

CITY OF TEMECULA
CITY COUNCIL POLICY



Title:	Code of Conduct
Policy No.	TBD
Approved:	September 28, 2021
Revised:	N/A

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this City Council policy is to provide for considerate and thoughtful civil discourse through which respectful dialogue can occur in the best interest of the community.

POLICY:

The policy of the City Council with respect to the matter listed in the above-referenced title is as follows:

1. Elected and Appointed Officials' Conduct with One Another

Elected officials are individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, opinions, and goals. Notwithstanding this diversity, all have chosen to serve in public office in order to preserve and protect the high quality of life of the community. Even in the face of adversity and differences of opinion, this common goal is acknowledged and remains at the forefront.

1(a). In Public Meetings

Formal titles and professional appearance

Elected officials will refer to one another formally during public meetings, such as Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, Chair, or Council Member followed by the individual's last name. Council Members shall present a professional appearance in all public meetings.

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. While public officials have a right to state their opinions, public officials should set an example and refrain from personal, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or other disparaging comments. Shouting or physical actions that could be construed as threatening will not be tolerated.

Role of Mayor in maintaining order

It is the responsibility of the Mayor to keep the comments of members on track during public meetings. Members should honor efforts by focusing discussion on current agenda items. If there is disagreement about the agenda or the Mayor's actions, those objections should be voiced politely and with reason, following procedures outlined in the City Council Rules of Order.

Effective problem-solving approaches

Members have a public stage to show how individuals with disparate points of view can find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the community as a whole. Outside of official meetings, individual members represent themselves and not the City as a whole unless specifically authorized to do so by law or City Council policy. In private settings, members may communicate their individual viewpoints and opinions unless otherwise prohibited by law. In public, all members should strive to represent the official policies or positions of the City and City Council, although both the majority and minority viewpoint reflected in discussion may be shared or reported on.

1(b). In Private Encounters

Respectful behavior in private

The same level of respect and consideration of differing points of view that is deemed appropriate for public discussions should be maintained in private conversations.

Insecurity of written notes, voicemail messages, and e-mail

Technology allows words written or said without much forethought to be distributed wide and far. Written notes, voicemail messages and e-mail should be treated as potentially "public" communication.

Private conversations with a public presence

Elected officials are always on display and should be aware that their actions, mannerisms, and language are monitored by people around them that they may not know and may be shared with others unbeknownst to them.

2. Elected and Appointed Officials' Conduct with City Staff

Governance of a City relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials, who set policy, appointed officials who advise the elected officials, and staff who implement and administer City Council direction and policy. Every effort should be made to show mutual respect for the contributions made by all for the betterment of the community.

Staff as professionals

The general expectation for all is clear and honest communication respecting the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual. Contrary behavior towards staff is not acceptable.

Public criticism of employees

Elected officials should refrain from expressing concerns about individual employee conduct or performance in public, to the employee directly, or to the employee's manager. Such comments should be shared with the City Manager directly through private correspondence or conversation.

Involvement in administrative functions

In accordance with Section 2.12.080 of the Temecula Municipal Code, elected officials should not attempt to influence staff on the making of appointments, awarding of contracts, selecting of consultants, processing of development applications, granting of City licenses and permits, or any other administrative functions or operations of the City that fall within the purview of the City Manager.

Requests for staff support

Routine administrative support is provided to all Council Members. The Executive Assistant or others designated in the City Manager's Office, open and distribute mail, manage calendars and scheduling of meetings, and perform other similar administrative tasks for the City Council. Requests for additional staff support should be made to the City Manager directly to ensure proper allocation of resources.

Solicitation of political support

Elected officials shall not solicit any type of political support (financial contributions, display of posters or lawn signs, name on support list, etc.) from staff. City staff may, as private citizens with constitutional rights, support political candidates but all such activities must be done away from the workplace without utilizing any City equipment and/or resources.

3. Elected and Appointed Officials' Conduct with the Public

3(a). In Public Meetings

Making the public feel welcome is an important part of the democratic process. Every effort should be made to be fair and impartial in listening to public testimony. While questions of clarification may be asked, the elected official's primary role during public testimony is to actively listen.

Maintain an open mind

Members of the public deserve an opportunity to influence the thinking of elected officials. To express an opinion prior to the close of debate or a public hearing casts doubt on the ability to obtain a fair review of the issue. This is particularly important when officials are serving in a quasi-judicial capacity and in these cases Council Members shall not express an opinion on the matter prior to the completion of the public hearing or receive evidence on the matter outside of the public hearing.

Asking for clarification and avoiding debate

Only the Mayor can interrupt a speaker during a presentation. However, a Council Member can ask the Mayor for a point of order if the speaker is off the topic or exhibiting disruptive behavior. It is the responsibility of the Mayor to remain calm at all times, keep the speaker focused, and maintain the order and decorum of the meeting. The Mayor and all members of the City Council should follow the City Council Rules of Order in conducting public meetings and the City Attorney is present to make any final rulings on meeting procedures if needed.

3(b). In Unofficial Settings

Members will frequently be asked to explain a Council action or to give their opinion about an issue as they meet and talk with constituents in the community. It is appropriate to give a brief overview of City policy and to refer to City staff for further information. It is inappropriate to overtly or implicitly promise Council or board/commission action, or to promise City staff will do something specific (fix a pothole, remove a library book, plant new flowers in the median, etc.). It is acceptable to publicly disagree about an issue, but it is unacceptable to make derogatory comments about other members, their opinions and actions. Members shall refrain from expressing any opinions related to quasi-judicial land use matters in all unofficial settings as such discussions must occur in public meetings for the official record. Unofficial settings include internet and social media platforms (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.)

4. Enforcement

The Code of Conduct expresses standards of conduct expected for members of the Temecula City Council. Members themselves have the primary responsibility to assure that ethical standards are understood and met, and that the public can continue to have full confidence in the integrity of local government. Members who intentionally and repeatedly do not follow proper conduct may be reprimanded or formally censured by the Council, lose committee assignments, or have other official representation on behalf of the City restricted. Serious infractions of the Code of Conduct could lead to other sanctions as deemed appropriate by the Council.

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