



## **PROTOCOL AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

**Final 01/17/12**

### **I. Purpose and Intent**

The City of Littleton is committed to maintaining high ethical standards. The City operates in a representative democracy to serve the citizens of Littleton and ensure the community's needs are met. Public servants have a special responsibility to carry out their duties with integrity. In order to preserve the confidence and trust of the public, the Protocol and Standards of Conduct provides uniform rules to guide the conduct of the city's officers, board and commission members, hereinafter referred to as Boards.

### **II. Meeting Protocols**

- A. Public input and observation are an important part of the democratic process. Council/ Boards should make the public feel welcome and should refrain from showing any sign of partiality, prejudice or disrespect toward an individual participating in or attending a public forum. Every effort should be made to be fair and impartial in listening to public testimony.
- B. Council expects civility among and between Council, Boards, the public, and among members of the public while in meetings. Disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated.
- C. Council/Boards should show respect for each other at all times. Disagreement and debate are constructive and expected. An effective Council/Board is composed of members who are able to agree to disagree without personalizing issues.
- D. Council/Boards are expected to refrain from sidebar conversations to the greatest extent possible so as not to detract from another speaker.
- E. Scheduled meetings are the intended forum for public debate and dialog and it is the expectation of Council for all Council/Board members to keep an open mind without prejudgment, to work collaboratively to identify promising options, to openly discuss and evaluate options, and to listen to the concerns of other Council/Boards prior to making a decision. Additionally, it should be understood that acknowledgement of individual

opinions and ideas, especially those that differ from one's own, is what allows the best discussion and decision for the community.

- F. Council/Boards are expected to attend meetings having reviewed all the materials and to be prepared to ask questions, make comments, and discuss all issues.
- G. To attain efficiency, Council/Boards should simply state, "I agree" rather than restating a point.
- H. Council/Boards should ask the Mayor/Chair to intervene if discussion on agenda items extends beyond a reasonable time frame.
- I. Council/Boards should consider the best interests of the city and the ramifications to all the citizens and businesses while considering issues.
- J. Council/Boards should refrain from undermining the Council/Board as a whole or individual member. Members should feel comfortable communicating the reasoning for their voting decision. However, after the decision has been made, the member should support the decision and move forward.
- K. It is improper during roll call for any Council/Board members to state or attempt to state the vote or sentiments of any absent Council/Board member.
- L. Any Council/Board member who is unable to attend a scheduled meeting shall notify the Mayor/Chair or City Manager at least 24 hours in advance of said meeting, if possible.
- M. Council/Boards agree to bring non-substantive changes to staff outside of a public meeting and retain substantive items for public discussion with Council/Board.
- N. The City Council is responsible for making policy. The city staff is responsible for implementing policy. Council members and staff should understand the difference between creating policy and implementing policy and be respectful and supportive of each role.

### **III. Confidential Information**

Confidential information shall not be disclosed to anyone other than City Council, Boards or City Council direct reports whose official duties are related to the subject matter of the confidential information. This protocol shall not be construed as prohibiting the City Manager and City Attorney

from distributing confidential information to the extent reasonably necessary to implement Council direction.

#### **IV. Making Public Statements**

- A. When giving a written or oral personal public opinion concerning issues facing or involving the city; all Council, board or commission members shall refrain from making statements on behalf of the city unless such person has explicitly been authorized by the respective body. When acting as, or perceived as acting as, a representative of the official body he or she represents, an individual must always uphold the approved Council, board or commission point of view.
- B. Any comments made by a Council/Board member at a meeting of another board should be assumed to be the Council/Board member's personal views or opinions and not the official position of the Council/Board unless stated otherwise.

#### **V. Council/Boards and City Employee Communications**

- A. To improve open communication and the public policy-decision making process, it is the desire of Council to ensure an evenness of communication between Council/Boards and staff as well as between Council/Board members. This means all Council/Boards members expect to receive information that is relevant to the Council's policymaking authority and deliberations as well as to the education and knowledge of individual members.
- B. Council/Boards should seek direction from the City Manager if there is any doubt regarding the appropriate level of contact with city employees.
- C. Council/Boards should make reasonable attempts to notify the appropriate city staff members in advance of public meetings about key questions and discussion points that they would like addressed during the public meeting.
- D. For routine questions or requests (e.g. code complaints, questions regarding agenda items), Council/Boards should contact the City Manager's Office or the appropriate city department director with information about the request. These requests can be made at any time rather than waiting for a formal referral at a Council/Board meeting. Council can expect that answers will be disseminated to all Council/Board members.

- E. Requests for additional information or reports that staff determines would take a significant amount of staff time/resources shall be referred to the City Manager for review and possible consideration by the Council/Boards as a whole and agreed upon as something that merits an investment of city resources.

Critical comments about specific city employees' performance should only be made to the City Council appointees that include the City Manager, the City Attorney and the municipal judge through correspondence or conversation outside the public setting.

- F. All Boards shall be given sufficient and reasonable advance notice of a Council meeting for which the board will either be the subject of an agenda item or are being requested to participate in the Council meeting agenda, allowing for scheduling and preparation.

## **VI. Involvement in Administrative Functions**

- A. Council/Boards shall refrain from influencing the recommendations made by staff or the information provided by staff to the Council/Board as a whole.
- B. Members of Council/Boards should have the same information for decision-making purposes. The Council/Boards may expect staff provide each member with identical information on items scheduled for deliberation even when requested by only one member.

## **VII. Council Conduct with Boards and Commissions**

- A. The City Council has established several Boards and commissions as a means of gathering more community input. Citizens who serve on most Boards or commissions are 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 should refrain from having any ex parte communications with Boards concerning issues and/or applications before any quasi-judicial body. Council communication with Boards shall be solely through a joint work session or through Council liaisons as set forth below.
- B. Since the attendance of three or more Council members constitutes a legal Council meeting, Council members should advise the City Clerk at least 24 hours in advance of their planned attendance at a board meeting for which the Council member is not the liaison or at another function where discussion of city business is anticipated so that appropriate and timely public notification can be prepared and posted.

## **VIII. Council Liaison Role**

The City Council liaison assigned to a board shall:

- A. Serve as the primary Council contact between the Council and the board. Liaisons communicate with the board and provide procedural direction and relay the position of Council to the board when communication is needed and not legally prohibited
- B. Serve as a conduit in providing information from the board back to Council on those items that are in service of Council policy deliberation and/or outside the norm of what Council would expect from board minutes.
- C. Resolve questions the board may have about the role of Council, municipal government and the board.
- D. Establish formal or informal contact with the chairperson of the board and effectively communicate the role of the liaison.
- E. Serve as Council contact rather than an advocate for or ex-officio member of the board.

## **IX. Council/Board and Commission Conduct With the Public**

- A. Council/Boards should be cordial, welcoming, and respectful to the public in all situations.
- B. Council/Boards should be welcoming and respectful to speakers without exception.
- C. If necessary, public comments received during a public meeting will be followed up by staff at a later time or as directed by the Council/Board. It is not anticipated nor expected for staff to respond during that meeting unless specifically requested by the Council/Board.
- D. Questions from the Council/Board to speakers should seek to clarify or expand information. Members should avoid challenging or criticizing speakers. If a speaker is off the topic or exhibits behavior or language that is disruptive or disrespectful, the Mayor or Chair should interrupt, focus the speaker, and reestablish the order and decorum of the meeting.

## **X. Personal Expectations**

### **A. Responsibility –**

1. I understand that the community expects me to serve with dignity and respect and be an agent of the democratic process.
2. I avoid actions that might cause the public to question my independent judgment.
3. I do not use my office or the resources of the city for personal or political gain.
4. I am a prudent steward of public resources and actively consider the impact of my decisions on the financial and social stability of the city and its citizens.

### **B. Fairness –**

1. I promote consistency, equity and non-discrimination in public agency decision-making.
2. I make decisions based on the merits of an issue, including research and facts.
3. I encourage diverse public engagement in decision-making processes and support the right of the public to have access to public information concerning the conduct of the City's business.

### **C. Respect –**

1. I treat my fellow city officials, staff, commission members and the public with patience, courtesy, civility, and respect, even when we disagree on what is best for the community and its citizens.

### **D. Integrity–**

1. I am honest with all elected officials, staff, commission members, boards, the public and others.
2. I am prepared to make decisions for the best interest of the public whether those decisions are popular or not.
3. I take responsibility for my actions even when it is uncomfortable to do so.