



CITY OF  
**LA MESA**

JEWEL of the HILLS

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**INTEROFFICE MEMO**

DATE: May 23, 2023

TO: Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Councilmember Laura Lothian

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF DIRECTING STAFF TO AMEND THE POLICY FOR THE DISPLAY OF FLAGS AT CITY FACILITIES TO ONLY ALLOW THE DISPLAY OF GOVERNMENT FLAGS AT CITY HALL

### **Background**

As City Council members are aware, in June of 2022, the Council directed staff to fly a flag at City Hall annually during the month of June representative of solely one group of citizens in our community.

I believe now, as I commented then, that such a policy serves only to recognize one group of community members at the expense of a number of other community groups of all ethnicities, races, religions, and philosophical beliefs that don't have a representative flag flown at City Hall.

The policy established by the City Council appears as well to lack consistency as precedence has also been established by La Mesa.

Despite the "Thin Blue Line" flag representing courage and sacrifice to law enforcement professionals and their families, the City of La Mesa does not allow our police officers to display this flag anywhere out of sensitivity to members of the public who might be offended by such a flag.

### **Discussion and Consideration**

City Hall is a place for all members of the public to conduct local government business, including pulling permits, paying tickets, obtaining business licenses, attending council and commission meetings, or simply having their questions answered.

City Hall represents the most democratic institution in the community, as everyone is invited to participate in its processes, regardless of their

backgrounds and beliefs. All are welcome with no one ever denied entry or services.

To avoid controversy and perceptions of bias, City Hall should be 100 percent neutral on social issues and/or differences between community groups.

Because flags are powerful symbols evoking positive and negative passions, only flags that represent everyone while excluding no one should be flown at City Hall. Those flags are the traditional, institutional government banners of the nation, state, and city: the United States, California, and La Mesa flags.

This policy should be applied universally and consistently, not based on politics and personal philosophies - as evidenced by the City's current policy of allowing one group a representative flag while denying law enforcement a representative flag. This is the very definition of inconsistency, bad public policy, and discrimination.

Our country desperately needs more unity and less division. I appeal to my fellow council members to represent all La Mesans, instead of selectively choosing whom to allow their expression and whom to restrict their expression.

I request my colleagues join me in providing appropriate direction to staff in this regard. I look forward to the discussion.