

This Code of Conduct is designed to describe the manner in which Council members should treat one another, city staff, constituents, and others they come into contact with in representing the Mar Vista. It reflects the work of the Mar Vista Community Council while defining more clearly the behavior, manners, and courtesies that are suitable for various occasions. The constant and consistent theme through all of the conduct guidelines is “respect.”

Council members experience stress in making decisions that impact the lives of the citizens. At times, the impacts of the entire community must be weighed against the impact of only a few. Despite these pressures, elected officials are called upon to exhibit appropriate behavior at all times. Demonstrating respect for each individual through words and actions is the touchstone that can help guide Council members to do the right thing in even the most difficult situations.

All Council members should:

- Fully participate in City Council meetings and other public forums while demonstrating respect, kindness, consideration, and courtesy to others.
- Prepare in advance of meetings and be familiar with issues on the agenda.
- Represent the City at ceremonial functions in a respectful manner.
- Be respectful of other people’s time. Stay focused and act efficiently during public meetings.
- Serve as a model of leadership and civility to the community.
- Inspire public confidence in Mar Vista Community Council.
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity in every action and statement.

COUNCIL CONDUCT WITH ONE ANOTHER

Councils 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 preserve and protect the present and the future of the community. In all cases, this common goal should be acknowledged even as Council may “agree to disagree” on contentious issues.

In Public Meetings

- Practice civility, professionalism 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. This does not allow, however, Council members to make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments. No shouting or physical actions that could be construed as threatening will be tolerated. Council members should conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times, including dress.
- Honor the role of the Chair in maintaining order it is the responsibility of the Chair to keep the comments of Council members on track during public meetings. Council members should honor efforts by the Chair to focus discussion on current agenda items. If there is disagreement about the agenda or the Chair’s actions, those objections should be voiced politely and with reason, following procedures outlined in parliamentary procedure.
- Avoid personal comments that could offend other Council members. If a Councilmember is personally offended by the remarks of another Council member, the offended Council member should make notes of the actual words used and call for a “point of personal privilege” that challenges the other Council member to justify or apologize for the language used. The Chair will maintain control of this discussion.
- Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches. Council 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.
- Be punctual and keep comments relative to topics discussed, Council members have made a commitment to attend meetings and partake in discussions. Therefore, it is important that Council members be

punctual and that meetings start on time. It is equally important that discussions on issues be relative to the topic at hand to allow adequate time to fully discussed scheduled issues.

COUNCIL CONDUCT WITH CITY STAFF

Governance of a City relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials who set policy and staff who implement and administer the Council's policies. 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. Poor behavior towards staff is not acceptable.**
- **Do not disrupt City staff from their jobs. Council members should not disrupt City staff while they are in meetings, on the phone, or engrossed in performing their job functions in order to have their individual needs met.**
- **Never publicly criticize an individual employee. Council should never express concerns about the performance of a City employee in public, to the employee directly, or to the employee's manager. Comments about staff performance should only be made through private correspondence or conversation.**

COUNCIL CONDUCT WITH THE PUBLIC

In Public Meetings Making the public feel welcome is an important part of the democratic process. No signs of partiality, prejudice or disrespect should be evident on the part of individual Council members toward an individual participating in a public forum. Every effort should be made to be fair and impartial in listening to public testimony.

- Be welcoming to speakers. Speaking in front of Council can be a difficult experience for some people. Some issues the Council undertakes may affect people's daily lives and homes. Some decisions are emotional. The way that Council treats people during public hearings can do a lot to make them relax or to push their emotions to a higher level of intensity.
- Be fair and equitable in allocating public hearing time to individual speakers. The Chair will determine and announce limits on speakers at the start of the public hearing process. Generally, each speaker will be allocated three-minutes with applicants and appellants or their designated representatives allowed more time. If many speakers are anticipated, the Mayor may shorten the time limit and/or ask speakers to limit themselves to new information and points of view not already covered by previous speakers. No speaker will be turned away unless he or she exhibits inappropriate behavior. Each speaker may only speak once during the public hearing unless the Council requests additional clarification later in the process. After the close of the public hearing, no more public testimony will be accepted unless the Chair reopens the public hearing for a limited and specific purpose.
- Give the appearance of active listening. It is disconcerting to speakers to have Council members not look at them when they are speaking. It is fine to look down at documents or to make notes, but reading for a long period of time gazing around the room gives the appearance of disinterest. Be aware of facial expressions, especially those that could be interpreted as "smirking," disbelief, anger or boredom.
- Ask for clarification, but avoid debate and argument with the public. Only the Chair - not individual Council members -- can interrupt a speaker during a presentation. However, a Council member can ask the Chair for a point of order if the speaker is off the topic or exhibiting behavior or language the Council member finds disturbing. If speakers become flustered or defensive by Council questions, it is the responsibility of the Chair to calm and focus the speaker and to maintain the order and decorum of the meeting. Questions by Council members to members of the public testifying should seek to clarify or expand information. It is never appropriate to

belligerently challenge or belittle the speaker. Council members' personal opinions or inclinations about upcoming votes should not be revealed until after the public hearing is closed.

- **No personal attacks of any kind, under any circumstance.** Council members should be aware that their body language and tone of voice, as well as the words they use, can appear to be intimidating or aggressive.

- Follow parliamentary procedure in conducting public meetings.

- **Make no personal comments about other Council members.** It is acceptable to publicly disagree about an issue, but it is unacceptable to make derogatory comments about other Council members, their opinions and actions.

- Council members are constantly being observed by the community every day that they serve in office. Their behaviors and comments serve as models for proper behavior in Mar Vista. It is a serious and continuous responsibility.

COUNCIL CONDUCT WITH OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES

- Be clear about representing the City or personal interests. If a Council member appears before another governmental agency or organization to give a statement on an issue, the Council member must clearly state: If his or her statement reflects personal opinion or is the official stance of the City; whether this is the majority or minority opinion of the Council.

Even if the Council member is representing his or her own personal opinions, remember that this still may reflect upon the City as an organization. If the Council member is representing the City, the Council member must support and advocate the official City position on an issue, not a personal viewpoint.

If the Council member is representing another organization whose position is different from the City, the Council member should withdraw from voting on the issue if it significantly impacts or is detrimental to the City's interest.

Council members should be clear about which organizations they represent and inform the CHAIR and Council of their involvement.

- Correspondence also should be equally clear about representation.

- **Keep political support away from public forums. Board and Commission members may offer political support to a Council member, but not in a public forum while conducting official duties. Conversely, Council members may support Board and Commission members who are running for office, but not in an official forum in their capacity as a Council member**

SANCTIONS

- **Public Disruption.** Members of the public who do not follow proper conduct after a warning in a public hearing may be barred from further testimony at that meeting or removed from the Council Meetings.

- **Inappropriate Staff Behavior.** Council members should refer to the City Manager any City staff that fail to follow proper conduct in their dealings with Council members, other City staff, or the public. These employees may be disciplined in accordance with standard City procedures for such actions.

- Council members Behavior and Conduct.

City Council members who intentionally and repeatedly do not follow proper conduct may be reprimanded or formally censured by the Council. Serious infractions of the Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct could lead to other sanctions as deemed appropriate by Council. Council members should point out to the offending Council member infractions of the Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct. If the offenses continue, then the matter should be referred to the Chair in private. It is the responsibility of the Chair to initiate action if a Council member's behavior may warrant sanction. If no action is taken by the Chair, the alleged violation(s) can be brought up with the full Council in a public meeting. If violation of the Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct is outside of the observed behaviors by the Council members, the alleged violation should be referred to the Chair. The Chair should ask the City Manager and/or the City Attorney to investigate the allegation and report the findings to the Chair. These actions can include, but are not limited to: discussing and counseling the individual on the violations; recommending sanction to the full Council to consider in a public meeting; or forming a Council ad hoc subcommittee to review the allegation; the investigation and its findings, as well as to recommend sanction options for Council consideration.

PRINCIPLES OF PROPER CONDUCT

Proper conduct IS ...

- Keeping promises
- Being dependable
- Building a solid reputation
- Participating and being available
- Demonstrating patience
- Listening attentively
- Studying thoroughly
- Keeping integrity intact
- Modeling a professional manner

Proper conduct IS NOT ...

- Showing antagonism or hostility
- Deliberately lying or misleading
- Speaking recklessly
- Spreading rumors
- Stirring up bad feelings, divisiveness
- Acting in a self-righteous manner

It all comes down to respect Respect for one another...respect for the validity of different opinions...respect for the process...respect for the community that we serve.

CHECKLIST FOR MONITORING CONDUCT

- Will my decision/statement/action violate the trust, rights or good will of others?
- What are my interior motives and the spirit behind my actions?
- If I have to justify my conduct in public tomorrow, will I do so with pride or shame?
- How would my conduct be evaluated by people whose integrity and character I respect?
- Even if my conduct is not illegal or unethical, is it done at someone else's painful expense? Will it destroy their trust in me? Will it harm their reputation?
- Is my conduct fair? Just? Morally right?
- If I were on the receiving end of my conduct, would I approve and agree, or would I take offense?
- Does my conduct give others reason to trust or distrust me?
- Am I willing to take an ethical stand when it is called for? Am I willing to make my ethical beliefs public in a way that makes it clear what I stand for?
- Do I exhibit the same conduct in my private life as I do in my public life? • Can I take legitimate pride in the

way I conduct myself and the example I set?

- Do I listen and understand the views of others?
- Do I question and confront different points of view in a constructive manner?
- Do I work to resolve differences and come to mutual agreement?
- Do I support others and show respect for their ideas?
- Will my conduct cause public embarrassment to someone else?