



Folsom City Council Staff Report

MEETING DATE:	2/25/2025
AGENDA SECTION:	Consent Calendar
SUBJECT:	Resolution No. 11328 – A Resolution Approving a City Council Travel Policy
FROM:	City Clerk's Department

RECOMMENDATION / CITY COUNCIL ACTION

Staff recommends that the City Council approve Resolution No. 11328 – A Resolution Approving a City Council Travel Policy.

BACKGROUND / ISSUE

Each year, the City Council approves an annual budget. During the FY 24/25 budget discussions, the City Council approved an allocation of \$6,600 for each Councilmembers' travel purposes for the fiscal year.

Currently, the City Council does not have a policy governing travel undertaken by Councilmembers on official City business. Thus, travel and related expenditures are evaluated on a case-by-case basis without established guidelines that would otherwise ensure uniformity. Upon reflection, staff believes that a structured policy guiding the use of travel funds could be beneficial in creating consistent standards. Implementing such a policy would provide clarity, promote the responsible use of taxpayer funds, and ensure that travel activities support the best interests of the City of Folsom and its residents.

Travel undertaken by Councilmembers serves several important purposes, including education, staying informed about current trends, and fostering collaboration. Participation in conferences, workshops, and meetings with other public agencies provides learning opportunities that are essential for effective governance. Such travel can lead to the introduction of new ideas, best practices, and innovative solutions gleaned from the shared experiences of other elected officials.

These experiences can result in benefits for the City of Folsom by helping to identify opportunities for cost savings, improved service delivery, and strategic growth.

POLICY / RULE

Folsom Municipal Code section 2.06.070(C) provides that the City Council may adopt rules governing its meetings, proceedings, and business.

ANALYSIS

The proposed City Council Travel Policy provides a framework that guides official travel undertaken by City Councilmembers. This policy aims to standardize the practices associated with council-related travel, establishing clear guidelines that align with the City's commitment to accountability and transparency. By formalizing these practices, the City of Folsom seeks to ensure that City Council travel funded by taxpayer dollars is conducted with the utmost fiscal responsibility and serves the City's interests effectively. This policy is essential for reinforcing public trust and demonstrating the City's dedication to ethical governance.

A core intent of the policy is the promotion of responsible stewardship of public resources. Travel expenditures, when managed properly, can yield significant benefits such as facilitating knowledge exchange, strengthening intergovernmental relationships, and fostering the professional development of councilmembers. These activities ultimately contribute to informed decision-making and strategic planning that benefit the residents of Folsom. By encouraging the prudent use of funds, the policy supports only those travel activities that deliver tangible value and align with the City's strategic goals.

The policy also underscores the importance of structure and continuity in the administration of public funds related to travel. Establishing uniform procedures helps prevent inconsistencies and reduces the risk of misunderstandings or misuse of resources. This structure provides councilmembers and staff with a clear understanding of what constitutes an acceptable use of public funds. By creating a transparent, well-defined process, the policy aligns with best practices in public administration and promotes fairness in the allocation of City resources.

Overall, the proposed policy is a step toward fortifying trust between the City and its residents by maintaining high standards of financial oversight. By prioritizing transparency, consistency, and accountability, the City Council Travel Policy will facilitate responsible governance and enhance the effectiveness of councilmembers in their official duties. The policy reflects a commitment to ensuring that public expenditures yield a positive return, ultimately reinforcing the City's mission to serve the community's best interests.

At the January 14, 2025 meeting, the City Council considered a draft travel policy. The City Council discussed how conferences are identified for attendance, clarified how funds are allocated annually, and discussed what expenses are covered within the travel budget, such as transportation, lodging, and per diem amount for meals and incidentals.

Following discussion, the City Council indicated conceptual support of the policy and proposed a modification to include per diem reimbursement in alignment with similar per diem reimbursement policy for City staff. Accordingly, the below language has been added to the proposed policy:

6. Meal and Incidental Expenses:

- a. Travelers may request to be reimbursed for meal and incidental expenses (M&IE) for overnight travel at rates established by the U.S. General Services Administration (USGSA) This will be based upon the city/county where the lodging is located. If not listed as a key city, the current standard rate shall be used. When the USGSA per diem is claimed, a meal receipt is not required. In instances where meal expenses are in excess of the per diem rate, the City requires an original receipt along with specific details regarding the name(s) of the guest(s) entertained, cost date, place, business purpose, and the business relationship of the individuals entertained.
- b. Pro ration of the per diem rate: The USGSA website (<https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>) has a per diem tool that will calculate 75% for the first and last day of travel as well as the breakdown for meals and incidentals provided for the other days
- c. Meals included in conference registration fee: Applicable pro ration of the per diem amount for the specific meal included in the registration will be deducted from the daily per diem claimed.
- d. Paid receipts are required for all expenditures not included in the daily per diem.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The adoption of the proposed City Council Travel Policy is not expected to have an immediate or direct financial impact. However, the financial impacts associated with councilmember travel will be considered as part of the City's annual budget process. Each fiscal year's budget discussions will include a review and allocation of funds for travel, ensuring that expenditures align with available funding and the City's financial priorities. This approach allows for transparency and fiscal oversight, ensuring that travel costs are planned and aligned with the City's strategic objectives.

ATTACHMENT

Resolution No. 11328 - A Resolution Approving a City Council Travel Policy

Submitted,

Christa Freemantle, CMC
City Clerk

ATTACHMENT 1

Resolution No. 11328 - A Resolution Approving a City Council Travel Policy

RESOLUTION NO. 11328

A RESOLUTION APPROVING A CITY COUNCIL TRAVEL POLICY

WHEREAS, travel undertaken by Councilmembers serves several important purposes, including education, staying informed about current trends, and fostering collaboration; and

WHEREAS, participation in conferences, workshops, and meetings with other public agencies provides learning opportunities that are essential for effective governance and can lead to the introduction of new ideas, best practices, and innovative solutions gleaned from the shared experiences of other elected officials; and

WHEREAS, a City Council Travel Policy standardizes the practices associated with council-related travel, establishing clear guidelines that align with the City's commitment to accountability and transparency; and

WHEREAS, the City Council Travel Policy provides councilmembers and staff with a clear understanding of what constitutes an acceptable use of public funds; and

WHEREAS, Folsom Municipal Code section 2.06.070(C) provides that the City Council may adopt rules governing its meetings, proceedings, and business:

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council approves the attached City Council Travel Policy which reflects a commitment to ensuring that public expenditures yield a positive return, ultimately reinforcing the City's mission to serve the community's best interests.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 25th day of February, 2025, by the following roll-call vote:

AYES: Councilmember(s):
NOES: Councilmember(s):
ABSENT: Councilmember(s):
ABSTAIN: Councilmember(s):

Sarah Aquino, MAYOR

ATTEST:

Christa Freemantle, CITY CLERK

Folsom City Council Travel Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for travel undertaken by Folsom City Councilmembers on official city business. The policy aims to ensure the responsible stewardship of taxpayer funds, promote transparency, and ensure that all travel expenditures result in benefits for the City of Folsom and its residents.

1. Annual Travel Budget

The annual travel budget for City Councilmembers shall be established each year as part of the city's budget process. This budget will provide the financial framework for all official travel undertaken by Councilmembers during the fiscal year.

2. Allocation of Travel Funds for Outgoing Councilmembers

Councilmembers whose terms are ending shall be allocated only half of the budgeted travel amount for that fiscal year. This limitation reflects the reduced time frame in which these members can effectively utilize travel funds in the city's best interest and ensures that newly elected Councilmembers (or re-elected Councilmembers) will receive their fair share and benefit of travel funds for the remainder of the fiscal year.

3. Restrictions on Travel for Outgoing Councilmembers

Councilmembers whose terms are ending are prohibited from traveling on city funds within the last two months of their term. This measure ensures that travel funds are utilized for ongoing or long-term city benefits and avoids expenditures that may not provide sufficient return on investment for the community.

4. Compliance with California's AB 1234

In accordance with AB 1234, Councilmembers must provide a report to the City Council after returning from any city-funded travel. The report shall include a summary of the activities undertaken, the relevance of the travel to the city's interests, and any tangible benefits or knowledge gained that can be applied to the City of Folsom. This report ensures compliance with State law as well as accountability and transparency in the use of public funds.

5. Stewardship of Taxpayer Funds

All travel by City Councilmembers must be conducted with the utmost care and consideration for the responsible use of taxpayer funds. Councilmembers are expected to seek cost-effective travel options and avoid unnecessary expenditures. The purpose of

travel should align with the city's strategic goals, and any expenditure should be justifiable in terms of the direct or indirect benefits to the City of Folsom and its residents.

6. Meal and Incidental Expenses:

- a. Travelers may request to be reimbursed for meal and incidental expenses (M&IE) for overnight travel at rates established by the U.S. General Services Administration (USGSA) This will be based upon the city/county where the lodging is located. If not listed as a key city, the current standard rate shall be used. When the USGSA per diem is claimed, a meal receipt is not required. In instances where meal expenses are in excess of the per diem rate, the City requires an original receipt along with specific details regarding the name(s) of the guest(s) entertained, cost date, place, business purpose, and the business relationship of the individuals entertained.
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7. Demonstrable Benefits Requirement

All travel expenditures should have benefit to the City of Folsom. Whether through the acquisition of new knowledge, the establishment of valuable connections, or the advancement of city projects, every trip should have clear objectives that align with the city's priorities.

8. Conclusion

This travel policy reflects the City of Folsom's commitment to prudent financial management and transparency. By adhering to these guidelines, City Councilmembers can ensure that their travel is conducted in the city's best interests and that taxpayer funds are used effectively to promote the well-being of the community.

This policy shall be reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changes in state law, city priorities, or budgetary considerations.

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