

CITY COUNCIL NORMS



BEHAVIOR AND PROTOCOL ADOPTED BY THE CAMARILLO CITY COUNCIL

Approved on September 8, 2021

INTRODUCTION

The Camarillo City Council is charged with taking appropriate, necessary, and timely action to maintain the City of Camarillo as a leading, well-managed, and innovative city in the forefront of desirable California cities.

It is the overall responsibility of the City Council a) to gather information and knowledge; b) to take counsel; c) to keep a long-range perspective; d) to hold itself to the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct in the performance of its duties without regard to personal advantage; e) to be free of favoritism; f) to listen carefully to the public; and g) to conduct a reasonable and reasoned period of discussion prior to making decisions.

To accomplish the above-stated responsibilities, and as guidance for the orderly governance of the City, the Camarillo City Council has adopted the following "Norms" of behavior and protocol. Except for those Norms that are based on law, these Norms are aspirational, voluntary and non-binding. They are set forth here to clarify what has become, over time, successful procedure or best practices for the conduct of civic affairs within our City.

These Norms do not, by themselves, carry the weight of law. Councilmembers are expected to abide by them out of a desire to have a well-run city that treats its citizens respectfully and with dignity. A governing body that strives to be fair, informed, honest, diligent, dignified, efficient and respectful of others will win the respect and trust of its citizens.

A principal purpose of the Norms is to establish or uphold procedures and behavior that win the trust of the public by promoting efficient, productive and civil interaction between Councilmembers. Any Councilmember who habitually ignores these Norms should expect to be called to task by his or her fellow Councilmembers and ultimately by the public.

If any Councilmember feels that a Norm is being violated, it is appropriate for that member to discuss it individually with the Councilmember. If the City Manager or staff are involved, it is appropriate to discuss it with the City Manager. People may often see events differently, but if they are well intentioned, they should be able to work out the matter and become better "teammates" for having had such a discussion.

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I. GENERAL

1. Councilmembers are elected by Districts but will govern on an at-large basis to address the needs of the entire community. Resources will be allocated based on community-wide priorities. To ensure a community-wide focus, Councilmembers need to listen to and engage with all community members, regardless of the District the Councilmember represents.
2. The Council provides policy direction to the City Manager. The City Manager, through City staff, implements Council policy. The Council does not interfere with the operating decisions of the City, which are the responsibility of the City Manager.
3. The City Manager keeps each Councilmember fully, and equally, informed as to all matters of importance to the city, including agenda items, financial conditions, needs of the city, citizen concerns, staffing needs, and urgency items.
4. The Council endeavors not to overburden the City Manager or staff with excessive demands for individual time or attention on matters that the City Manager can better handle with general communications to the Council as a whole. [See Policy 1.02, City Council Communications]
5. The Council looks to the City Manager, staff, commissions, committees, and consultants for advice on City decisions. It is staff's role to provide factual, objective, and unbiased information in reports to the Council and members of the public. Councilmembers do not interfere or attempt to unduly influence the content of reports being prepared by staff. If a Councilmember disagrees with a staff recommendation, he/she is not obligated to vote for it and is likewise free to express his/her opinion.
6. The Council complies with all laws relating to open meetings, public records, and conflicts of interest.
7. It is unfair to misrepresent the facts or to make other assertions that are simply not true or inaccurate.
8. The Council encourages citizen participation in the development of City policies.
9. The Council desires the public to be fully informed about decisions that impact them and encourages public comment as policies are set.
10. The Council makes adequate provision for the training and continuing education of the Council, commissions, and City staff.

11. All Councilmembers shall receive any documents provided to any other Councilmember pertaining to an agenda item.
12. Councilmembers inform the City Manager as far in advance as possible of when they will be out of town or otherwise unavailable to conduct City business.
13. The Council participates in regional, state and national programs and meetings which serve the best interests of the City of Camarillo. When traveling on City business, the Council must adhere to all applicable policies and regulations as stated in the travel reimbursement policy. Councilmembers must act in good faith when selecting where to travel to represent the City, and do not misuse the City's reimbursement policy for travel expenses.

II. ELECTIONS

Campaigning can sometimes be the cause of a serious breakdown of communications and trust between Councilmembers. The heat of a campaign may cause resentments and bitter feelings after the election is over. It is not in the best interest of the public for these feelings to take expression on the dais or during the conduct of other routine city business by members of the council. To minimize the potential for such a breakdown, it is best for participants in a campaign, whether candidate or supporter, to abide by some ground rules of fairness.

1. It is unfair to misrepresent the facts of a candidate's record, or to make other assertions that are simply not true or inaccurate.
2. If a Councilmember decides to actively support the opponent of a fellow Councilmember by public facing activity including reportable campaign contributions, public statements and endorsements (whether on social media, or otherwise), it is a matter of courtesy to first advise that Councilmember personally at an appropriate time before going public.
3. Campaign dirty tricks, such as disrupting an opponent's event, removing or defacing signs, or removing flyers delivered door to door, must never be permitted or condoned.
4. These Ground Rules can be summed this way: Tell the truth yourself. Don't allow others to promulgate falsehoods on your behalf. Treat your opponent and his or her supporters with respect. Do not allow your supporters to violate the integrity of the process.
5. Councilmembers agree to abide by the *Code of Fair Campaign Practices*, whether they are a candidate or not. *The Code of Fair Campaign Practices* can be found in the California Elections Code, Section 20440.

III. SELECTION OF THE MAYOR AND VICE MAYOR

1. Subject to the discretion of the Councilmembers, insofar as possible, each Councilmember should have an equal opportunity to serve as Mayor and Vice Mayor.
2. The outgoing Mayor will follow (a) those already in the rotation and (b) first-time elected Councilmember(s).
3. The order of the first-time elected Councilmember(s) is based on the order of finish in the election, with the first-time elected Councilmember who received the most votes in the election, regardless of districts, taking the first position of the newly elected Councilmembers following those existing Councilmembers already in the rotation. The Councilmember who received next highest number of votes takes the next position in the rotation, and so on.
4. If the election is canceled, the order of the rotation of the appointed candidates will be by random draw, and will follow those already in the existing rotation.
5. Subject to the discretion of the Councilmembers, once a Councilmember's position in the rotation is established, it does not change based upon the future order of election results.
6. In cases where a Councilmember's position is vacated, the position will go to the end of the rotation.
7. The Mayor and Vice Mayor are nominated at the first Council meeting in December and are selected by a vote of their peers on the Council. They will serve for a one-year term. In the customary rotation, and subject to the discretion of the City Council, the Vice Mayor is nominated to serve as Mayor at the end of the Mayor's one-year term.
8. If the selection of Mayor and/or Vice Mayor is not in the customary rotation, the other Councilmembers will retain their current positions in the rotation.
9. The Mayor and Vice Mayor serve at the pleasure of the other Councilmembers. The votes of all Councilmembers are equal.
10. After the selection of Mayor and Vice Mayor, the seating order of Mayor and Councilmembers at the dais is as follows:

Councilmember	Vice Mayor	Mayor	Immediate Past Mayor	Councilmember
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See Appendix A for rotation examples

IV. MAYOR'S ROLE⁽¹⁾

1. The Mayor represents the City, is the official spokesperson, and presides over all City Council meetings.
2. In the absence of the Mayor, the Vice Mayor performs the duties of Mayor.
3. The Mayor, as well as each Councilmember, recognizes the unique role of representing the City, and takes great care to ensure that this always takes precedence over representing oneself or one's own personal agenda.
4. It is the Mayor's prerogative to make Council committee assignments from requests provided by Councilmembers. The Mayor accommodates Councilmember requests whenever possible.
5. The City Council will be copied on all correspondence sent under the Mayor's signature.
6. At a public meeting, the Mayor has discretion to move agenda items and/or to take them out of order to accommodate the needs of the Council, staff, or the public.
7. The Mayor acts as a facilitator during public meetings. The Mayor ensures all views are heard and the meeting progresses in an orderly and timely fashion. The Mayor provides an equal opportunity for each Councilmember to be heard.
8. The Mayor is expected to be an advocate for his or her views, just as other Councilmembers are, but the Mayor does not take advantage of his or her status on the dais to coerce or to advocate in excess of what is allowed to other Councilmembers. The Mayor's role as a facilitator should not be compromised by his or her role as an advocate.
9. If a Councilmember, or sub-committee, brings an issue forward to the council, it is appropriate for the Mayor to give that member or committee members the opportunity to speak first on that particular issue.
10. Generally speaking, during Council discussion, the Mayor speaks last.
11. The Mayor has every right as a member of the body to make a motion, but should normally do so only if the Mayor wishes to make a motion on an item but is convinced that no other member of the body is willing to step forward to do so at a particular time.

⁽¹⁾ See also:

Policy 1.01, City Council Reorganization, Committees, and Appointments

Policy 1.04, Scheduling City Council Meeting Agenda Items

Policy 1.05, City Council Meetings

V. CITY COUNCIL PREPARATION

1. Councilmembers should, if possible, avoid surprising their colleagues or staff. To the maximum extent possible, Councilmembers should advise the City Manager in advance of substantive issues or questions they intend to bring up at the public meeting which would likely require staff research and response, including pulling items from the consent calendar. This refers to issues and questions that the staff would not normally anticipate or have researched for that particular meeting. Getting minor questions resolved with staff prior to a public meeting will shorten meetings and move the agenda forward in a timely manner.
2. Councilmembers should be prepared for Council and committee meetings, which includes having read all agendas and supporting documentation prior to the meeting.
3. To the extent feasible, Councilmembers should stay abreast of regional issues affecting neighboring cities, counties, and the operations of other districts or agencies.

VI. PUBLIC MEETINGS

1. Policy 1.05 City Council Meetings governs public meetings.
2. Councilmembers shall not have private communications among themselves or with members of the public, via cell phones or other electronic communication devices, from the dais during public meetings regarding any City related business.
3. The Mayor, Councilmembers, and all commission and committee members should treat everyone with courtesy and respect and treat all individuals and their ideas and opinions in a professional and respectful manner.
4. If any Councilmember becomes aware of an unexpected issue that may be brought up by a member of the public at a Council, commission or committee meeting, that Councilmember will inform the City Manager prior to the meeting.
5. Any Councilmember may request that an item be continued. Councilmembers should not request a continuance without justifiable reason, keeping in mind that the public may attend expecting to participate in the process, staff has prepared reports, and there may be staff or consultants present just for the item. Any request to continue an item must be approved by a majority of the Council and must be consistent with any applicable statutory time periods.
6. Public speakers are allowed a three-minute time limit for their comments. The time limit is enforced by the Mayor.
7. The Council listens carefully to the speakers, however heated, and does not interrupt or engage in debate with the speakers. The three-minute period belongs to the speaker. When the speaker is finished, the Council may ask questions of the speaker.
8. A Councilmember may suggest a change in procedure if he or she feels it will be helpful for the conduct of a particular meeting, understanding that the Mayor runs the meeting.
9. Subject to applicable legal deadlines, the Mayor or any Councilmember may move to refer back to staff any agenda item that is deemed to be incomplete or unready for final decision.
10. The Mayor oversees Council deliberation to move the Council to final action on each item.
11. Councilmembers should make their remarks succinct, to the point, and as brief as possible so as not to tire the audience or to engage in lecturing that becomes tedious to repetitious.

12. Councilmembers should avoid repeating remarks already made by others, and simply state agreement with those particular shared sentiments.
13. Councilmembers are expected to attempt to persuade their colleagues to their point of view through reasoned debate, but also to accept the Council's ultimate decision graciously and as final. Councilmembers should not place the City Manager or staff in the position of having to deal with minority positions which do not further existing Council policy.
14. Councilmembers should make the reasons for their votes clear to their colleagues and to the public. This is particularly important when the Council is divided on an issue.
15. Every Council action should be:
 - a. A reasoned decision, that was arrived at in a fair way;
 - b. Not to the personal advantage of any Councilmember;
 - c. Free of favoritism;
 - d. Based on information and opinions from a variety of sources, and particularly, from those who would be most affected.
16. The Mayor should ensure that the direction staff receives is clear and represents the majority view of the Council (i.e., roll call vote, informal vote, verbal consensus, further comments, or further questions or comments from staff for clarification).
17. Open meeting laws allow the Council to meet in Closed Session to discuss certain matters in private without the attendance of the public. All matters discussed in Closed Session shall be private and confidential and the disclosure by any person of the topics or details of such matters is expressly prohibited. All written information provided during Closed Session is confidential information and Councilmembers will return written documents to staff at the end of each Closed Session.

VII. CITY COUNCIL INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION⁽¹⁾

1. Councilmembers should treat each other with respect and courtesy.
2. Each Councilmember has the responsibility to initiate action to resolve problems between Councilmembers cooperatively and as soon as possible, either directly with other Councilmembers or with the City Manager.
3. The Council maintains a respectful decorum, and avoids personal attacks during public meetings, in the press, social media, or at any other time.
4. Councilmembers should be sensitive to the negative impact that inappropriate conduct has on the public perception of the city. Councilmembers should be mindful of the fact that they are representatives of the city in all their public activities.
5. Councilmembers are flexible and cooperative in filling in for one another at meetings or important functions.
6. Councilmembers do not engage in private discussions in violation of the Brown Act. A Councilmember who feels that a conversation is potentially a violation should express his or her concern and immediately withdraw from the conversation. Councilmembers are expected to honor such concerns and immediately cease the conversation even if they do not agree that the Brown Act applies in that particular instance.
7. The privacy of non-public conversations between Councilmembers or between Councilmembers and staff should be respected. This is particularly true if the conversation involves matters of personal health, personalities, working relationships, job performance, or other sensitive issues. Divulging the content of personal communications publicly or to the media can impact the working relationships between Councilmembers.
8. If a Councilmember feels that information from a private conversation must be made public, he or she should first consult with the person who confided that information, explain his or her reasoning, and to the extent possible, allow that person to make his or her own public disclosure.
9. No City letterhead shall be distributed to the City Council. If a Councilmember wishes to write or send a letter on City letterhead, they may submit their draft to the City Manager and/or his Executive Assistant, to be transcribed to City letterhead. Councilmembers should always be mindful of staff's time, especially

when requesting items not derived from the majority of the Council. The document will be distributed to the entire City Council.

10. Councilmembers shall be mindful when representing views or making comments and if they do not reflect the majority of the City Council, must claim the comments as their own personal view.

⁽¹⁾ See also:
Policy 1.02, City Council Communications
Policy 2.01, Public Information and Communication Media

VIII. CITY COUNCIL INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF

1. The Council and City Manager work together as a solution-oriented team.
2. Councilmembers should feel free to communicate with the City Manager and Department Heads about any city issues, including citizen concerns. The Council allows staff to handle citizen complaints and does not to attempt a direct resolution of the problem.
3. Complaints or concerns about any city department or staff are first taken up with the City Manager. It is not appropriate, in any situation, to critique, ridicule, or complain about staff to any staff person other than the City Manager.
4. Councilmembers may routinely ask department heads for information relative to their department. However, inquiries that require extensive research, or reports that may occupy more than cursory staff time should first be discussed with the City Manager and may require action or approval by the entire Council.
5. Department heads report to the City Manager. Councilmembers do not insert themselves into or interfere with that chain of command.
6. The Council should expect to be fully and promptly informed by the City Manager or his designee regarding any unusual activities or events of public concern.
7. Councilmembers keep a friendly, professional relationship with staff members, but avoid getting overly personal and avoid becoming involved with personnel matters, operational matters, work assignments or projects with any staff other than the City Manager.
8. The Council meets annually in February to discuss and set its Goals and Objectives for the next Fiscal Year starting July 1, and may also recommend relative projects, programs and activities. Staff uses the adopted Goals, Objectives and approved projects, programs and activities to create department work plans and to establish the Fiscal Year Budget; therefore, prioritization of Council programs, projects and activities is critical in assisting staff with development of the next Fiscal year Budget.
9. Council is presented a draft budget for review and discussion in May. The final budget is presented to the Council for adoption in June. The Council reviews and adjusts the budget mid-year in February.

IX. COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL⁽¹⁾

1. Committees of the Council serve the entire Council.
2. The Council endeavors to define the jurisdiction and area of study of each committee so as to avoid conflicts or overlapping issues.
3. Councilmembers are kept informed of committee work through receipt of Summary of Actions.
4. The Council may refer an item to a specific committee for further review.
5. Committees may recommend a course of action to the Council, but they never supplant the decision-making authority of the entire Council unless authority to take specific action is expressly delegated to a committee by a vote of the Council at a public meeting.

⁽¹⁾ See Also: Policy 1.01, City Council Reorganization, Committees, and Appointments

X. CITIZEN COMMISSIONS, BOARDS, AND COMMITTEES

1. The Council is responsible to make its vision for the City clear to all appointed and advisory bodies as policy guidance for those bodies.
2. The Council values the time and considerable efforts of those who serve on the City's Commissions, boards, and committees, and holds Commissions, boards, and committees to the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct in the performance of their appointed duties.
3. Like the City Council, Commissions, boards, and committees work for the benefit of the community and never for personal purposes.
4. The Council spells out the role, jurisdiction, authority and prerogatives of appointed bodies.
5. Commissions, boards, and committees are expected to make specific recommendations on matters brought before them, and not merely to pass them on to the City Council for final decision.
6. Councilmembers do not dictate the decisions of the City's citizen commissions, boards, and committees. The commissioners, board members and committee members come to their own conclusions based on the information presented to them, and the applicable laws and regulations, while placing substantial weight on the information provided by and recommendations of City staff.
7. If a Commission, board, or committee chooses to override or reject staff recommendations, it clearly states for the record the specific reasons so the City Council may have the benefit of its reasoning.

XI. APPENDIX A

Rotation Examples for Section III. Selection of Mayor and Vice Mayor

Norms 2 & 3.

Barbara, Carol and Debbie are existing councilmembers. Debbie is the Mayor. Ann and Esther are newly elected. Ann was the highest vote getter. The council certifies the election results and Barbara is selected as Vice Mayor and Carol as Mayor. The rotation is as follows:

Carol (Mayor)
Barbara (Vice Mayor)
Ann (highest vote getter)
Esther (first-time elected)
Debbie (outgoing Mayor)

Norm 4.

If the election was cancelled because there were two open seats, one in District 3 and one in District 4, and there was only one candidate for each seat. The order of Ann and Esther would be determined by draw. If Esther drew 1 and Ann drew 2, the rotation would look like this:

Carol (Mayor)
Barbara (Vice Mayor)
Esther (drew No. 1)
Ann (drew No. 2)
Debbie (outgoing Mayor)

Norm 6.

Barbara's position is vacated and the Council appointed Francine to fill the vacancy until an election can be held. The Council would need to select a new Vice Mayor, but before that happens, the rotation would look like this:

Carol (Mayor)
Esther
Ann
Debbie
Francine

Norm 7.

The Council selects Esther as the Vice Mayor. The rotation now looks like this:

Carol (Mayor)
Esther (Vice Mayor)
Ann
Debbie
Francine

Norm 8.

During the reorganization, the Council selects Esther as Mayor and Debbie as Vice Mayor. Ann was not selected as Vice Mayor per the customary rotation, but she remains in her current position within the rotation. The rotation now looks like this:

Esther (Mayor)
Debbie (Vice Mayor)
Ann
Francine
Carol (outgoing Mayor)