. LAFCO officials understand they have no expectation of privacy in the content of any electronic communication sent or received on an LAFCO account or communication utilizing LAFCO servers. LAFCO provided electronic devices, including devices for which LAFCO pays a stipend or reimburses the LAFCO official, are subject to LAFCO review and disclosure of electronic communications regarding LAFCO business. LAFCO officials understand that electronic communications regarding LAFCO business that are created, sent, received or stored on an electronic messaging account, may be subject to the Public Records Act, even if created, sent, received, or stored on a personal account or personal device.
8. In the event a Public Records Act request is received by LAFCO seeking electronic communications of LAFCO officials, the LAFCO Clerk shall promptly transmit the request to the applicable LAFCO official(s) whose electronic communications are sought. The LAFCO Clerk shall communicate the scope of the information requested to the applicable LAFCO official, and an estimate of the time within which the LAFCO Clerk intends to provide any responsive electronic communications to the requesting party.
9. It shall be the duty of each LAFCO official receiving such a request from the LAFCO Clerk to promptly conduct a good faith and diligent search of his/her personal electronic messaging accounts and devices for responsive electronic communications. The LAFCO official shall then promptly transmit any responsive electronic communications to the LAFCO Clerk. Such transmission shall be provided in sufficient time to enable the LAFCO Clerk to adequately review and provide the disclosable electronic communications to the requesting party.
10. In the event a LAFCO official does not possess, or cannot with reasonable diligence recover, responsive electronic communications from the LAFCO official's electronic messaging account, the LAFCO official shall so notify the LAFCO Clerk, by way of a written declaration, signed under penalty of perjury. In addition, an LAFCO official who withholds any electronic communication identified as potentially responsive must submit a declaration under penalty of perjury with facts sufficient to show the information is

"personal business" and not "public business" under the Public Records Act. The form of the declaration is attached hereto as Attachment A.

11. It shall be the duty of the LAFCO Clerk, in consultation with LAFCO's Legal Counsel, to determine whether a particular electronic communication, or any portion of that electronic communication, is exempt from disclosure. To that end, the responding LAFCO official shall provide the LAFCO Clerk with all responsive electronic communications, and, if in doubt, shall err on the side of caution and should "over produce". If an electronic communication involved both public business and a personal communication, the responding LAFCO official may redact the personal communication portion of the electronic communication prior to transmitting the electronic communication to the LAFCO Clerk. The responding LAFCO official shall provide facts sufficient to show that the information is "personal business" and not "public business" by declaration. In the event a question arises as to whether or not a particular communication, or any portion of it, is a public record or purely a personal communication, the LAFCO official should consult with the LAFCO Clerk or the Legal Counsel. The responding LAFCO official shall be required to sign a declaration, in a form acceptable to the Legal Counsel, attesting under penalty of perjury, that a good faith and diligent search was conducted and that any electronic communication, or portion thereof, not provided in response to the Public Records Act request is not LAFCO business.
12. AB 1234 (ethics) training should include a discussion of the impacts of the *City of San Jose* case and this policy. Such training should include information on how to distinguish between public records and personal records. LAFCO officials who receive AB 1234 training from other providers should actively solicit training from the alternative provider on the impacts of the *City of San Jose* case.
13. LAFCO officials understand that electronic communications regarding LAFCO business are subject to LAFCO's Records Retention Policy (Section II, Chapter 1, Policy 7), even if those electronic communications are or were created, sent, received or stored on an LAFCO official's personal electronic messaging account. It is a felony offense to destroy, alter or falsify a "public record". As such, unless the LAFCO official has cc'd/transmitted electronic communications in accordance with Paragraph 5 above, that LAFCO official must retain all electronic communications regarding LAFCO business, in accordance with LAFCO's adopted records retention policy, regardless of whether such electronic communication is originally sent or received on a personal electronic messaging account.
14. Failure of an LAFCO official to abide by this policy, following its adoption, may result in one or more of the following:
  - Disciplinary action, up to and including termination (for employees);

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- Removal from office (for commissioners);
- Censure (for commissioners);
- Revocation of electronic device privileges (including revocation of stipend or reimbursement);
- Judicial enforcement against the LAFCO official directly, by the requesting party; and

15. This policy does not waive any exemption to disclosure that may apply under the California Public Records Act.

16. Upon leave of service from LAFCO, the Email administrator will request that County ISD close the LAFCO official's Email account and copy the contents from the Email account onto an electronic medium (CD, DVD, USB flash drive) and to be retained in accordance with the Commission's Record Retention Policy.

**ATTACHMENT A**

**DECLARATION**

(attached on following page)

...

California Public Records Act Request  
Pursuant to Gov. Code § 6250 *et seq.*

Declaration of:

Re: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print or type name of official

Insert shorthand name of record request, including  
request number, if applicable

**Regarding Search of Personal Electronic  
Messaging Account**

Requester: \_\_\_\_\_

Print or type name of requester

STATE OF CALIFORNIA  
COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO  
LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION FOR SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

I, \_\_\_\_\_ declare:  
Print name

1. I received notice of a California Public Records Act ("CPRA") request regarding a search of my personal electronic messaging account(s).

2. I understand that the CPRA request seeks:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Insert text of CPRA request.

3. I am the owner or authorized user of the following personal electronic messaging account and have the authority to certify the records:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Insert description of personal electronic messaging account(s).

4. I have made a good faith, diligent, thorough, and complete search of the above mentioned personal electronic messaging account(s) for all electronic communications potentially responsive to the above mentioned CPRA request.

5. Any responsive electronic communications discovered, and referenced below, were prepared or used by me in the ordinary course of business at or near the time of the act, condition or event.

6. Any responsive electronic communications discovered, and referenced below, are true copies of all records described in the above mentioned CPRA request.

Check the applicable box:

- I certify that I do not possess responsive electronic communications.
- I certify that I cannot reasonably recover responsive electronic communications.

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Explain efforts to retrieve responsive electronic communications and why you were unable to recover responsive electronic communications.

- I certify that I discovered potentially responsive electronic communications from my personal electronic messaging account, but I am withholding that information because the information is "personal" business. This is for the following reasons:

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Describe with sufficient facts why the contested information is personal business and not subject to the CPRA. Attach additional pages, if necessary.

- I certify that I discovered potentially responsive electronic communications from my personal electronic messaging account. I am providing all responsive information. However, some information is nonresponsive and I am withholding that information, because the information is personal business. This is for the following reasons:

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Describe with sufficient facts why the contested information is personal business and not subject to the CPRA. Attach additional pages, if necessary.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct and that I have personal knowledge of the facts set forth above.

Executed this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_, in \_\_\_\_\_, California.

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**7. RECORDS RETENTION POLICY** (Adopted October 21, 2009, Amended January 17, 2018)

It is the policy of this Commission to retain San Bernardino LAFCO’s records of proceedings, **electronic communications**, and financial documents and records in accordance with the Records Retention Schedule outlined below.

<u>TYPE OF RECORD</u>	<u>RETENTION PERIOD</u>
<b>Records of Proceedings</b>	Government Code § 56382
<b>Electronic Communications</b>	County of San Bernardino Records Retention Policy
<b>Financial:</b>	
Expense Reports	7 years
Budgets	7 years
Billings/Accounting Reports	7 years
Budget Change Proposals	7 years
Budget Change Concepts	7 years
Audits	7 years
Invoices	7 years
Fees/Receipts	7 years
Checks/Ledgers/Registers	7 years
Cal Stars Reports	7 years
Cost Recovery – Federal	7 years
Cost Recovery – State	7 years
Grants	7 years
Resource: California Secretary of State. “Local Government Records Management Guidelines”, Feb 2006. Under the authority established by Senate Bill 742 (1999), adding Section 12236 to the Government Code.	

The Commission has adopted the financial portion of the “Local Government Records Management Guidelines”, issued by the California Secretary of State pursuant to Government Code Section 12236, as may be amended from time to time by the Secretary of State, as the Commission’s official retention schedule **for financial documents and records**. This policy shall be reviewed, and when necessary updated, at least every five years pursuant to the Secretary of State Guidelines.

**The Commission has adopted the records retention policy for electronic communications of the County of San Bernardino as the Commission’s official retention schedule for electronic communications.**

*San Bernardino LAFCO Policy and Procedure Manual  
Section II – Accounting and Financial Policies*

To implement the retention and destruction of the records pursuant to the Schedule, the Commission designates the Executive Officer as the Records Management Coordinator who shall present a Commission agenda item once a year related to records to be destroyed.

DRAFT

# LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION FOR SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY

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## RESOLUTION NO. 3258

### A RESOLUTION OF THE LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION FOR SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, AMENDING ITS POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

On Wednesday, January 17, 2018, on motion of Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, duly seconded by Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_, and carried, the Local Agency Formation Commission adopts the following resolution:

**SECTION 1.** The Local Agency Formation Commission for San Bernardino County, State of California (hereafter shown as "LAFCO"), hereby finds and determines that it wishes to amend its Policy and Procedure Manual within the Human Resources section (new policy and renumbering of following sections) and Accounting and Financial section (amended policy) related to electronic communications.

**SECTION 2.** The Local Agency Formation Commission for San Bernardino County therefore determines, resolves and orders that:

1. The Policy and Procedure Manual is hereby amended as follows;
2. Chapter 4 of Section III is amended as follows:
  - a. The title of Chapter 4 of Section III is amended to read "Electronic Communication, Safety, and Equipment" is adopted and approved;
  - b. The revision to add new Policy 2: Electronic Communications Policy of Chapter 4 of Section III attached to this resolution as Exhibit "A", and incorporated herein by reference, is adopted and approved; and,
  - c. The revision to subsequent polices in Chapter 4 of Section III are renumbered pursuant to the addition of Item 2 above, is adopted and approved.
3. The amended Policy 7: Records Retention Policy of Chapter 1 of Section II attached to this resolution as Exhibit "B" and incorporated herein by reference, is adopted and approved.

**RESOLUTION NO. 3258**

**SECTION 3.** The Executive Officer of LAFCO is ordered to certify the passage of this resolution and to cause a copy of the amended Policy and Procedure Manual to be posted on the LAFCO Website, and a certified copy of this resolution to be forwarded to the County Executive Officer, each City, Town, and Independent Special District in the County and to affected County Departments.

**THIS ACTION APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY THE LOCAL AGENCY FORMATION COMMISSION FOR SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:**

**AYES: COMMISSIONERS:**

**NOES: COMMISSIONERS:**

**ABSENT: COMMISSIONERS:**

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STATE OF CALIFORNIA            )  
  )ss.  
COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO)

I, KATHLEEN ROLLINGS-McDONALD, Executive Officer of the Local Agency Formation Commission for San Bernardino County, California, do hereby certify this record to be a full, true, and correct copy of the action taken by said Commission, by vote of the members present, as the same appears in the Official Minutes of said Commission at its meeting of January 17, 2018.

DATED: January \_\_, 2018

\_\_\_\_\_  
KATHLEEN ROLLINGS-McDONALD  
Executive Officer