

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

The intent of this Code is to provide guidelines for the elected members of City government as they interact with each other and with members of the public. While acknowledging an individual's right to expression, the Council feels that elected officials must be held to a higher standard of behavior, and therefore violation of this Code may be construed as inefficiency, neglect of duty, official misconduct, and/or malfeasance in office, depending on the nature and severity of the offense.

The provisions of this Code apply to all elected officers of the City of Richland Center, regardless of the use of the term "Council Member" or other titles throughout.

Official Statements by Council Members

- The Mayor and/or City Administrator are authorized to make official statements on behalf of the City, and the Council President is authorized to make official statements on behalf of the Council.
- No Council Member other than the Council President is authorized to make any official statement or comment on behalf of the City or Council.
- If a Council Member makes a statement or comment, the Council Member shall ensure such statement or comment contains language indicating the statement or comment reflects the personal views of the Council Member and not the views of the City or Council.

Council Member Rules of Conduct

Each Council Member shall:

- (A) Uphold the Oath of Office and faithfully and impartially discharge the duties of a Council Member to the best of their ability;
- (B) Adhere to the ordinances and policies adopted by the Council intended to apply to Council Members;
- (C) Act in the best interests of City government at all times;
- (D) Refrain from conduct which a reasonable person would deem unethical, offensive or otherwise contrary to community values;
- (E) Be responsive to the needs of the community;
- (F) Represent the interest of constituents by attending and participating in meetings; adequately prepare for meetings and observe the rules of decorum and these Council Rules at meetings; and conduct City government business in a manner consistent with law and refrain from discussions surrounding City business outside the appropriate meetings and channels of communication.
- (G) Council Member Conduct at Meetings. In addition to the rules of decorum in RONR, Council Members shall, at all meetings of the City Council or a Committee, conduct themselves and dress in a professional and respectful manner. Council Member comments should be directed to the presiding officer and not to any individual Council Member, City employee or member of the public. All comments must be respectful, courteous, appropriate and germane to the topic under discussion. Any inappropriate conduct will be recognized and addressed by the presiding officer.

The presiding officer of a Council or Committee meeting shall have the power to direct a Council Member's removal from a meeting.

(H) Council Member Conduct Outside Meetings. In addition to the proceeding provisions, Council Members shall adhere to the following.

1. Council Members shall at all times exhibit professional and courteous behavior when interacting with the City Administrator and City employees. Council Members shall be mindful that in their interactions with City employees they represent said employees' employer, and act accordingly.
2. Council Members shall refrain from requesting that a City employee perform a task or function without first obtaining the appropriate authorization. Matters relating to official City business should be addressed through the Administrator or the appropriate Committee, Board or Commission.

(I) As elected representatives, Council Members receive complaints from constituents, including City employees and the general public. Council Members shall refer complaints and/or concerns regarding the management and operation of City government to the appropriate step within the chain of command (Department Head and/or City Administrator). Outside of the chain of command, Council Members shall refrain from reviewing or discussing the merits of such complaints or concerns until the matter has been submitted to the chain of command and reported by that authority to the Board or Committee. However, Council Members shall be entitled to reasonable updates or other information so as to respond to the reporter. Council Members may make referrals to the appropriate party in the chain of command if determined to be the best way to resolve the matter.

Procedure for Enforcement

(A) If the Council Rules are violated during a meeting of a Board, Committee, Other Board or Commission, the presiding officer of the meeting shall have all powers under these Rules to immediately bring a Council Member's conduct into conformity with the Council Rules. If appropriate, the Board Chair or other presiding officer of the meeting may report a violation of the Council Rules to law enforcement for purposes of taking appropriate action, which may include (without limitation) removal of the offending Council Member from a meeting and/or issuing a citation for disorderly conduct or other violations, as appropriate. In addition, the presiding officer of the meeting shall refer the matter to the Council to determine what, if any, further sanction is warranted. The Council Member who is alleged to have violated the Council Rules shall be provided an opportunity to address the Council prior to final determination and disposition.

(B) The Council may, in its discretion, impose one or more of the following sanctions:

1. Private reprimand, a confidential record of which shall be kept by the City Clerk;
2. Censure without a formal Resolution of the Council;
3. Censure with a formal Resolution of the Council;
4. Removal from position of Committee Chair;
5. Removal from Committee; and
6. Referral to Council and the City Attorney to determine if cause exists to remove the Council Member from office.

If the Council determines cause (defined as inefficiency, neglect of duty, official misconduct or malfeasance in office) exists to remove the Council Member from office, the Council is authorized to appoint agents to (a) conduct any further and other investigation as may be necessary; (b) prepare verified charges seeking the Council Member's removal from office; and (c) prosecute the Council Member's removal from office. Any such proceedings shall comply with Wis. Stats. Chap. 17.