



Executive Summary

City Council Workshop

AGENDA ITEM: City Council Code of Conduct Training and Refresher
PREPARED BY: Jacob Schillander, City Administrator
RECOMMENDED ACTION: Discussion and direction only

Summary

Council requested a training and refresher discussion of the City Council Code of Conduct adopted November 24, 2025. The workshop will build a shared understanding of the adopted expectations through a brief policy review and 10 practical scenarios. It is an educational exercise, not a determination of a specific complaint or violation.

Workshop focus

Discussion will address Council and staff roles; resident and business interactions; boards and commissions; respectful conduct; speaking for the City; social media; Open Meeting Law; and conflicts of interest. The adopted Code remains the governing policy.

Requested Council direction

Participate in the scenarios and identify areas needing clarification, additional training, or future consideration of a policy amendment. No formal Council action or policy amendment is proposed for this workshop.

Training materials

All scenarios are hypothetical and are intended solely for training and discussion. They are not based on any particular person or incident and do not represent any particular Councilmember, resident, employee, business, or past situation.

Source: Maple Plain City Council Code of Conduct, adopted November 24, 2025, pp. 1–9. Scenario references identify pages in that policy.

Scenario 1 A Councilmember Directs Staff

A resident contacts a Councilmember because they are unhappy with how a City service is being provided. Wanting to help, the Councilmember contacts the employee responsible for the service and tells the employee how the issue should be handled.

Discussion questions

1. What authority does an individual Councilmember have?
2. How should the Councilmember respond to the resident?
3. How should the request get to staff?

Policy reference: Authority, p. 2; Working with Staff, pp. 5–6; Working with the Community, p. 7.

Notes

Scenario 2 Can You Fix This for Me

A resident disagrees with how a City ordinance is being enforced and contacts a Councilmember directly. The resident asks the Councilmember to intervene with staff and make an exception. The Councilmember believes the resident may have a legitimate concern.

Discussion questions

1. Can the Councilmember advocate for a different outcome?
2. Can the Councilmember ask questions about what occurred?
3. What should happen if the resident remains dissatisfied?

Policy reference: Working with Staff, pp. 5–6; Working with the Community, p. 7.

Notes

Scenario 3 Councilmember Request for Staff Research

A Councilmember is interested in a new program they have seen another city implement. The Councilmember emails a staff member and asks them to research the program, contact several cities, obtain cost estimates, and prepare a report.

Discussion questions

1. Is asking a staff member a question different from assigning a project?
2. When does an individual request become direction to staff?
3. How should significant requests for staff time be handled?

Policy reference: Working with Staff, pp. 5–6.

Notes

Scenario 4 Meeting With a Developer

A developer has a proposal that may eventually require Council approval. Before submitting the formal application, the developer asks one Councilmember to meet for coffee to discuss the project and asks whether the Councilmember would support it.

Discussion questions

1. Can the Councilmember meet with the developer?
2. What can the Councilmember appropriately discuss?
3. What should the Councilmember avoid saying?

Policy reference: Working with the Community and Meeting requests by residents and businesses, p. 7.

Notes

Scenario 5 Council Liaison Disagrees With a Commission

A Councilmember is appointed as liaison to a City commission. During a meeting, the commission appears ready to make a recommendation with which the Councilmember strongly disagrees. The Councilmember begins explaining why the commission should reconsider and what the Council is likely to do if the recommendation moves forward.

Discussion questions

1. What is the liaison's role?
2. Is it appropriate to express a personal opinion?
3. When does participation become influence?

Policy reference: Working with Boards and Commissions, p. 6.

Notes

Scenario 6 A Difficult Council Meeting

Councilmembers strongly disagree about an agenda item. During debate, one member repeatedly interrupts another. Eventually, one Councilmember makes comments questioning another member's motives and criticizing how that person approaches their role.

Discussion questions

1. Where is the line between vigorous disagreement and conduct inconsistent with the Code?
2. What responsibility do Councilmembers have when another member is speaking?
3. How should the Mayor or presiding officer respond?

Policy reference: Roles of Council, Staff, and Commissions, p. 4; respectful-behavior principles, p. 5; Compliance and Enforcement, pp. 1–2.

Notes

Scenario 7 Conversations Outside a Council Meeting

Two Councilmembers discuss an upcoming City issue. Later, one of them discusses the same issue with another Councilmember. Everyone involved believes this is acceptable because a quorum was never together at the same time.

Discussion questions

1. What concerns could this create?
2. What is a serial meeting?
3. What should Councilmembers do when conversations begin moving toward determining how the Council will handle upcoming business?

Policy reference: Open Meeting Law, pp. 2–3.

Notes

Scenario 8 Social Media

A Councilmember uses a personal Facebook page. The page identifies the individual as a Maple Plain City Councilmember, and the Councilmember regularly posts about City projects and responds to residents' questions about City business. A resident posts a strongly critical comment about a Council decision, and the Councilmember wants to delete the comment and block the resident.

Discussion questions

1. When might a personal account begin raising issues associated with official activity?
2. How should City-related questions be handled on a personal page?
3. When may comments be removed, and what risks arise from blocking someone?

Policy reference: Social Media Use, pp. 8–9, especially III–VII.

Notes

Scenario 9 Speaking for the City

A Councilmember attends a meeting with another governmental organization. The City Council has previously taken an official position on the issue being discussed, but the individual Councilmember personally disagrees with that position.

Discussion questions

1. Can the Councilmember express their own opinion?
2. How should they distinguish their personal opinion from the City's position?

Policy reference: Intergovernmental Relations, pp. 7–8; Working with Staff, p. 5.

Notes

Scenario 10 A Potential Conflict of Interest

A matter comes before the Council that could financially affect a business in which a Councilmember has an interest. The Councilmember believes they can remain objective and would like to participate because they know a great deal about the issue.

Discussion questions

1. Is being able to remain objective enough?
2. When should a potential conflict be disclosed?
3. Who should the Councilmember consult?

Policy reference: Conflict of Interest, p. 3.

Notes

Closing questions

Which expectations in the Code need clarification to apply consistently?

Which topics would benefit from additional training or City Attorney guidance?

Are there provisions Council would like staff to bring back for possible clarification or amendment?

Requested follow-up

Record the topic, requested clarification, and appropriate next step. Any policy change would return for future Council consideration.
