

City of Ashland: City Council Code of Conduct

The City of Ashland Code of Conduct provides defined principles of how the Ashland City Council (“Council” includes the Mayor) members shall treat one another, constituents, city staff, contracted service providers, city commissioners, and other stakeholders with whom this Council has contact. This Code of Conduct applies to behavior during Council meetings as well as any other interactions involving issues related to the work of the City Council or City staff, either in person or when communicating on social media platforms.

The mayor and city councilors will follow these rules of conduct:

RESPECT

- Respect the role of the Mayor as presiding officer.
- Practice respect, professionalism, and decorum during discussion and debate. Assume good intentions and refrain from impugning motives or professional competency of any meeting participant, including City staff, presenters, and the public.
- Avoid negative personal comments and casting of aspersion either directly or indirectly. One may speak in opposition but do so without personal rancor. Refrain from derogatory or misleading statements about each other, City staff, contractors, and other stakeholders in all public venues.

PREPARATION

- Read staff reports, agenda packets and pertinent information prior to meetings.
- Ask questions of staff by noon on the day of the meeting.
- Respect the “Two-Hour Rule” relative to the staff time invested to respond to requests from councilors
- Be punctual and keep commitments. Familiarize and be adept with technology devices needed to participate effectively in all meetings.

SEEK CONSENSUS FOR THE WORK AT HAND

- Understand that all stakeholders, council members, staff, and community members have different perspectives that deserve consideration and active listening.
- Value and engage in constructive dialogue before making decisions.
- If a topic is not clear, seek clarity for your understanding. Avoid questions that are actually statements and posturing.
- Respect the colleague who has the floor, listen, then respond by requesting the floor from the presiding officer.
- Keep to the published agenda; ask yourself:
 - “Is my question to seek understanding related to this specific agenda item?”
 - “Am I advocating instead of truly seeking pertinent information?”
- Be clear and concise. If you agree with the sentiments already expressed by a colleague, avoid repeating at length, and simply affirm your position with theirs.
- Disagree agreeably and professionally with respect. Use appropriate language, tone, and nonverbal communication.
- Respect the decisions of the Council and commit to working toward effective implementation of the decisions, even if you disagree with them.
- Take special care to ensure that information shared with the public about City of Ashland issues is accurate and complete.
- Personal statements, notes, voicemail, e-mail, social media posts and texts are all public records and expressions of speech. Exercise and abide by expected decorum of Ashland elected officials.
- Remember, amending or deleting posts wrongfully changes and or deletes public record.

VIOLATIONS OF CODE OF CONDUCT

Because of the importance of maintaining a healthy working relationship within the Council, it is essential that potential breaches of this Code be addressed in a public and timely fashion at the next Council meeting. Any member of this body who witnesses a breach of this Code of Conduct will follow the standard procedure for requesting an item be added to the agenda of the upcoming meeting. Individual councilors will submit the request with a second councilor to the City Manager and Mayor. If the mayor is the one bringing a Code of Conduct agenda item forward, she/he may do so by working directly with the City Manager in the standard process of developing the agenda.

Agenda requests regarding potential breach of this Code of Conduct will be automatically addressed by being placed on the agenda for the next business meeting and placed directly following the Consent Agenda. If the packets have already been published when the Code agenda request is made, the person(s) bringing forward the agenda item can request it be added to the following meeting agenda or can bring it forward at the beginning of the immediate meeting with a request to the full council to add it to that evening's agenda. If Council agrees to add it to the agenda, it will be placed after the Consent Agenda.

In addition to the above public meeting protocols that address Code of Conduct violations, a provision in the Ashland Municipal Code allows the censuring of a Council member upon a two-thirds vote of the entire council. (AMC Section 2.04.115)

SUPPORTING SECTIONS FROM ASHLAND MUNICIPAL CODE

The following AMC Sections require the mayor and council to abide by the above outlined provisions:

- AMC Section 2.04.080 (C) states: "Individual Councilors should respect the separation between policy-making and administration. Councilors shall not pressure or direct City employees in a way that could contravene the will of the Council as a whole or limits the options of the council.
- AMC Section 2.04.080 (D) The Mayor and Council members should strive not to criticize any person in a public meeting or in public electronic mail messages. The same expectation applies to City staff in the exercise of their official duties. Discussions and disagreements should focus on the content of the topic at hand. Nothing should limit a Councilor or staff person's right to report wrongdoing.
- AMC Section 2.04.080 (E) Councilors with a concern about the performance of a particular staff person should express that concern to the Mayor, City Manager, or City Attorney.
- AMC Section 2.04.110 (A-3) In their work as City Representatives, City Councilors are expected to represent the full City Council accurately and objectively and to depict the position of other Councilors accurately and objectively. If the Council has an approved position on a matter under discussion, the Representative shall articulate and, if called upon, vote in favor of that position.
- AMC Section 2.04.115 states "A Council member is free to express personal views on any issue in any forum as long as any statements he or she makes about the positions of the full City Council and the positions of other individual Council members are accurate and objective. Upon two-thirds vote of the entire Council, a Council member may be censured for noncompliance with this requirement.

This Code of Conduct supports the essential fiduciary work performed by Ashland City Councilors. Observance of these guidelines will streamline and focus our interactions while maintaining a degree of public collegiality and respect necessary for effective local governance. Failure to abide by this code could place the city of Ashland at legal and financial risk, jeopardize the productivity and efficiency of the Council, and harm the working environment of staff who are tasked with ensuring the effective and safe operation of the city.