



# BOARDS, COMMITTEES, & COMMISSIONS

## CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct provides a framework to guide members of boards, committees, and commissions in their actions. The Code of Conduct operates as a supplement to existing statutes, including (but not limited to) Oregon Ethics Laws.

Advisory boards, committees, and commissions are referred to generally as “boards” in this code; members of boards, committees, and commissions are referred to generally as “board members.”

### **Member Conduct.**

This section describes the manner in which board members will treat one another, other City officials (elected and appointed), members of the public, and City staff.

### **Board Conduct During Meetings**

- Practice civility, professionalism, and decorum in discussions and debate. Difficult questions, tough challenges to particular points of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of democratic governance. However, this does not allow board members to make belligerent, personal, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments.
- Avoid personal comments that are intended to, or could reasonably be construed to, purposefully offend others. If a board member is offended by the conduct or remarks of another board member, the offended board member is encouraged to address the matter directly with the offending board member at the earliest opportunity and work toward an amicable resolution.

### **Board Conduct Outside Public Meetings**

- Continue professional and respectful behavior outside of public meetings. Board members are viewed by the public as representatives of the City. As such, the same level of decorum and consideration for differing points of view deemed appropriate for board meeting deliberations (outlined above) should be maintained in other public settings and private conversations, particularly when

discussing City business, City officials (elected and appointed), members of the public, and City staff.

- Unless sharing specific information voted on by the majority of the board, you shall express only your personal opinions. Never represent yourself as a spokesperson for the City unless you are authorized by the City to do so. If the City is a subject of the content you are discussing, be clear and open about the fact that you are a member of a City board but that your views do not represent those of the board, the City, its employees, or its elected officials.
- Practice courtesy, civility, and respect when participating in social media forums. Provide accurate information, speak truthfully, and represent the views and positions of the City, the Council, and other individuals forthrightly and in good faith.
- Be aware of the public nature of written notes, calendars, voicemail messages, emails, and social media posts. All written or recorded materials created as part of one's official capacity can potentially be considered public records under Oregon law.
- Understand proper political involvement. Board members, as private citizens, may support political candidates or issues, but such activities must be undertaken separately from their role as a board member. When supporting any candidate or measure, the board member shall be clear that they are supporting as a private citizen, not as a representative of the City.

### **Board Conduct with the Public**

- Be welcoming to speakers at public meetings and treat them with respect. For many citizens, speaking in front of a board is a new and difficult experience. Board members should commit full attention to the speaker. Comments, questions, and non-verbal expressions should be appropriate, respectful, and professional.
- Make no commitments on behalf of the board in unofficial settings. Board members are sometimes asked to explain a board action or to give their opinion about an issue as they meet and talk with citizens. It is appropriate to give a brief overview. Overt or implicit commitments that the City will take specific actions, however, are to be avoided.

### **Board Conduct with Staff**

- Respect the professional duties of City staff. Board members should refrain from disrupting staff from conducting their duties; participating in administrative functions, including directing staff assignments; attending staff meetings unless requested by staff; and impairing the ability of staff to implement policy decisions.

## **Board Member Values.**

The individual attitudes, words, and actions of board members should reflect the values of respect, integrity, and service to the community.

### **Respect**

*To show respect to others, board members are expected to:*

- Treat board members, City officials (elected and appointed), members of the public, and City staff with patience, courtesy, and civility, even when they disagree on what is best for the community.
- Conduct themselves in a professional, courteous, and respectful manner at all times.
- Be honest with fellow board members, the public, and others.

### **Integrity**

*To demonstrate integrity as a public official, board members are expected to:*

- Make independent, objective, fair, and impartial judgments and avoid relationships and actions that give the appearance of compromising objectivity, independence, and honesty.
- Adhere to Oregon ethics law requirements regarding gifts, services, or other special considerations, as regulated by the Oregon Government Ethics Commission.
- Excuse themselves from participating in decisions when their financial interests may be affected by the board's action.
- Use public resources, such as staff time, equipment, supplies, or facilities, only for City-related business and only with authorization from the City Administrator or applicable Department Director.
- Protect confidential information concerning litigation, personnel, property, or other affairs of the City.

### **Service**

*To serve the public effectively, board members are expected to:*

- Review materials provided in advance of the meeting.
- Make every effort to attend meetings. If attendance is not possible, communicate absences with the board chair.
- Be prepared to make difficult decisions when necessary.
- Respect the distinction between the roles of citizens, elected officials, appointed board members, and staff.
- Promote meaningful public involvement in decision-making processes.

- Make decisions after prudent consideration of their long-term impacts to the community.

### **Accountability.**

To ensure public confidence in the integrity of the City of St. Helens, board members are held to a high standard. For this reason, the City Council believes the Code of Conduct is as important to the public process as other rules and procedures. It is recognized that there may be times when action is required to correct and/or prevent behavior that violates the Code of Conduct.

Early recognition of the questioned conduct is encouraged, and progressive counsel may occur with the board member (though it is not required). Should it become necessary for the City Council to consider the removal of a board member, it may designate a staff or council member to contact the board member to make them aware of any concerns regarding alleged misconduct, nonperformance of duty or failure to obey the laws of the federal, state, or local government. The board member has the option to provide a timely response to the concerns within the timelines established by the Council. The City Council reserves the right to remove board members at its discretion whether or not an opportunity to respond has been given.

### **Use of City Property.**

Board members are strictly prohibited from using any intellectual property of the City including letterhead, logos, City social media accounts, and any other City-run or trademarked property, without written permission from the City. Board members are also prohibited from making any social media accounts for City boards.

Board members are not permitted to use any City equipment except in the carrying out of their duties on the board.

City-owned real property is fully owned and maintained by the City or official City volunteers. Board members do not have rights over any City-owned property.

### **Implementation and Certification.**

All board members will be given a copy of the Code of Conduct and will be required to affirm in writing that they have received the Code, understand its provisions, and pledge to conduct themselves by the Code. The City Council may choose to review and update this Code in the future to ensure it remains effective and useful.

Any board member declining to sign the Code of Conduct Certification may be

removed from the board. Any board member who is removed under this provision will not be permitted to be appointed to a City board for a period of three (3) years unless the majority of the City Council establishes an exception.

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## **CODE OF CONDUCT CERTIFICATION**

**As a member of a City of St. Helens board, I affirm that:**

- ✓ I have read and understand the St. Helens Code of Conduct for members of boards, committees, and commissions, and I understand its application to my role and responsibilities while serving on a City board.
- ✓ I pledge to conduct myself by the St. Helens Code of Conduct for boards, committees, and commissions.
- ✓ I understand that the City Council may remove me from my position if my conduct falls below these standards (whether or not the City Council has informed me of concerns and provided me with an opportunity to respond to concerns within any timelines established by Council).
- ✓ I understand that if I refuse to sign this Code of Conduct Certification, I may be removed from my position.

**Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed this** \_\_\_\_\_ **day of** \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_

**Board Appointed to:** \_\_\_\_\_