

CITY OF COVINA
CITY COUNCIL & ELECTED OFFICIALS CODE OF CONDUCT

ALL ELECTED OFFICIALS

All members of the City Council, including those serving as Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem, have equal votes. No Council Member has more power than any other Council Member, and all should be treated with equal respect.

All Council Members and Elected Officials should:

- Demonstrate honesty and integrity in every action and statement
- Serve as a model of leadership and civility to the community
- Inspire public confidence in Covina government
- Work for the common good, not personal interest
- Prepare in advance of Council meetings and be familiar with issues on the agenda
- **Attend and** fully participate in City Council meetings and other public forums while demonstrating respect, kindness, consideration, and courtesy to others
- Participate in scheduled **events and** activities to increase Council effectiveness
- Review Council procedures, such as these Council Protocols, at least annually
- Represent the City at ceremonial functions at the request of the Mayor
- Be responsible for the highest standards of respect, civility, and honesty in ensuring the effective maintenance of inter-governmental relations
- Respect the proper roles of Elected Officials and City staff in ensuring open and effective government
- Provide contact information to the City Manager in case of an emergency or urgent situation arises while the Council Member **or Elected Official** is out of town

COUNCIL & ELECTED OFFICIALS CONDUCT WITH ONE ANOTHER

~~Councils~~ The City Council and Elected Officials are composed of individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, opinions, and goals. Despite this diversity, all have chosen to serve in public office in order to improve the quality of life in the community. In all cases, this common goal should be acknowledged even as ~~Council~~ Elected Officials may "agree to disagree" on contentious issues.

In Public Meetings

- Use formal titles.

The Council and Elected Officials should refer to one another formally during Council meetings as Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, ~~or~~ Council Member, City Clerk, or City Treasurer followed by the individual's last name.

- Practice civility and decorum in discussions and debate.

Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of a free democracy in action. Be respectful of diverse opinions.

- Honor the role of the presiding officer in maintaining order and equity.

Respect the Mayor's efforts to focus discussion on current agenda items. Objections to the Mayor's actions should be voiced politely and with reason, following parliamentary procedures.

- Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches.

Council Members have a public ~~stage~~ platform to show how individuals with disparate points of view can find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the community as a whole. Council Members and Elected Officials are role models for residents and other stakeholders involved in public debate.

- Be respectful of other people's time.

Stay focused and act efficiently during public meetings.

In Private Encounters

- Treat others as you would like to be treated.

Ask yourself how you would like to be treated in similar circumstances, and then treat the other person that way.

COUNCIL & ELECTED OFFICIALS CONDUCT WITH CITY STAFF

Governance of a City relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials, who set policy, and City staff, ~~which~~ **who** analyze problems and issues, make recommendations, and implement and administer the ~~Council's~~ policies **adopted by the City Council**. Therefore, every effort should be made to be cooperative and show mutual respect for the contributions made by each individual for the good of the community.

- Treat all staff as professionals.

Clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual is expected. As with ~~your~~ Council **and elected** colleagues, practice civility and decorum in all interactions with City staff.

- Channel requests of staff through the City Manager or ~~his/her~~ **their** designee.

Requests of City staff should be directed only to the City Manager or ~~his/her~~ **their** designee. Council Members **and Elected Officials** should not set up meetings with department staff directly, but work through the City Manager.

- All Council Members should have the same information with which to make decisions.

Information requested by an individual Council Member or Elected Official will be made available to all Council members. All information requests should respect the “one hour” rule (See below).

- Never publicly criticize an individual employee, including Council-Appointed Officers. Criticism is differentiated from questioning facts or the opinion of staff.

All critical comments about staff performance should **remain confidential and** only be made to the City Manager through private correspondence or conversation.

- City Manager is administrative head of the City.

Any concerns a Council Member or Elected Official may have regarding day-to-day operations of the City should be directed to the City Manager. Avoid any staff interactions that may be construed as trying to direct or shape staff recommendations. Council Members and Elected Officials shall refrain from coercing staff in making recommendations to the Council as a whole.

- Be cautious in representing City positions on issues.

Before sending correspondence related to a legislative position, check with City staff to see if a position has already been determined. When corresponding with representatives of other governments or constituents, remember to indicate, if appropriate, that the views you state are your own and may not represent those of the ~~full Council~~ **City**.

- Do not attend staff meetings unless requested by City Manager.

Even if the Council Member or Elected Official does not say anything, their presence may imply support, show partiality, intimidate staff, or hamper staff's ability to do its job objectively.

- Respect the “one hour” rule for staff work.

Requests for staff support should be made to the City Manager, according to the protocol for channeling communications. Any request, which would require more than one hour of staff time to research a problem or prepare a response, will need to be approved by the full Council to ensure that staff resources are allocated in accordance with overall [Council City](#) priorities. Once notified that a request for information or staff support would require more than one hour, the Council Member [or Elected Official](#) may request that the City Manager place the request on an upcoming Council [meeting](#) agenda.

- Depend upon the staff to respond to citizen concerns and complaints.

It is the role of Council Members [and Elected Officials](#) to pass on concerns and complaints [within their designated roles and responsibilities](#) on behalf of their constituents. It is not, however, appropriate to pressure staff to solve a problem in a particular way. Refer citizen complaints to the appropriate Department [Head Director](#). The senior staff member should respond and is responsible for making sure the Council Member [or Elected Official](#) knows how the complaint was resolved.

COUNCIL AND ELECTED OFFICIAL CONDUCT WITH BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

The City has established several Boards and Commissions as a means of gathering more community input. Citizens who serve on Boards and Commissions become more involved in government and serve as advisors to the City Council. They are a valuable resource to the City's leadership and should be treated with appreciation and respect. Council Members serve as liaisons to Boards and Commissions, according to appointments made by the Mayor, and in this role are expected to represent the full Council in providing guidance to the Board or Commission. [The City Treasurer also serves on the Finance Advisory Commission in a non-voting capacity.](#) In other instances, Council Members or Elected Officials may attend Board or Commission meetings as individuals, and should follow these protocols:

- If attending a Board or Commission meeting [as an individual](#), identify your comments as personal views or opinions [and not that of the entire City.](#)

Elected Officials may attend any Board or Commission meeting, which are always open to any member of the public. Any public comments [made](#) by an Elected Official at a Board or Commission meeting, when that Elected Official is not the liaison to [or a member of](#) the Board or Commission, should be clearly made as individual opinion and not a representation of the feelings of the entire City [Council.](#)

- Limit contact with Board and Commission members to questions of clarification.

It is inappropriate for a Council Member or Elected Official to contact a Board or Commission member to lobby on behalf of an individual, business, or developer, or to advocate a particular policy perspective. ~~It is acceptable for Council Members or Elected Officials to~~ [but may](#) contact Board or Commission members in order to clarify a position taken by the Board or Commission.

- Remember that Boards and Commissions are advisory to the Council as a whole, not individual Council Members.

The City Council appoints individuals to serve on Boards and Commissions, and it is the responsibility of Boards and Commissions to follow policy established by the Council. Council Members and Elected Officials ~~should not feel they do not~~ have the power or [right authority](#) to threaten Board and Commission members in any way if they disagree about an issue. A Board or Commission appointment should not be used as a political "reward."

- Concerns about an individual Board or Commission member should be pursued with tact.

If a Council Member [or Elected Official](#) has a concern with the effectiveness of a particular Board or Commission member ~~and is comfortable in talking with that individual privately, the Council Member should do so. Alternatively, or if the problem is not resolved, the Council Member~~ [they](#) should consult with the Mayor, who can bring the issue to the Council as appropriate.

- Be respectful of diverse opinions.

A primary role of Boards and Commissions is to represent many points of view in the community and to provide the Council with advice based on a full spectrum of concerns

and perspectives. Council Members and Elected Officials may have a closer working relationship with some individuals serving on Boards and Commissions, but must be fair to and respectful of all citizens serving on Boards and Commissions.

- Keep political support away from public forums.

Board and Commission members may offer political support to a Council Member or an Elected Official, but not in a public forum while conducting official duties. Conversely, Council Members and Elected Officials may support Board and Commission members who are running for office, but not in an official forum in their capacity as a Council Member or Elected Official.

- Maintain an active liaison relationship.

Appointed Council liaisons are encouraged to attend all regularly scheduled meetings of their assigned Board or Commission, or to arrange for an alternate to attend in their absence.

STAFF CONDUCT WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

- Respond to Council & Elected Official questions as fully and as expeditiously as is practical.

The protocol for staff time devoted to research and response is in application here. If an Elected Official forwards a complaint or service request to a Department Director head ~~there will be follow through with~~ the Department will provide a response to the complainant and notify the Elected Official as to the outcome.

- Respect the role of Council Members as policy makers for the City.

Staff is expected to provide its best professional recommendations on issues. Staff should not try to determine Council support for particular positions or recommendations in order to craft recommendations. The Council must be able to depend upon the City staff to make independent recommendations. Staff should provide information about alternatives to staff recommendations as appropriate, as well as pros and cons for staff recommendations and alternatives.

- Demonstrate professionalism and non-partisanship in all interactions with the community and in public meetings.
- It is important for the staff to demonstrate respect for the Council and Elected Officials at all times. All Council Members and Elected Officials should be treated equally.

OTHER PROCEDURAL ISSUES

- Commit to periodic review of important procedural issues.

Annually, or as required by law, the Council will review the ~~Council~~ Elected Officials protocols, adopted procedures for meetings, the [Ralph M. Brown Act](#), conflict of interest, and other important procedural issues.

Use of [City Letterhead](#)

- [Authorized use of](#) City letterhead ~~may be used~~ by Council Members.

Council members may use letterhead only for [approved](#) communication with constituents or stating City adopted positions.

- [Unauthorized use of](#) City letterhead ~~may not be used~~ by Council Members [and Elected Officials](#).

City letterhead may not be used for personal business or to present an opposing view once an official position has been taken by the Council. All official City Council positions will be stated over the signature of the Mayor only or as directed. [Elected Officials not currently serving on the City Council are not authorized to use City letterhead but may channel requests for communications through the Mayor or City Manager.](#)

[Certificates and Proclamations](#)

Certificate and Proclamation requests may be made from any member of the public, Elected Officials, or City staff. Requests from members of the public shall be submitted in writing and addressed to the Mayor and/or the City Manager for approval.

- [Certificates](#)

Certificates are less formal than proclamations and are typically prepared in order to recognize an achievement, milestone, event, or celebration. Certificates may be presented outside of City Council meetings or may appear on the agenda.

- [Proclamations](#)

Proclamations contain more information and are designed to bring attention to a particular subject by proclaiming something on a certain day, week, or month. Proclamations typically appear on the City Council meeting agenda but may also be presented outside of City Council meetings.

Examples of recognition through certificates and proclamations include, but are not limited to: Community events, athletic/academic accomplishments, acts of heroism, annual commemorative events, regional events, months and/or weeks honoring or raising awareness for causes, or commemorative months and/or weeks.

- [Objections](#)

Any Council Member may notify the Mayor of objections to any certificate or proclamation. At which time, the item may be agendaized for consideration by the entire City Council.

Council Meetings

- The Mayor should work with the City Manager to plan the Council meetings.

There are three (3) purposes to the pre-Council planning meeting: 1) to plan how the meeting will be conducted; 2) to identify any issues or questions that may need greater staff preparation for the meeting; and 3) to discuss future meetings. The purpose of the meeting is not to work on policy issues. Normally, only the Mayor is expected to attend the pre-Council meetings with the City Manager and other staff, as required.

- Attendance of Council Meetings

In order to help facilitate the conduct of business, Council Members and Elected Officials are expected to attend all regularly scheduled Council meetings and special meetings unless the absence is excused. Excused absences for the entirety or a portion of a meeting must be granted by the Mayor, or the Mayor Pro Tem in their absence, prior to the start of the meeting.

- Remote Participation

Council Members and Elected Officials shall make good effort to attend meetings in-person but will be allowed to participate remotely, as necessary, according to procedures set forth in the California Government Code.

- Council Member placement of items on the Agenda.

At the request of two (2) Council members, the City Manager will place an item on the agenda.

- Don't politicize procedural issues (e.g. minutes approval or agenda order) for strategic purposes.

- Submit questions on Council agenda items ahead of the meeting.

In order to focus the Council meetings on consideration of policy issues and to maintain an open forum for public discussion, questions which focus on the policy aspects of agenda items should be discussed at the Council meeting rather than in one-on-one communications with staff prior to the meetings. Any clarifications or technical questions that can be readily answered can be handled before the meeting. Council Members are encouraged to submit their questions on agenda items to the City Attorney, City Manager, or Assistant City Manager as far in advance of the meeting as possible so that staff can be prepared to respond at the Council meeting.

- ~~Mayoral discretion on controversial items.~~

~~On highly controversial items, the Mayor may: 1) move placement of the item on the agenda to facilitate the flow of all agenda business; 2) may limit the time allotted to individual speakers on an item; 3) may limit the total time allotted for public comment on an individual item.~~

- Confidentiality of Closed Session.

Confidentiality applies to any non-public discussion items. Council Members will not speak to affected/opposing parties, the [press media](#), or any individual not present about items discussed in closed session. Any written reports or materials presented during closed session will be turned in at the end of closed session.

- [Adjourning in Memory](#)

The City Council and Elected Officials may, at their discretion, adjourn a meeting in memory of recently deceased members of the community. Requests to adjourn in memory may be made by any member of the City Council or Elected Official and subject to the sole approval of the Presiding Officer.

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ENFORCEMENT

Failure of an Elected Official to observe and conduct ~~himself/herself~~ themselves in accordance with these adopted Protocols may result in, but not be limited to, the following actions:

- 1) Private counseling of the Elected Official;
- 2) Letter of warning/reprimand from the City Council;
- 3) Restrictions upon City-authorized travel;
- 4) Removal from serving as City representative/liaison to internal Boards and Commissions and to inter-governmental organizations;
- 5) Reductions in personal expense budget;
- 6) Exclusion from closed session discussions;
- 7) ~~Restricting~~ Restriction of the Elected Official's communications with City staff;
- 8) Censure by the City Council; and
- 9) In the most serious cases, referral of the matter to the Fair Political Practices Commission, District Attorney, or grand jury for ethics investigation and/or criminal prosecution.