



City Council / Board HR Decision Memo Template

Put HR decisions in front of council or board the right way: issue, recommendation, fiscal impact, risk, alternatives, and the ask.

WHAT THIS HELPS YOU DO

Use this memo template to brief a council or board on any HR decision that needs their approval or awareness — so the decision is framed by staff analysis instead of dais improvisation.

WHEN TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

- Before any HR item appears on a council or board agenda
- When requesting positions, reclassifications, or pay plan changes
- When a personnel controversy requires governing-body awareness
- Before settlements, separations, or policy adoptions needing approval
- When a department head wants council to 'just handle it'

WHAT THIS DOCUMENT HELPS PREVENT

- HR decisions made live on the dais without staff analysis
- Council surprise — the most expensive emotion in public HR
- Fiscal impacts discovered after the vote
- Legal risk discussed in open session when it belonged in executive session
- Decisions with no record of what was recommended and why

Faulkner HR Solutions focuses on the system behind the people problem. This tool is designed to help employers slow down the decision, identify the risk, and create proof before the issue becomes a claim, complaint, turnover event, or credibility problem.

BEFORE YOU START: READINESS CHECKLIST

Gather the following before working through this document. Incomplete inputs are one of the most common reasons employer decisions fail under later scrutiny.

Have it	Input	Notes / location
☐	Employee name and role	



Have it	Input	Notes / location
☐	Date of incident, request, or separation	
☐	Supervisor involved	
☐	Policy or handbook section that applies	
☐	Prior documentation on file	
☐	Pay records, if applicable	
☐	Relevant emails, texts, notes, or complaints	
☐	Decision-maker name	
☐	Deadline, if applicable	



DECISION MEMO TEMPLATE

One page if possible, two at most. Council decisions improve in direct proportion to how clearly staff frames the issue, the cost, the risk, and the specific action requested.

Memo Header

To (council / board) and meeting date	
From (title) and department	
Agenda item type (action / discussion / executive session / consent)	
Subject (one line, specific)	

Section 1 — Issue Summary

Three to five sentences: what is happening, why it requires the governing body, and by when. No adjectives, no history lesson.

Section 2 — Recommendation

State the recommended action as a motion someone could read aloud. If staff cannot recommend, say what analysis is missing.

Section 3 — Fiscal Impact

Current fiscal year cost (and funding source / budget line)	
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Annualized ongoing cost	
Cost of NOT acting (overtime, turnover, liability, service impact)	
Budget amendment required? (Y/N)	

Section 4 — Legal and HR Risk

Addressed	Risk element	Notes
☐	Legal review obtained (who, when) or scheduled	
☐	Executive session justification identified if personnel/litigation matters (cite the exception)	
☐	Precedent effect: what does this decision commit us to for the next case?	
☐	Records/PIA posture: assume every document here is producible	
☐	Employee due process or civil service implications addressed	

Section 5 — Alternatives Considered

Alternative	Cost	Risk / trade-off	Why not recommended
Recommended option			—
Alternative A			
Alternative B (incl. 'do nothing')			

Section 6 — Decision Requested

Specific motion / action requested	
Deadline and consequence of delay	
Implementation owner if approved	
Communication plan after the vote (employees, public, press if needed)	

Role	Name / signature	Date
Prepared by		



Role	Name / signature	Date
Reviewed by (manager/administrator)		
Legal review		

STOP AND REVIEW BEFORE ACTING

If any statement below is true, pause. Get the decision reviewed by HR, counsel, or Faulkner HR Solutions before you act.

- ☐ The item involves a named employee and is headed for open session without legal review.
- ☐ Council is being asked to decide something the charter delegates to the manager.
- ☐ The fiscal impact line says 'minimal' with no number.
- ☐ The memo argues one option instead of presenting alternatives honestly.
- ☐ A settlement or separation is on the agenda with no precedent analysis.

MINIMUM DOCUMENTATION STANDARD

Before this file is closed, the employer should be able to answer every question below and point to where the proof lives.

Question	Your answer / where the proof is stored
What happened?	
When did it happen?	
Who observed or reported it?	
What policy, standard, deadline, or expectation applies?	
What decision was made?	
Who had authority to make the decision?	
What alternatives were considered?	
What risk was reviewed?	
What follow-up is required?	
Where is the proof stored?	

COMMON MISTAKES

1. Bringing council a problem instead of a recommendation with alternatives.



2. Discovering the fiscal note during the meeting.
3. Naming employees and airing discipline details in open session.
4. Writing memos that assume the reader knows the backstory — new members don't.
5. Skipping 'do nothing' as an alternative, which is always an alternative.
6. Treating the memo as advocacy instead of analysis; councils learn which staff do which.

WHAT TO DO NEXT

Route the draft through manager and legal review before the agenda deadline, confirm the session type (open vs. executive) is right for the content, and file the final memo with the minutes — it is the record of what the governing body knew when it decided.

Before you terminate, deduct, discipline, classify, or respond, get the decision reviewed.

Call 210.446.8730 or email thomas@faulknerhrsolutions.info.



Public-sector HR decisions have to survive more than internal disagreement. They have to survive records requests, council questions, budget scrutiny, and public trust.

Need help applying this to a real workplace decision?

Faulkner HR Solutions helps Texas employers, nonprofits, municipalities, and growing businesses fix the people systems behind recurring workplace problems.

If this document raised a risk flag, do not guess your way through the next step.

Call: 210.446.8730

Email: thomas@faulknerhrsolutions.info

Website: faulknerhrsolutions.info

DISCLAIMER

This resource is provided for general employer education and planning purposes. It is not legal advice and does not create an attorney-client relationship. Employment laws, agency guidance, and local requirements may change. Employers should review the facts of each situation before acting and consult appropriate HR or legal counsel when needed.