

To: City Council
From: Human Resources
Date: May 28, 2024
Re: Good Governance Suggestions

Listed below are items for your review, sourced from various city and county elected official handbooks, as well as the Progressive Discipline Outline from the January 16, 2024, City Council meeting.

Lafayette County Code of Ethics

The ethical city official, employee and candidate should:

- Properly administer the affairs of the city.
- Promote decisions which only benefit the public interest.
- Actively promote public confidence in city government.
- Keep safe all funds and other properties of the city.
- Conduct and perform the duties of the office diligently and promptly dispose of the business of the city.
- Maintain a positive image to pass constant public scrutiny.
- Evaluate all decisions so that the best service or product is obtained at a minimal cost without sacrificing quality and fiscal responsibility.
- Inject the prestige of the office into everyday dealings with the public employees and associates.
- Maintain a respectful attitude toward employees, other public officials, colleagues and associates.
- Effectively and efficiently work with governmental agencies, political subdivisions and other organizations in order to further the interest of the city.
- Faithfully comply with all laws and regulations applicable to the city and impartially apply them to everyone.

City of Green Bay Code of Conduct for Elected Officials

The Council is composed of individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, opinions, and goals. Despite this diversity, all choose to serve in public office and, therefore, have the obligation to preserve and protect the well-being of the community and its citizens. In all cases, this common goal should be acknowledged, and the Council must recognize that certain behavior is counterproductive, while other behavior will lead to success.

A. Use Formal Titles

The Council shall try to refer to one another formally during public meetings as City Manager, Council President, or Alderperson followed by the individual's last name.

B. Use Civility and Decorum in Discussions and Debate

Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of free democracy in action. Every Council member has the right to an individual opinion, which should be respected by the other Council members. Council members shall not be hostile, degrading, or defamatory when debating a contentious issue. Council members should assume the other members of the Council have the appropriate motives and interest of the public in mind and should not criticize differing opinions because they believe them to be lacking in judgment or improperly motivated.

However, this does not allow Council members to make belligerent, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or personally disparaging comments in public meetings or during individual encounters. Shouting or physical actions that could be construed as threatening or demeaning will not be accepted. If a Council member is personally offended by the remarks of another Council member, the offended member should make a note of the actual words used and call for a “point of personal privilege” that challenges the other Council member to justify or apologize for the language used.

C. Honor the Role of the Chair in Maintaining Order

It is the responsibility of the President of the Council, to keep the comments of Council members on track during Council meetings. Council members should honor efforts by the President to focus discussion on current agenda items. If there is disagreement about the agenda or the President’s actions, those objections should be voiced politely and with reason, following commonly recognized parliamentary procedure. Likewise, the same responsibilities vested in the President for Council meetings, are vested in the Committee Chair for Committee meetings.

City of Two Rivers Code of Conduct for Elected Officials

Responsibility to Devote Full Attention to Council and Committee Proceedings

It is the policy of the Council that Council Meetings should be devoted exclusively to the conduct of public business. Council Members should provide their full attention to matters on the agenda, or which otherwise relate to matters within the Council’s jurisdiction and authority, and not engage in private discussions or transact private business during meetings. Electronic devices may be used during meetings as an alternative to printed materials before the Council, to look up information relevant to matters being considered by the Council, or similarly in a manner which contributes to the Council’s considerations and decisions concerning agenda items and can be shared with the Council.

Such devices shall have ringers turned off during meetings and shall not be used during meetings for private entertainment or to transact private business.

Electronic communications (e.g. by text, email or instant messaging) sent or received by Council Members during a meeting may create public records subject to disclosure under Wisconsin’s Public Records Law, and may be attributed to the City and the Council. Therefore, if they relate to matters being addressed by the Council, they must be shared with the Council as a whole. If the need to engage in a private communication not related to the meeting arises, the Councilmember shall step out of the meeting room to communicate.

Do Not Supersede Administrative Authority

Outside of Council meetings, any City Council member who requests information from City staff relative to matters that may come before the Council or its committees shall either direct such request to the City Manager or send that request in the form of an e-mail to a department head, with copy to the City Manager. The purpose of this paragraph is to both recognize the City Manager’s role as the appointed chief executive officer of the City and to assure that all Council members are provided with the same background information on matters that may come before the Council or its committees. In such instances, the City Manager shall provide the requested information to all Council members.

Expression of Positions with the Media or Social Media

When communicating with the media or in social media, Councilmembers should clearly differentiate between personal opinions and the official position of the City. Each Council member represents one vote of seven and until a vote on any issue is taken, Council members’ positions are merely their own.

City of Whitewater Elected Official Progressive Discipline Policy
01/16/2024 – Common Council Meeting

Purpose: The purpose of this Progressive Discipline Policy is to address instances where an elected official fails to adhere to the Code of Conduct, providing a fair and consistent process for corrective action.

- 1. Informal Discussion:* For minor infractions, the Ethics Committee shall engage in an informal discussion with the elected official to address concerns and provide guidance on corrective actions.
- 2. Written Notice:* If the misconduct persists, a written notice outlining the specific violation and expected improvements shall be issued to the elected official.
- 3. Suspension:* For more serious or repeated violations, a suspension may be imposed, with the duration commensurate with the severity of the offense. During suspension, the elected official shall not perform their duties.
- 4. Removal from Committee Assignments:* Continued violations may result in the removal of the elected official from specific committee assignments, limiting their influence and responsibilities within the organization.
- 5. Censure:* In extreme cases, where the misconduct significantly harms the public trust, a censure resolution may be initiated by the appropriate governing body. This formal condemnation serves as a public reprimand.
- 6. Recall Procedures:* If the elected official's behavior continues to undermine public trust, constituents may initiate recall procedures in accordance with state laws.