

# City of Spring Lake Park Statement of Values

## Preamble:

The proper operation of democratic government requires that decision-makers be independent, impartial and accountable to the people they serve. The City of Spring Lake Park has adopted this Statement of Values to promote and maintain the highest standards of personal and professional conduct in the City's government. All elected and appointed officials<sup>1</sup> are required to subscribe to this statement, understand how it applies to their specific responsibilities and practice its 9 core values in their work. Because we seek public confidence in the City's services and public trust of its decision-makers, our decisions and our work must meet the most demanding ethical standards and demonstrate the highest levels of achievement in following this statement.

## The Values:

As a representative of the City of Spring Lake Park,

1. I serve the public interest.
2. I fulfill the duties and responsibilities of holding public office.
3. I am ethical.
4. I am professional.
5. I am fiscally responsible.
6. I am conscientious.
7. I communicate effectively.
8. I am collaborative.
9. I am forward thinking.

## Value examples/expressions:

- 1. I serve the public interest. In practice this value means that:**
  - a. I provide courteous, equitable, and prompt service to everyone.
  - b. I am attuned to, and care about, the needs and issues of citizens, public officials, and city workers.
  - c. I am interested, engaged, and responsive in my interactions with constituents.
  - d. I recognize and support the public's right to know the public's business.
  
- 2. I fulfill the duties and responsibilities of holding public office. In practice this value means that:**
  - a. I observe the highest standards of integrity in my official acts and undertake my responsibilities for the benefit of the greater public good.

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this policy, an elected official is a member of the City Council. An appointed official is an individual who has been appointed by the City Council to serve on a Board or Commission as a representative of the City of Spring Lake Park. City staff are subject to the City's Personnel Policy, as approved by the City Council.

- b. I faithfully discharge the duties of my office regardless of my personal considerations, recognizing that the public interest is my primary concern.
- c. I uphold the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Minnesota and carry out impartially the laws of the nation, state, and municipality and thus foster respect for all government.
- d. I comply with both the letter and the spirit of the laws and policies affecting operations of the City.
- e. I recognize my obligation to implement the adopted goals and objectives of the City in good faith, regardless of my personal views.
- f. I conduct myself in both my official and personal actions in a manner that is above reproach.
- g. I do not use my position to secure for myself or others special privileges or exemptions that are different from those available to the general public.
- h. I understand and abide by the respective roles and responsibilities of elected and appointed officials and city staff and will not undermine them in their work.
- i. I am independent, impartial, and fair in my judgment and actions.

**3. I am ethical. In practice this value means that:**

- a. I am trustworthy, acting with the utmost integrity and moral courage.
- b. I am truthful, do what I say I will do, and am reliable.
- c. I am accountable for my actions and behavior and accept responsibility for my decisions.
- d. I make impartial decisions, free of influence from unlawful gifts, narrow political interests, and financial and other personal interests that impair my independence of judgment or action.
- e. I am fair, distributing benefits and burdens according to consistent and equitable criteria.
- f. I oppose all forms of harassment and unlawful discrimination.
- g. I extend equal opportunities and due process to all parties in matters under consideration.
- h. I show respect for confidences and confidential information.
- i. I avoid giving the appearance of impropriety and of using my position for personal gain.

**4. I am professional. In practice this value means that:**

- a. I apply my knowledge and expertise to my assigned activities and to the interpersonal relationships that are part of my job in a consistent, confident, competent, and productive manner.
- b. I approach my job and work-related relationships with a positive attitude, contributing to a supportive, respectful, and non-threatening work environment.
- c. I keep my professional knowledge and skills current and growing.
- d. I am respectful of all city staff, officials, volunteers, and others who participate in the City's government.

**5. I am fiscally responsible. In practice this value means that:**

- a. I make decisions after prudent consideration of their financial impact, taking into account the long-term financial needs of the City, especially its financial stability.
- b. I demonstrate concern for the proper use of City assets (e.g., personnel, time, property, equipment, funds), follow established procedures, and do not use public resources for personal gain.
- c. I make decisions that seek to preserve the financial capacity of the City to provide programs and services for City residents.
- d. I provide full disclosure of any potential financial or other private conflict of interest. I abstain from participating in the discussion and vote on these matters.
- e. I prevent misuse of public funds by establishing, maintaining, and following strong fiscal and management controls.
- f. I report any misuse of public funds of which I am aware.

**6. I am conscientious. In practice this value means that:**

- a. I act in an efficient manner, making decisions and recommendations based upon research and facts, taking into consideration short and long term goals.
- b. I follow through in a responsible way, keeping others informed, and responding in a timely fashion.
- c. I am respectful of established City processes and guidelines.
- d. I prioritize my duties so that the work of the City may move forward.
- e. I prepare for all meetings by reviewing any materials provided ahead of time. When I have materials to contribute, I make sure all others involved have ample time to review these materials prior to the meeting.
- f. I attentively listen to the discussions and presentations that are taking place during the City Council meetings, and will present my opinions in a respectful and constructive manner.
- g. I commit to abstaining from substances that impair my judgment and cognitive functions during and immediately before official city events and meetings.

**7. I communicate effectively. In practice this value means that:**

- a. I convey the City's care for and commitment to its citizens.
- b. I communicate in various ways that I am approachable, open-minded, and willing to participate in dialog.
- c. I engage in effective two-way communication by listening carefully, asking questions, and responding appropriately which adds value to conversations.
- d. I do not interfere with the orderly conduct of meetings by interrupting others or making personal comments not germane to the business at hand.
- e. I follow up on inquiries in a timely manner.
- f. I encourage and facilitate citizen involvement in policy decision-making.
- g. I am respectful in disagreements and contribute constructively to discussions on the issue.

**8. I am collaborative. In practice this value means that:**

- a. I act in a cooperative manner with groups and other individuals, working together in a spirit of tolerance and understanding to accomplish common goals.
- b. I share information with others in a timely manner so that, together, we can make informed decisions.
- c. I work towards consensus building and gain value from diverse opinions.
- d. I accomplish the goals and responsibilities of my individual position, while respecting my role as a member of a team.

**9. I am forward thinking. In practice this value means that:**

- a. I promote intelligent, proactive, and thoughtful innovation in order to advance the City's policy agenda and provide City services while considering the broader regional, state-wide, national, and international implications of the City's decisions and issues.
- b. I maintain consistent standards, but am also sensitive to the need for compromise, creative problem solving, and making improvements when appropriate.
- c. I am open to new ideas and processes, adopting them as they conserve resources and provide efficient and effective service.
- d. I consider the potential long-term consequences and implications of my words, actions and inactions.

**Enforcement:**

**1. Reporting a Violation**

Any City Council Member, staff member, or resident who believes an elected or appointed official has violated the Statement of Values may bring the matter to the attention of the Mayor (or the Acting Mayor if the Mayor is the subject of the alleged violation) or City Administrator, in writing. The report should include:

- The specific value(s) alleged to have been violated.
- A description of the actions or behavior in question.
- Any supporting evidence or documentation.

**2. Preliminary Review**

Upon receiving a report, the party receiving the report shall refer the matter to the City Administrator and the City Administrator will:

- Conduct an initial review of the allegation.
- Determine if the claim has sufficient merit to proceed. If the claim is deemed unsubstantiated, the matter will be dismissed and no further action will be taken.

If the claim is determined to merit further action, the City Administrator will notify the elected or appointed official involved and the City Council.

### 3. Informal Resolution

For minor violations, the City Administrator and/or Mayor (or Acting Mayor, if the Mayor is involved in the alleged violation) may attempt an informal resolution:

- Meeting with the involved Council Member or appointed official to discuss the violation.
- Issuing a verbal or written warning.
- Developing a plan to ensure future adherence to the City's Statement of Values.

If an information resolution is successful, the matter will be considered closed.

### 4. Formal Investigation

For more serious or repeated violations, the City Administrator will request the City Council to initiate a formal investigation. The following steps will be taken:

- **Appointment of an Investigative Committee or Other Investigator:** The City Council may appoint an Investigative Committee, consisting of two Council Members not involved in the alleged violation (to the extent feasible) to oversee the investigation. Alternatively, the Council may nominate a third party investigator designee or empower the Investigative Committee to designate an investigator.
- **Gathering Evidence:** The Investigative Committee or designated investigator will collect relevant evidence including, without limitation, documents, emails and statements from witnesses.
- **Interview Process:** The Investigative Committee or designated investigator will interview the involved elected or appointed official(s) and appropriate witnesses.
- **Making Findings:** The Investigative Committee or designated investigator shall thereafter make findings and present them to the City Council.

### 5. Council Deliberation and Action

The City Council will review the findings of the Investigative Committee or designated investigator at a work session or other meeting as determined by the City Council. Potential responsive actions include, without limitation:

- Dismiss the complaint, if the violation is not substantiated or is deemed resolved.
- Issue a formal written reprimand.
- Censure the elected or appointed official (public disapproval).
- Recommend additional training on ethics, professional conduct, or other appropriate subject matter.
- Initiate steps for removal from office, as permitted by state law.

The City Council's election to pursue any responsive action shall not bar the implementation of any other responsive action not inconsistent with it and permitted by applicable law.

## **6. Appeal**

The involved elected or appointed official may appeal any decision, in writing, to the City Council within 10 business days of receiving notice of this decision. The Council will review the appeal and, if necessary, hold a follow-up hearing to reconsider the disciplinary action.

## **7. Public Communication**

For formal actions such as censure or removal from office, the City will provide public notice in the interest of transparency.

Adopted by the Spring Lake Park City Council on this 16th day of January, 2018.

Amended by the Spring Lake Park City Council on March 6, 2023, September 18, 2023 and October 22, 2024.