

CITY OF STEVENSON, WASHINGTON
RESOLUTION NO. 2026-646

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF STEVENSON, WASHINGTON, ADOPTING A CITY
COUNCIL CODE OF ETHICS AND INCORPORATING IT INTO THE CITY COUNCIL
CODE HANDBOOK

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Stevenson seeks to promote ethical, transparent, and accountable governance; and

WHEREAS, Washington law grants cities broad authority to establish standards of conduct for elected officials, including but not limited to RCW 35A.11.020, RCW 35A.12, and RCW 42.23; and

WHEREAS, the Council has reviewed and considered the proposed City Council Code of Ethics, attached hereto as Exhibit A and incorporated by reference, originally prepared as Section 13 of the City Council Code Handbook; and

WHEREAS, the Council finds that adopting the Code of Ethics will promote public trust, strengthen responsible leadership, clarify expectations for social media use, reinforce compliance with the Public Records Act (RCW 42.56) and Open Public Meetings Act (RCW 42.30), and ensure that Council actions remain grounded in fairness, integrity, and respect; and

WHEREAS, the Council further finds that adoption of a Code of Ethics aligns with the City's commitment to democratic leadership, transparency, and accountability in its legislative processes;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF STEVENSON, WASHINGTON:

Section 1. Adoption of the City Council Code of Ethics.

The City Council hereby adopts the City Council Code of Ethics, attached as Exhibit A and incorporated in full by this reference, as official City policy governing the ethical standards and conduct of City Councilmembers.

Section 2. Incorporation Into the City Council Code Handbook.

The City Council Code of Ethics shall be codified as Section 13 of the City Council Code Handbook, and all current and future Councilmembers shall abide by its provisions.

Section 3. Training Requirements.

Councilmembers shall participate in periodic training on ethics, the Public Records Act, the Open Public Meetings Act, and respectful workplace principles as described in the Code of Ethics.

Section 4. Procedural Safeguards for Enforcement.

Any review of alleged violations of the Code of Ethics shall include reasonable notice to the affected Councilmember and an opportunity to be heard before the Council considers reprimand or censure. Nothing in this Code authorizes removal from office or any action inconsistent with Washington law.

Section 5. No Limitation on Constitutional Rights.

Nothing in the Code of Ethics shall be interpreted to restrict or regulate political speech protected under the First Amendment or Article I, §5 of the Washington Constitution.

Section 6. Severability.

If any portion of this Resolution or the Code of Ethics is held invalid, the remainder shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 7. Effective Date.

This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon passage.

PASSED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF STEVENSON, WASHINGTON, on the 15th day of January, 2026.

CITY OF STEVENSON, WASHINGTON

Mayor

ATTEST:

Clerk/Treasurer

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

City Attorney

Exhibit A

Section 13 – City Council Code of Ethics

A. Purpose

The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to promote public trust and ensure that elected City Councilors conduct themselves with honesty, fairness, respect, integrity, and a commitment to democratic principles. This Code establishes clear expectations for ethical conduct so that the community may have confidence in its elected officials and in the governance of the City. RCW 42.23 addresses the Code of Ethics for Municipal Officers; this Section 13 supplements those provisions. All Councilors are reminded of their obligation to comply with RCW 42.23.070 (Prohibited Acts).

B. Social Media and Public Communications

Councilors communicate with the public in a variety of ways, including electronic and digital platforms. These communications shape public confidence in City government.

Councilors shall:

1. Communicate truthfully, respectfully, and responsibly in all public forums.
2. Distinguish personal opinions from official City positions.
3. Avoid disparaging, harassing, or inflammatory comments about colleagues, staff, or the public.
4. Refrain from discussing quasi-judicial matters or ongoing deliberations outside formal meetings.
5. Ensure that public communications reflect dignity, professionalism, and respect for the City and its residents.
6. Recognize that electronic communications made in the course of City business, including social media posts, may constitute public records under RCW 42.56 and must be preserved in accordance with the City's Public Records Ordinance.

C. Dedication to Democratic Leadership and the Public Interest

Councilors shall:

1. Honor democratic principles and model ethical leadership.
2. Serve the best interests of all residents and those doing business with the City.
3. Affirm the dignity and worth of public service.
4. Treat their office as a public trust.

D. Working for the Common Good and Respect for Process

Councilors shall:

1. Work for the benefit of the community as a whole.
2. Treat all persons and claims before the City fairly and equally.
3. Follow all applicable laws, procedures, and Council rules of order.
4. Respect the role of staff in implementing Council policy.
5. Avoid giving written or verbal direction directly to staff without prior discussion with the

- Mayor, consistent with a Mayor–Council form of government.
6. Prepare diligently for meetings and policy deliberations.

E. Transparency, Accountability, and Public Records Compliance

Councilors shall:

1. Conduct City business openly to ensure public accountability.
2. Comply with the Public Records Act (Chapter 42.56 RCW) and Open Public Meetings Act (Chapter 42.30 RCW).
3. Recognize that most communications related to City business are public records.
4. Provide requested records promptly to the Public Records Officer.
5. Not destroy or alter public records except as permitted under state law.
6. Execute all Nissen declarations or other required documents as requested.

F. Respectful Conduct, Meeting Decorum, and Use of Position

Council meetings are legislative work sessions and shall be conducted in a manner that promotes orderly, efficient, and respectful deliberation.

Councilors shall:

1. Treat all persons with courtesy, fairness, and respect.
2. Confine meeting comments to the business at hand and matters properly before the Council.
3. Avoid interrupting speakers or interfering with the orderly conduct of meetings.
4. Respond to questions posed during public comment only when recognized by the Mayor.
5. Avoid repetitive or excessively lengthy remarks.
6. Support the presiding officer's efforts to maintain orderly and efficient meetings.
7. Refrain from threats, intimidation, harassment, or conduct that undermines public confidence.
8. Not use their elected position or meeting time to promote or oppose broader social, political, or ideological issues unrelated to City business or legislative actions.
9. Nothing in this Code shall be construed to prohibit or restrict political speech protected under the First Amendment or Article I, §5 of the Washington Constitution.

(See also Section 7 – Decorum.)

G. Integrity, Impartiality, and Avoidance of Improper Influence

Council meetings are legislative work sessions and shall not be used as platforms for personal, political, or ideological advocacy unrelated to City business.

Councilors shall:

1. Conduct themselves honestly and ethically.
2. Base decisions on the merits of the issue, applicable law, and adopted City policy.
3. Avoid favoritism, bias, or personal gain.
4. Maintain public confidence by ensuring their conduct is fair in fact and appearance.
5. Avoid conduct suggesting they may be improperly influenced.
6. Not seek or accept gifts intended to influence official decisions.
7. Disclose personal relationships or financial interests that may reasonably appear to

- conflict with official duties.
- 8. Not use confidential information for personal benefit or to harm others.
- 9. Avoid investments or outside interests that conflict with official responsibilities.

H. Stewardship of Public Resources

Councilors shall:

1. Use City property, funds, and equipment only for legitimate public purposes.
2. Not use City resources for personal, business, or political purposes.
3. Support fiscal responsibility and sound management of public funds.

I. Accountability and Compliance

Councilors are responsible for upholding this Code and encouraging peers to do the same.

Councilors shall:

1. Alleged violations may be reported in writing to the Mayor (or Mayor Pro Tem if the Mayor is implicated).
2. The Council may review allegations in an appropriate executive session, refer matters to independent counsel, or take other action consistent with applicable law.
3. Remedies may include verbal warnings, public reprimand or censure, removal from committee assignments, or referral to legal authorities.
4. Before issuing any reprimand or censure, the Council shall provide the affected Councilor reasonable notice and an opportunity to be heard.
5. Nothing in this Code authorizes removal from office or any action inconsistent with Washington law.

J. Whistleblower Protection

No person shall be retaliated against for raising good-faith concerns or reporting potential violations of this Code.

K. Professionalism and Leadership

Councilors shall:

1. Participate in periodic ethics training, including Public Records Act, Open Public Meetings Act, respectful workplace principles, and ethical decision-making.
2. Seek guidance from the City Attorney when ethical questions arise.
3. Understand that this Code is intended to promote ethical governance and does not create a basis for civil liability.

L. Acknowledgement of the Code

M. Whistleblower Protection

No person shall be retaliated against for raising good-faith concerns or reporting potential violations of this Code.

N. Ethics Education

Councilors shall:

1. Participate in periodic ethics training, including PRA, OPMA, respectful workplace, and ethical decision-making.
2. Seek guidance from the City Attorney when ethical questions arise.
3. This Code is intended as guidance to promote ethical governance and does not create a basis for civil liability as to any Councilor.

O. Oath of Commitment

Upon assuming office, each Councilor shall acknowledge receipt of and familiarity with this Code of Ethics.

M. Adoption and Amendment

This Code of Ethics is adopted by resolution and incorporated into the City Council Code Handbook. Amendments shall require a majority vote of the Council at a public meeting.