



CITY OF HOUSTON

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Mayor John Whitmire

DATE: February 9, 2024

SUBJECT: Staff Announcement

Council Members,

I want to announce the initial members of my team in my first month that will be working in the administration. I am continuing to assess the functions of my office and may adjust the roles and responsibilities of team members. I look forward to having all communities and expertise included in my administration.



Allison Alexander, Head of Administrative Operations

Allison Alexander was most recently the director of events and operations at the Jones Graduate School of Business at Rice University. She has previous experience working with the Houston Astros and the University of Houston-Downtown.



Alexa Aragon, Deputy Chief of Governmental Relations

Alexa Aragon has served as the deputy director in the Governmental Relations office at the City of Houston for the past two years, with previous experience as the senior management analyst on the City of Arlington's Intergovernmental Relations and Management Resources team.



Mary Benton, Senior Advisor for Communications

Mary Benton has a decade of experience in public service communications, with roles at the City of Houston and Harris County. Previously, she was a news reporter at KPRC.



Chris Brown, Senior Advisor for Financial Integrity

Chris Brown led on the City's most pressing financial issues during his tenure as city controller, playing an instrumental role in solving Houston's pension crisis and addressing billions of dollars in unfunded Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) liability.



Luis Civallero, Staff Analyst

Luis Civallero was the deputy campaign manager for a successful Houston City Council campaign and has previous experience as a summer law clerk for a Houston-area litigation firm.



Marta Crinejo, Senior Advisor for Council Agenda

Marta Crinejo has served as the agenda director for the City of Houston for the past 13 years, with more than 20 years of experience at the City.



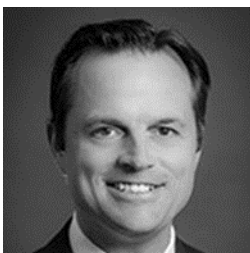
Steven David, Deputy Chief of Staff

Steven David was most recently a manager at Accenture in the public service consulting division. He has also worked at KPMG and has experience in the Office of Economic Development and the Office of Innovation at the City of Houston.



Marlene Gafrick, Senior Advisor for Planning

Marlene Gafrick was most recently at MetroNational, where she served as the Director of Planning for ten years. She has 33 years of experience with the City of Houston Planning Department and led the department as its director for eight of those years.



Chris Newport, Chief of Staff

Chris Newport was most recently a senior manager at Accenture in the public service consulting division. He has also served as chief of staff for a former Houston mayor and was the executive vice president and chief of staff of the Houston Super Bowl host committee.



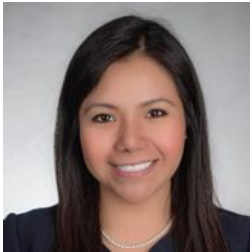
Scout Odegaard, Senior Advisor for Boards & Commissions

Scout Odegaard was most recently the government affairs manager at the Greater Houston Builders Association, with previous experience at the U.S. House of Representatives and Texas State Legislature.



Julia Ossemi-Seied, Staff Analyst

Julia Ossemi-Seied has worked under two Houston City Council Members, most recently serving as a deputy chief of staff and director of communications.



Diana Patiño, Senior Advisor for Communications (volunteer)

Diana Patiño is the founder and president of Patino Strategies, LLC and has run campaigns at various levels of government. She was previously the Public Policy, Legislative, and Public Relations Director for the Harris County Tax Assessor's office and has prior experience at the U.S. House of Representatives, Texas State Legislature, and City of Houston.



Joshua Sanders, Chief of Intergovernmental Relations

Joshua Sanders is a former lobbyist that has represented clients at various levels of government including municipalities, counties, local government corporations, and the State of Texas.



Ahmed Sharma, Senior Multimedia Specialist

Ahmed Sharma is a digital content specialist, with prior roles at Fox and Sinclair Broadcast Group. He has also worked in academia, as an adjunct professor and researcher.



Jose Soto, Senior Advisor for Labor Relations

Jose Soto was most recently the assistant public information officer, legislative liaison, and council liaison for Houston's Municipal Courts. Previously, he worked under three Houston City Council Members and served as deputy agenda director for a former Houston mayor. He has prior experience at the Texas State Legislature and is an active member of HOPE.



Veronica Weatherspoon, Senior Advisor for Constituent Engagement

Veronica Weatherspoon has served as the division manager for the Correspondence & Constituent Services Division for the past 10 years, with more than 16 years of experience at the City.



Elijah J. Williams, Senior Advisor for Infrastructure and Economic Development

Elijah J. Williams has led Houston's Energy Corridor as executive director for the past four years. He has served at the local, state, and federal levels of government for 20 years, including roles in the Texas Legislature, U.S. Small Business Administration, and NASA, with time as a presidential appointee.



Rebekah Williams, Senior Advisor for Community Relations

Rebekah Williams has served as the communications specialist supervisor at the City of Houston, with previous community and communications experience in local radio.



Cynthia Wilson, Senior Advisor for Organizational Culture and Education

Cynthia Wilson is a longtime educator with more than 25 years of experience in Texas' two largest school districts and recent experience in education consulting. She also served as the superintendent of Orangeburg Consolidated School District.