

Quirky Bold
Exceed Expectations
"Culture eats strategy for lunch."

Ambitious Different
High Standards
Culture
Remarkable Visionary
Extraordinary Anchors Cool
Artsy
Lasting
Eye-catching
Unusual Unique
Special
Risky Quality

Innovative

CITY COUNCIL
PROTOCOL MANUAL
SUWANEE, GA

adopted 8.23.11

**Suwanee City Council Protocol Manual
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I. Introduction and Overview

I.1. Purpose of Manual

This protocol manual is designed to assist the City Council, staff, and others by memorializing existing policies, procedures and the general ways of doing things. Its purpose is also to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Council, staff, and others. Administration of City business is greatly enhanced by the agreement of the City Council and staff to follow these practices. This manual is not intended to be overly restrictive, thereby providing “banana peels” that Council or staff might slip on. Rather the manual should be viewed as an instructive source of guidance so that accepted practices are documented and expectations are clarified. Practices and policies will change as circumstances arise. With that in mind, the City Council will review and revise this manual accordingly.

I.2. Suwanee’s Culture

The Suwanee community is comprised of diverse, high-achieving, “creative class” individuals who expect authenticity and high performance from their local government. The community has responded well to Suwanee’s style and approach – the “Suwanee way of doing things,” that comes directly from the adopted culture. The City respects the past, but is willing to embrace innovation.

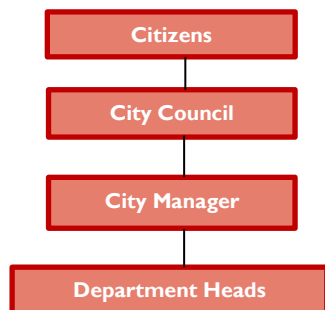
Organizational culture can be defined as the values and norms shared by people in an organization that impact the way they interact with each other and with those outside the organization. Essentially it is the shared attitudes, experiences, beliefs, and values of an organization. As each organization is unique, so is its culture and there is no one right or wrong cultural style. IBM’s culture is probably not suitable for Google.

To assist with identifying Suwanee’s culture, the City Council has adopted the following anchor points: Suwanee Quality; Unique; Remarkable; and Visionary. In as much, Suwanee has embraced a culture that impacts the way staff and Council interact and function, as well as the way that Suwanee is viewed by others. Suwanee’s cultural style is one that is professional, yet fun and informal at the same time. Innovation and creativity are encouraged. While everyone is held accountable for their actions, trying out new ideas is encouraged and it is understood that such ideas may or may not be successful. Staff is encouraged to speak freely, openly, and honestly without fear. Challenging and thought-provoking dialogue is welcome. The City recognizes that a culture that encourages independence and flexibility ultimately results in greater success, both individually and City-wide. The City seeks to employ staff who not only perform at a high level, but who also fit the City’s culture.

Suwanee’s adopted organizational culture is very important to the City’s operations; it defines the way Council and staff interacts and functions and is reflected in many of the policies, procedures, and protocol that are outlined in this manual. There is a popular saying that, “culture eats strategy for lunch.” It is critical that Suwanee’s strategies are aligned with our organizational culture. By taking the formal step to memorialize policies and procedures, this allows Council to ensure they are consistent with Suwanee’s culture. Memorializing them in a written manual like this also helps to ensure they are consistently communicated throughout the organization.

I.3. Council-Manager Form of Government

Suwanee has chosen to operate as a Council-Manager form of government. In this form of government, the City Council is recognized as the governing body of the City, elected by the public and serving part-time, while the City Manager is hired by the Council and serves at their pleasure, carrying out policies established by the Council. The City Council provides legislative direction, while the City Manager oversees the day-to-day administrative operations of the City, based on policy set by Council. Core functions of the City Council include setting policy, approving the budget, determining tax rates, etc. Core functions of the City Manager include preparing the budget, directing daily operations, and hiring and firing personnel. More information on how this form of government is specifically executed in Suwanee is included in Chapter 10.



2. City Council – General Authority & Responsibilities

Effective management of a municipality is enhanced when elected officials and appointed staff clearly understand and agree on their respective roles as defined by their form of government, the city charter, and the code of ordinances. As a general rule, the City Council is the legislative body, and its members are the community's decision makers; the City Manager oversees the executive functions of daily oversight and policy implementation. In this sense, Suwanee's government works similarly to a major corporation with a part-time Board of Directors (Council) that sets policy and provides oversight and a CEO (City Manager) that carries out the policy and provides professional management of the day-to-day operations.

As elected officials, the Council implements the community's vision through the policies it enacts. In an effort to memorialize this vision, the Council adopted a Vision Statement during the 2000 annual Council work retreat. This Vision Statement, included in the Appendix, is revisited annually in each retreat to ensure it still accurately captures the community's vision.

2.1. Role of City Council

The following is a brief overview of the various roles that the City Council undertakes. Many of these roles are explained in greater detail in Chapter 1 of the *GMA Handbook for Georgia Mayors and Councilmembers*.

2.1.1. Establish Policy

One of the most visible roles that the City Council has is its legislative responsibilities, which involves setting policy for the City. Some of these include, but are not limited to, adopting ordinances and resolutions, setting the millage rate for property taxes, approving the annual budget, approving City expenditures, establishing priorities for City services, entering into contracts, establishing policies and procedures, and hearing rezoning and annexation requests. Sections 2.111-2.116 of the City Code provide more details on the Council's legislative authority.

2.1.2. Appoint/Supervise Officials

The City's appointed boards, commissions, and authorities assist the Council by serving in advisory capacity and by overseeing various functions or projects. The City Charter grants the Council authority to create such bodies and to establish their composition, duties, period of existence, etc. Some examples of the City's appointed bodies include the Planning Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Public Arts Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Harvest Farm Managing Board, and others. Suwanee's appointed boards are outlined in further detail in Chapter 7 of this document. Section 3.11 of the City Charter also provides more information on the Council's authority as it relates to boards, commissions, and authorities.

In addition to appointing boards, commissions, and authorities, the Council also appoints people to serve in individual capacities, such as the City Manager, Judges, Solicitors, City Attorney, etc.

2.1.3. Provide Community Leadership

Council members will be offered many opportunities, both as a whole and individually, to take a visible role in interacting with and engaging the community and to show public support for the City's various initiatives and programs. Some examples of these include leading a session at the bi-annual Citizens Police Academy, participating in and encouraging community involvement in strategic planning efforts (the Strategic Plan, Comprehensive Plan, park master planning, etc.), volunteering at City events and projects, sitting on various appointed Boards, etc. The Council members have an important role in interacting with the community - listening to wishes of constituents and communicating the City's vision and goals. Lastly, Council members will help to represent the City's interests at various regional, county, state, and federal levels. The City Manager will make the Council aware of these various opportunities as they arise.

2.1.4. Decision-Making

Closely related to the Council's legislative authority is the role Councilmembers play in making important decisions that provide guidance to staff for carrying out the day-to-day operations of the City. Such decisions might include direction on project scope, feedback on various City initiatives or programs, etc. While typically less formal than the Council's legislative powers (many times not requiring a formal vote in a Council meeting), such decisions are important and will typically be included as a discussion item for a Council workshop.

In an effort to aid in providing such guidance, and to help strengthen and solidify Suwanee's chosen culture, the Council has

adopted *Strategic Anchor Points*. Strategic Anchors are essentially the filters used when making long-term or notable strategic decisions. These anchors should cause the Mayor, Council members, and staff to pause and filter decisions, when appropriate, through these anchors. Therefore, when Council is considering a decision that doesn't fit these anchors, something may not be right and the decision may be going against what has made Suwanee successful. The Anchor Points are included in the Appendix.

2.2. Role of Mayor

The Mayor serves as the presiding officer and chair of all meetings of the City Council. The Mayor may participate in all deliberations of the Council in the same manner as other members and is a voting member of Council in all matters, unless a conflict of interest exists. The Mayor administers oaths and executes all written and approved contracts, ordinances, and other documents executed by the City.

The Mayor serves as the City's ceremonial representative at public events and functions; Councilmembers are welcome to attend as well. The Mayor is the official spokesperson for the Council – articulating actions taken, fielding questions about the City's policies and intentions, etc.

The Mayor appoints individuals to committees, study groups, etc. In certain cases, Councilmembers will be asked to submit nominees for such committees and groups and the Mayor will then ratify those nominees.

For more details on the Mayor's official capacities, please see Section 2.28 of the City Charter and Sections 2.31-32 of the City Code. Please also see *Understanding the Mayor's Office in Council-Manager Cities*, published by ICMA, in the Appendix.

2.2.1. Emergency Authority of Mayor

Per the City Code, the Mayor has the authority to declare a state of emergency under appropriate conditions. For more details on the conditions for this declaration, please see Sections 26.57-61 of the City Code.

2.2.2. State of the City Address

The Mayor delivers the annual State of the City address. This event is typically held during an evening in early January and is sponsored by the Suwanee Business Alliance (SBA). It is normally done as a Power Point, which can then be used by other Council members later in the year for meeting with homeowners and other community groups. Staff is available to assist the Mayor in putting this presentation together.

2.3. Mayor Pro-Tem

One Council member serves as the Mayor Pro Tempore (Pro-Tem) and performs the duties of Mayor in his/her absence or disability. The Mayor Pro-Tem is elected on an annual basis by the City Council during the January Council meeting. For more details, please see Section 2.27 of the Charter.

2.4. Intergovernmental Relations

Intergovernmental relations refers to the interactions between different governmental entities, such as Gwinnett County, the State, the School Board, the Atlanta Regional Commission, etc. Many of the Council's legislative functions will involve negotiation and coordination with other governments, such as distribution of various tax revenues, negotiation of the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS), etc. Council members will interact with elected and appointed officials from other governmental entities on a regular basis.

2.4.1. Service Delivery Strategy (SDS)

House Bill 489, known as the Service Delivery Strategy (SDS) Act of 1997, requires every county within the State of Georgia to develop and adopt a service delivery strategy that outlines current and future service delivery arrangements. In short, the strategy essentially outlines which government entities within a County are providing certain services, ensuring they are provided Countywide in a manner that eliminates the unnecessary duplication of services. The strategy must be reviewed, re-negotiated (if necessary), and re-adopted every 10 years by each of the affected jurisdictions. The strategy must be submitted to the Georgia Department of Community Affairs for verification in order to remain eligible for state administered financial grants or state permits. The act requires that each strategy contain four components:

1. **Identification of current service delivery arrangements.** The strategy must identify all local government services presently provided or primarily funded by each government and authority within the county and describe the geographic area in which the identified services are provided.
2. **Identification of future service delivery arrangements.** The strategy must indicate which local government authority will provide each service, the geographic areas of the county in which each service will be provided and a description of any services provided by any local government to any area outside its geographical boundaries.
3. **Funding sources of both current and future services.** The strategy must describe the funding source for each service to be provided. This component must indicate the source of revenue each local government will use to fund each service it will provide within the county.
4. **Identification of the legal mechanisms that will be used by each of the jurisdictions to implement the service delivery strategy.** The strategy must identify the mechanisms, if any, to be used to implement the service delivery strategy, such as intergovernmental agreements, ordinances, resolutions, etc.

2.4.2.SPLOST

Another important issue that involves coordination with Gwinnett County and the municipalities is SPLOST (Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax). The 2009 SPLOST program is currently underway; collections for this program began April 1, 2009 and will extend through March 31, 2014. In order to extend the SPLOST program beyond this timeframe, the voters will need to reauthorize it, which would likely occur in the November 2013 election. This would require Gwinnett County and the municipalities to negotiate in two different areas:

- **Projects:** State law requires the County and municipalities to identify potential project categories for voters to consider as part of the referendum. As the voters are considering categories on a County-wide basis, the County and municipalities must reach consensus on what those will be. For example, project categories in the 2009 SPLOST program include Libraries, Recreational Facilities, Public Safety Facilities and Equipment, Roads, Street, and Bridges, among others.
- **Revenue Distribution:** The County and municipalities negotiate not only the percentage of revenue that will be distributed to the County and then to the municipalities as a whole, but the municipalities must also agree to a formula for how they will distribute their share among themselves. The current distribution is based on population.

2.4.3.Organizations

There are several organizations that help to facilitate intergovernmental relations, both within Gwinnett County and around the region and state. Suwanee's Councilmembers and staff have had a strong tradition of holding leadership roles within each of these organizations. Some of these are as follows:

- **Gwinnett Municipal Association** – The Gwinnett Municipal Association (GwMA) is a non-profit organization that was formed by the cities of Gwinnett County in order to foster better cooperation among the municipalities and to improve the understanding of the complex issues that cities face. The GwMA holds general membership meetings on a regular basis, which are open to the elected officials and staff. For more information, please see www.gwinnettmunicipalassociation.org.
- **Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)** – The ARC is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for the 10-county metro area. Suwanee's elected officials take part in providing input and helping to develop the regional plans and initiatives that ARC oversees. The ARC also provides numerous training opportunities for elected officials and staff. For more information, please see www.atlantaregional.com.
- **Georgia Municipal Association (GMA)** – GMA is a statewide organization that provides leadership, tools, and services to assist local municipalities. GMA offers a number of training opportunities, including the annual Mayor's Day Conference (January) and Convention (June). GMA's website www.gmanet.com includes a wealth of resources, including training materials for elected officials, legislative tracking, news reports from municipalities across the state, an on-line version of the Georgia Cities newspaper, etc. Two

of GMA's resources are included in the appendix: *A Survival Guide for Newly Elected Municipal Officials* and *GMA Handbook for Mayors & Council Members*.

3. Conflicts of Interest, Ethics & Liability of Elected Officials

3.1. Conflicts of Interest

The state laws regarding ethics and conflicts of interest are some of the most important for Councilmembers to be aware of and follow. Essentially, these laws prohibit any Councilmember from voting on any question that is brought before the Council in which he/she is personally involved. Due to both the complexity of these laws and the significant consequences if violated, it is highly suggested that Councilmembers discuss the law and potential conflicts with the City Attorney.

Section 2.14 of the City Charter details the City's position on conflicts of interest. Chapter I of the *GMA Handbook for Georgia Mayors and Councilmembers*, included in the Appendix, includes a section on "Ethic, Conflict of Interest, and Abuse of Office," that provides more reference on state law. Again, the City Attorney is the best resource for this information.

3.2. Code of Ethics

Suwanee has obtained certification from the Georgia Municipal Association as a Certified City of Ethics. As such, the City has an adopted ethics ordinance in place. The ethics ordinance includes guidelines to ensure that the City is operated in a manner that is, and gives the appearance of being, independent and impartial. The ethics ordinance establishes procedures for the public to file an ethics complaint to be heard by a hearing officer. The ethics ordinance is included in the Appendix.

3.3. Liability

The City provides a number of high profile services, such as public safety, roads, parks, etc. that carry some degree of risk and liability. The City must always approach its responsibilities in a manner that reduces the potential of risk and liability for all involved.

The City Attorney will provide guidance to the City and Councilmembers on reducing liability. It is important to understand that violations of certain laws and regulations by individual members of the City may result in personal liability that is not covered by the City's insurance or can be represented by the City Attorney. Examples may include discrimination, harassment, fraud, etc.

4. Overview of City Documents

Councilmembers will want to familiarize themselves with a number of different documents that will help guide decision-making, outline legal requirements for operating the City, etc.

4.1. City Charter

Suwanee's charter is a written document that establishes the basic governmental structure, form of government, corporate boundaries, and municipal powers. In this respect, it is similar to a state or national constitution. Each municipality in Georgia has a charter, which is approved by the State General Assembly. As such, amendments to the City charter require action by the General Assembly.

4.2. City Code

The City Code is the compilation of local laws that have been adopted and codified by the City Council. The City Code covers a wide range of areas, including taxes, court, environmental regulations, alcoholic beverages, business regulations, etc. Amendments to the City Code must be adopted by the Council.

4.3. Georgia Laws

Municipalities are created by the State and, as such, many of the State laws apply to the operation of the City. The City Attorney provides guidance on this area.

4.4. Zoning Ordinance

The Zoning Ordinance regulates the kinds of activities that are permitted in each district, building heights, required parking, landscape and buffer requirements, sign restrictions, etc. Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance are drafted by staff and then forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration, with Council having the final vote.

4.5. Development Regulations

The Development Regulations are technical specifications that outline the standards to which properties and infrastructure shall be constructed. Examples of the standards include water quality, roadway design, materials quality, etc. Like the Zoning Ordinance, amendments are drafted by staff and then forwarded to the Planning Commission for consideration, with Council having the final vote.

4.6. Employee Handbook

The Employee Handbook includes the written policies that govern City employees (including Council, as appropriate) and informs them of their responsibilities and responsibilities. Amendments to the Handbook are drafted by staff and forwarded to the Council for adoption.

4.7. Police Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)

The Police SOP are a compilation of the written directives, procedures, orders, rules, and operations that guide members of the Police staff as they carry out their agency activities. The SOP are written and adopted internally in the Police Department.

4.8. Short Term Work Program (STWP)

The STWP is a five-year plan of actions that the City intends to complete in order to address identified needs and goals. The STWP is updated annually, removing the prior year's projects and adding a new 5th year, as well as any adjustments that need to be made to projects. Discussion and review of the STWP takes place at the annual Council work retreat, held at the beginning of each calendar year. The Council then formally adopts the updated STWP approximately 1-2 months after the retreat. The STWP is an important tool for decisions needed during budget development.

4.9. Budget

The budget is the City's financial plan that presents the services to be provided to the community over the coming year and the funds necessary to perform these services. Suwanee operates under a fiscal year that begins on July 1 and ends June 30. In late winter, staff begins the process of estimating anticipated revenues, identifying and evaluating potential expenditures and preparing a recommended budget. Special budget workshops will be scheduled with the Council throughout the spring, as needed, for the City Manager to present the recommended budget. Two public hearings are typically held on the budget in June, with the Council considering the budget at the June Council meeting.

4.10. Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

The CIP is a five-year plan of certain intended capital projects and purchases. This tool gives the City a comprehensive approach in planning for future assets and projects, as well as maintaining and replacing current ones. The CIP also allows the City to strategically plan how it will fund these projects and the impact they will have on future budgets. The CIP is a component of and developed at the same time as the annual budget. As such, it follows the same timeframe and review process with Council – spring workshops, with public hearings and adoption in June. For more information on general capital planning, please see the chapter in the *GMA Handbook for Georgia Mayor and Councilmembers* on Capital Improvements Planning, which is included in the Appendix.

4.11. Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR)

At the close of each fiscal year on June 30, an independent auditor reviews the City's financial statements. The auditor's report, along with the financial statements and other important information, make up the CAFR. The CAFR essentially allows the reader to determine how well the City performed from a financial standpoint and where it stands in terms of assets and liabilities. The audit is completed in late summer and early fall, with the report and CAFR being presented to Council at the end of each calendar year.

4.12. Comprehensive Plan

A community's Comprehensive Plan identifies near-term and long-term critical planning strategies that will help guide the location and design of future development. Georgia municipalities are required to update and adopt a new Comprehensive Plan every ten years, to comply with guidelines outlined by the Department of Community Affairs. The City's current plan is the 2020 Comprehensive Plan, intended to guide development through 2020. As such, the City is not scheduled to begin a major update to its plan until approximately 2018 or 2019. The City has historically contracted with planning consultants to carry out the public participation and plan development phases of this initiative. Staff oversees minor reviews and updates, which take place on an annual basis.

4.13. Downtown Master Plan

In 2002, the City adopted a Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) plan for the Downtown area, including the historic Old Town and what is now Town Center. This plan not only helps provide vision and guide planning for the Downtown area, but also makes the City eligible for grant funding through ARC's LCI Implementation Program. The City reviewed and updated this plan, adopting the current version in 2009. Similar to the Comprehensive Plan, the City has historically contracted with planning consultants to carry out the public participation and plan development phases of this plan. Work on the next update to the Downtown Master Plan is scheduled to begin in late 2013/early 2014.

4.14. Pedestrian Bicycle Plan (PBP)

The PBP provides an implementation guide for pedestrian and bicycle facilities to support the community's goals for a walkable and bikeable community. The plan not only identifies gaps in the existing system, but also defines additional improvements to benefit the overall sidewalk and trail network. This plan was originally adopted as the Alternative Transportation Plan (ATP), with its name changing to the PBP with the 2011 update. It is estimated this plan will be reviewed and updated approximately every five years, or as needed. The City has historically contracted with transportation planning consultants to carry out the public participation and plan development phases of this plan.

4.15. National Citizen Survey

The National Citizen Survey (NCS) is an independent, statistically valid survey of resident opinions about the community and services provided by local government. The NCS is a collaborative effort of the National Research Center and the International City/County Management Association. Council and staff find the survey results helpful in decision-making, strategic planning, budgeting, etc. Suwanee first participated in the NCS in 2008 and then again in 2010. Through the STWP, the Council has committed to participating every two years.

4.16. Strategic Plan

At the time this document was adopted, the City had its first Strategic Plan initiative underway. The goal was to adopt a 10-year strategy that outlines a unified and shared community vision for Suwanee. This plan will then help guide Council in

making decisions about the City's services, functions, goals, visions, infrastructure, values, purpose, etc. This plan will be the 20/20 Vision and will help guide the City through 2020. As such, it is anticipated the City will adopt a new plan every ten years. The City contracted with a team of planning, community engagement, and economic consultants to prepare this plan. Similar to the Comprehensive Plan, minor annual updates will likely be needed and handled by the staff.

4.17. Annual Report

In conjunction with the State of the City address, staff develops an Annual Report that is a written document highlighting successes, completed projects, awards received, etc. for the past year. This report is printed and mailed with the *Crossroads* newsletter at the beginning of each year.

4.18. Other Planning Efforts

The need to develop other plans and studies, not identified above, often arises. Typically, these are one-time plans, focused on a single issue or project. Past examples have included the Buford Highway Transportation Study, Sims Lake Master Plan, I-85 Business District report, etc. The need for such plans is typically identified in the STWP. Depending on the complexity of the plan and process, the Council will decide whether to contract with a consultant team or use staff resources.

5. Council Meetings & Workshops

5.1. Council Code of Conduct

In the *Handbook for Georgia Mayors and Councilmembers*, GMA notes that successful cities and leaders generally share a common set of characteristics:

- Trust and respect between elected officials
- Teamwork is demonstrated in all actions
- Communications are open, honest and consistent with expectations and outcomes that are clearly understood
- Planning, including visioning, goal-setting, and short- and long-range planning, is a part of the organizational culture
- The City operates in a businesslike manner

Recognizing the value of such characteristics, the City Council adopted the *Council Code of Conduct* to serve as agreed-upon code for how Council members will interact with each other and handle themselves both in public and internally.. The Code of Conduct is reviewed each year at the Council work retreat and is included in the Appendix.

5.2. Schedule

The Council typically meets together twice each month. The monthly Council Meeting (and Public Hearing, if needed) is held on the fourth Tuesday of each month.

The Council Workshop is held two Thursdays (12 days) before the Council meeting (usually the second Thursday of each month). The Workshops typically begin at 5:30 pm.

Other meetings may arise on an as needed basis, such as budget workshops. Additionally, the Mayor or three members of Council may call a special meeting. Notice of such special meetings shall be served no later than 48 hours in advance of the meeting.

In late fall, staff will prepare a proposed schedule of all Workshops and Council Meetings for the following year. Council will adopt this schedule. At times, scheduling conflicts arise where meeting dates are adjusted. Generally, meetings continue as scheduled, with individual Councilmembers absent, unless three or more Councilmembers will be unable to attend.

All meetings are held at City Hall.

5.3. Agenda Development

5.3.1. Agenda Item Requests

Staff in the City Manager's office develops the agendas for the Workshops and Council Meetings and submits them to the Council for comments or additions. Council, on behalf of themselves, members of Boards, community members, etc., may request to have an item placed on the agenda by contacting the City Manager or Assistant to the City Manager. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, an item must first be submitted for and discussed at a workshop in order to be placed on a Council Meeting agenda. During the workshop, Council will discuss all pending items and whether to proceed with placing them on the Council Meeting agenda.

5.3.2. Workshop Agendas

Workshop agendas are prepared the week before the Workshop takes place (usually the first week of each month). Requests for agenda items should be submitted to staff by 10:00 am on the Tuesday of that week. Staff will then prepare a draft agenda and forward it to the Council by e-mail for review, typically on Thursday afternoon. The agenda is typically finalized and distributed to Council on Friday of the week preceding the Workshop.

5.3.3. Council Meeting Agendas

Council Meeting agendas are prepared the week before the meeting. As all agenda items were discussed at the Workshop, there is no submittal requirement/deadline for these items. Section 2-44 of the City Code outlines the established order of business for Council Meeting agendas; staff will prepare the agenda accordingly. Again, staff will prepare a draft agenda and forward it to Council for review, typically on Thursday afternoon. The agenda is typically finalized and distributed to Council on Friday of the week preceding the meeting.

5.3.4. Agenda Packages

Each agenda package includes the agenda, City Manager’s Notes (brief overview of each item on the agenda), and background materials for each item, as appropriate. The agenda package will be uploaded to a folder on the City’s network that Council can access from their iPad, computer, or other device. As of May 2011, the City no longer provides paper copies of the agenda packages to Council members or staff.

Staff prepares a limited number of hard copies of a package with the agenda and background materials for the public – for both workshops and meetings. These are available in the meeting room at the time of the meeting.

5.3.5. Adding Items to the Agenda After Publication

At times, emergencies arise and agenda items develop after the agenda has been finalized. In Suwanee, these are informally called “walk-on items.” In the case of an item to be added to the workshop agenda, the Council/staff member should bring this to the attention of the City Manager as soon as possible. In the case of an item to be added to the Council meeting agenda, the Council/staff member should again bring it to the attention of the City Manager, who will inform Council. If appropriate, Council will take a formal vote in the meeting on whether to amend the agenda to add the item.

5.3.6. Agenda Distribution

Staff distributes the final agendas to the following media outlets: Atlanta Journal Constitution; Gwinnett Daily Post; and Suwanee Patch.

Citizens may also request to receive a copy of the final agenda by e-mail. This request should be directed to the Assistant to the City Manager.

The final agendas are also posted on www.suwanee.com – in the City Hall tab, Agendas & Minutes. A hard copy is also posted in the front window of City Hall.

5.4. Workshops

5.4.1. Purpose of Workshops

The workshops have several purposes: 1) to discuss pending items for the Council Meeting agenda; 2) to discuss items that staff needs to bring to Council’s attention; 3) to receive progress reports on current projects and 3) to hear regular updates from members of appointed Boards, Gwinnett Municipal Association, etc. Overall, the purpose of the workshop is for Council and staff to meet and discuss various items in an informal manner where questions may be asked of each other and in-depth discussion can take place. No official action on City business is taken in workshops. Workshops do not generally include public input, unless permitted by the consent of a majority of Council.

In an effort to manage the length of workshops, the beginning of the workshop agenda includes a “Staff Updates” section. This section includes items that staff needs to communicate to Council on, but do not necessarily need a full discussion or feedback from Council; a brief written update is usually sufficient. If requested, and agreed by Council, an item from the Staff Updates can be moved to the discussion agenda.

5.4.2. Location

Workshops are held in the Big Splash room of City Hall. The room is set up so that the tables are configured in one large square, with Council members and staff sitting at the tables. The Council finds this arrangement allows for informal, effective communication, consistent with the City’s culture. There are chairs along the walls for the public in attendance.

5.4.3. Time

The workshops typically begin at 5:30 pm. Occasionally, the time will be changed if the Council is interested in also gathering for other purposes, i.e. to hear a presentation by a consultant before the workshop. At times, it will be necessary to combine the workshop with a called meeting, for the purposes of holding an executive session, a public hearing, or considering an item of business. In this case, the called meeting will typically take place before the workshop begins. Workshops generally last 2-5 hours.

5.4.4. Attendance

Workshops are attended by all members of the City Council, the City Manager, and the City Attorney. Typically, most, if not all of the department managers attend, as well. Depending on the agenda items, other staff members, consultants, Board members, etc. will be invited. The Mayor presides over the workshops. As no official business takes place during the workshops, no quorum is necessary.

5.4.5. Schedule of Recurring Reports

One purpose for the workshops is for Council to receive regular updates from staff, appointed Boards/staff, etc. on various issues related to their department/Board. The schedule for these updates is usually as follows. Council can amend this schedule and add or remove updates, as desired.

- January: DDA (semi-annual report)
- February: Police (quarterly report); Planning (Economic Indicators report)
- March: Public Arts Commission (semi-annual report; Harvest Farm Managing Board (semi-annual report)
- April: Municipal Court (semi-annual report)
- May: Police (quarterly report); Finance (annual pension report)
- June: DDA (semi-annual report)
- July: Planning Commission (annual report)
- August: Police (quarterly report); Zoning Board of Appeals (annual report)
- September: Public Arts Commission (semi-annual report; Harvest Farm Managing Board (semi-annual report)
- October: Municipal Court (semi-annual report)
- November: Police (quarterly report)

5.4.6. Minutes

The City Clerk takes informal minutes of the workshops. These minutes are not formally adopted or distributed to the public. The workshops are not recorded by audio or video.

5.4.7. Meal

Staff arranges for a light dinner to be delivered and served during the workshop. The meal is for the Council and staff members present.

5.5. Council Meetings

5.5.1. Components of a Council Meeting

There are three “components” to a Council meeting: 1) a dinner session, at 5:30 pm, where Council informally discusses the meeting agenda; 2) a public hearing, at 6:30 pm, if necessary; and 3) the Council (business) meeting at 7:00 pm. All are open to the public.

5.5.2. Dinner Session

The dinner sessions are held in the Big Splash room of City Hall and allow the Council to informally review the items that are on the public hearing and meeting agenda with staff. The room is configured in the square set up that is used for workshops. Staff arranges for a light dinner to be delivered and served during the dinner session. The meal is for the Council and staff members present.

At the conclusion of the dinner session, the Council will move to the Council Chambers for the public hearing and meeting. Council sits on the dais, along with the City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk.

5.5.3. Attendance; quorum required

Council meetings are attended by all members of the City Council, the City Manager, and the City Attorney. Typically, most, if not all of the department managers attend, as well. Depending on the agenda items, other staff members, consultants, Board members, etc. will be invited. The Mayor presides over the meetings. A quorum, of three or more council members, is required for both the public hearing and meeting. If a quorum cannot be attained with 30 minutes of the published starting time, the meeting will be rescheduled.

5.5.4. Minutes and recordings

The City Clerk takes formal minutes of the public hearing and meeting. These minutes are adopted by Council the following month and posted to the City’s website. The City Clerk also makes an audio recording of the public hearing and meeting; no video recording is done.

5.5.5. Public Participation

Citizens have two separate opportunities to participate in a Council meeting. The first is during the public hearing, when they are invited to address the Council on any item that is on the public hearing agenda. The second is during the “Audience Participation” portion of the Council meeting. Comments during this portion are to be reserved for any item that is not on the public hearing agenda. The Mayor has the authority to impose time limits for public comments in both the public hearing and the meeting. For more information on public participation, please see Section 2-46 of the City Code.

5.5.6. Signing of Documents

At the conclusion of the meeting, the City Clerk will circulate all documents that were approved and require signature of the Mayor and/or Council.

5.6. Consent Agenda

The City Code permits the Council to use a consent agenda for Council Meetings. The consent agenda is a group of items that are expected to receive unanimous approval and where no debate is anticipated. Council will typically decide during the workshops whether to place an item on the consent regular agenda. Council members can also request during the draft agenda review or vote at the beginning of a Council Meeting to remove an item from the consent agenda, if desired.

5.7. Public Hearings

Public hearings provide Council the opportunity to solicit public comment on various subjects. They are always scheduled for rezoning cases, special use permits, alcohol beverage applications, budget adoption, and the setting of the millage rate. They are commonly used when the City is undergoing various planning initiatives, such as the Comprehensive Plan, etc. As needed, public hearings are held in conjunction with the Council meetings and begin at 6:30 pm.

5.8. Open Meetings

Georgia's laws regarding government meetings and records are commonly referred to as the "sunshine laws." They are designed to provide transparency to the public on how government operates, how decisions are made, how money is spent, etc. As such, they require that the public have notice and access to City meetings and establish procedures for public access to City records.

5.8.1. What is a Meeting?

In general, whenever a quorum of the Council (or other City Board) gathers at a designated time to conduct or discuss public or official business, this is considered a meeting that must be open and advertised to the public and comply with other aspects of the sunshine laws. This applies whenever any public matter, official business, or policy is discussed, including workshops, even if no final action is taken. Social gatherings that include a quorum are not considered meetings as long as no City business or other public matter is discussed.

5.8.2. Executive Sessions

5.8.2.1. Purpose

Council and Boards have the ability to discuss issues related to three areas in a closed discussion not open to the public: 1) legal – to discuss pending or potential litigation with the City Attorney; 2) personnel – to discuss hiring, compensation, evaluation, or disciplinary action for a specific public employee. The Council conducts interviews for Board seats and other appointments in executive sessions; and 3) real estate acquisitions. The City Attorney will provide guidance, if necessary, on whether an item meets the criteria to be discussed in an executive session. All items discussed in an executive session are strictly confidential.

While not open to the public, Council cannot enter into an executive session unless it was held in conjunction with a meeting, even if it is simply for the purposes of calling a meeting to order, immediately taking a vote to enter into executive session, and then adjourning the meeting after the executive session ends. A majority of Council must vote to enter into the executive session.

Official business does take place in an executive session. If an item requires a vote by Council, the vote must take place in an open meeting.

5.8.2.2. Attendance

Depending on the topic(s) to be discussed, executive sessions are typically attended by the City Manager, City Attorney, and City Clerk. Other staff members may be present, if needed.

5.8.2.3. Schedule

Due to the limited nature of discussion topics, executive sessions do not occur at a regularly scheduled time. Each Council meeting agenda includes an agenda item that allows Council to vote on entering into an executive session, if needed. If need for an executive session arises that cannot wait for the monthly Council meeting, a specially called meeting will be scheduled in conjunction with a workshop and typically takes place at 5:30 pm. The workshop will then follow the called meeting. On rare occasions, an emergency will make it necessary to hold an executive session before

the next regularly scheduled workshop or Council meeting. In this case, the City Manager will contact Council to confirm availability and a specially called meeting will be scheduled.

5.9. External Meetings

Council members will be invited to meetings and training opportunities for external organizations, such as the Gwinnett Municipal Association, Atlanta Regional Commission, Georgia Municipal Association, etc. Council may contact the Office Administrator for assistance in signing up and confirming attendance to these events.

6. Education & Training

There are a number of training opportunities, both optional and mandatory, that are offered by various organizations for Council members. The following includes more details on these events.

6.1. Newly Elected Municipal Officials Institute

State law requires each Council member to attend the Newly Elected Municipal Officials Institute. This 18-hour program is coordinated by GMA and the Carl Vinson Institute and is offered at locations throughout the state. The course provides an orientation to City government for Council members new to office. This course must be taken within the first 12 months of taking office. Typically, the course is offered in late winter/early spring of each year. For more details, please see www.cviog.uga.edu/elected-officials.

6.2. Harold F. Holtz Municipal Training Institute

In addition to the Newly Elected Institute, state law also requires elected officials to attend and complete 42 units of various training courses pertaining to the basic performance of their duties. In partnership with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government, GMA provides the Municipal Training Institute, which offers these required courses, as well as other elective courses. The Institute also offers a voluntary certification program for elected officials. For more details, please see www.gmanet.com/Training.

6.3. GMA Convention

The Georgia Municipal Association hosts an annual convention each year. In addition to providing required and elective training classes, the convention also includes sessions on various topics and networking opportunities with other cities. The convention is typically held the last weekend in June at the Savannah Convention Center. Suwanee's Council members, City Manager, and City Attorney normally attend. Some senior staff members may attend as well. For more details on the convention, please see www.gmanet.com/convention.

6.4. Mayor's Day

Mayor's Day, also a GMA event, is a smaller version of the annual convention. Held in Atlanta in mid-January each year, the conference offers required and elective training classes and sessions on various topics. Council members normally attend this conference. For more details, please see www.gmanet.com/MayorsDay.

6.5. Other

Other non-required professional development opportunities will arise. The Council will decide among themselves on the suitability of attendance for these activities and whether the City will fund them.

6.6. Registration for Classes, Conferences & Other Events

The Office Administrator can assist Council members with registration for classes, conferences, etc., as well as the associated travel arrangements, such as hotel. Council should submit their completed registration forms to him/her. Any special requests should be noted on the registration forms.

6.7. Retreats

The Council holds two work retreats each year. The first is typically held over three days (mid-Thursday to mid-Saturday) in February. During this retreat, Council reviews accomplishments from the previous year, develops the Short Term Work Program for the coming year, discusses funding priorities for the upcoming budget, and engages in conversation on Council-determined strategic and tactical issues. This retreat also includes a learning field trip, informational meeting(s), and networking opportunities with elected officials and staff from the host city. This retreat is attended by the Council, City Manager, and Department Heads. An outside facilitator assists with this retreat.

The second retreat, called the mid-year retreat, is held in late summer or early fall. This retreat is intended to be for the discussion of big-picture, strategic issues. An outside facilitator also assists with this retreat.

Both retreats are held outside Suwanee, typically within a driving distance of approximately two hours or less. The locations are typically selected for the learning value they might provide, such as benchmarking the host city, relevance to a particular project or initiative, etc. Staff will solicit ideas on location from Council when beginning the retreat planning process.

6.8. Travel

6.8.1. General Overview of Travel Policy

The City has adopted a policy that outlines covered expenses for Council and staff as it relates to travel, entertainment, lodging, and incidental expenses incurred when conducting City business. The policy covers air travel, lodging, car rental, meals and entertainment, and other expenses, as well as outlining expenses that will not be reimbursed. Please note, the City does not cover expenses for spouses or other companions traveling with City and/or staff. Additionally, the City does not pay for the purchase of any alcohol. For more details on the travel policy, please see Section 4-08 of the Employee Handbook.

6.8.2. Procedures for Obtaining Reimbursement of Expenses

Original, itemized receipts are required for all expenses over \$5.00; estimated expenses are not acceptable.

The Office Administrator is available to assist Council in preparing an expense report for travel and other expenditures. Receipts must be submitted to him/her within ten days of purchase/return of trip. A check will be issued within approximately 30 days of submittal for all approved reimbursable expenses.

Customary expenses by Council may be approved administratively by the City Manager or his/her designee. In the case of special circumstances or expenses subject to interpretation, the Mayor shall review and approve Councilmembers' expenses and the Mayor Pro-Tem will review and approve the Mayor's expenses..

6.8.3. City Vehicles

Council members typically use their personal vehicles for City-related travel. The City will reimburse the Council member for the mileage incurred at the City mileage rate; this should be submitted as outlined above. Carpooling with other Council members or staff, if feasible, is encouraged to minimize expenses. If desired, Council members may reserve one of the City vehicles for use during an out-of-town trip.

7. Appointed Boards & Positions

The City's appointed boards, commissions, and authorities assist the Council be serving in advisory capacities and by overseeing various functions or projects. The City Charter grants the Council authority to create such bodies and to establish their composition, duties, period of existence, etc. Section 3.11 of the City Charter provides more information on the Council's authority as it relates to boards, commissions, and authorities.

In addition to appointing boards, commissions, and authorities, the Council also appoints people to serve in individual capacities, such as the City Manager, Judges, Solicitors, City Attorney, etc.

7.1. City Manager

Suwanee is a Council-Manager form of government, with a City Manager overseeing and directing the daily operations of the City. The City Manager directs the City's administrative activities; serves as a focal point for strategic planning, programming and budgeting; supervises City employees; serves as a liaison between Council and staff; and assists the public. For more details on the City Manager's functions, please see Section 3.16 of the City Charter.

7.2. City Attorney

Council appoints a City Attorney, who is responsible for representing and defending the City in all litigation in which the City is a party, attending meetings of Council as directed, and advising the Council and staff concerning legal aspects of the City's operations. The City Attorney serves on a part-time basis and works from his/her office, rather than from City Hall. The City Attorney is appointed annually in December of each year. For more details on the City Attorney, please see Section 3.12 of the City Charter.

7.3. Planning Commission

The Planning and Zoning Commission is a five-member board comprised of volunteers appointed by the Suwanee City Council. Its duties and responsibilities include reviewing requests and making recommendations to the City Council on the following matters:

- **Rezoning requests** – Requests to alter the zoning district for a piece of property. Zoning districts regulate the allowed and special uses and the basic development standards for properties throughout the City.
- **Special use permit** – Each Zoning district includes a list of potential uses (called special uses) that may be appropriate for the district in certain locations. These uses require a permit to be issued by Council.
- **Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance** – Periodically the Zoning Ordinance requires changes in order to help the city meet the goals of the comprehensive plan.

Additionally, the Commission reviews and decides on the following:

- **Waivers** – These are requests to deviate from the requirements of the Development Regulations. They may be authorized by the Planning Commission, but decisions of the Planning Commission may be appealed to the City Council.
- **Alternate Architectural Reviews** – Quality designs that do not meet the requirements of the Architectural Standards may be submitted for review and approval by the Planning Commission, as an Alternate Architectural Review.

The Board may also undertake special studies and reviews as directed by the Council.

The Planning Commission meets on the first Tuesday of each month, at 6:30 pm, in City Hall. Members serve two-year terms, appointed on a staggered basis, and must be residents of the city of Suwanee.

7.4. Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is a five-member board comprised of volunteers appointed by the Suwanee City Council. Its duties and responsibilities include reviewing and issue rulings related to variance requests and appeals of administrative decisions.

- **Variances** - requests to deviate from the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.
- **Appeals of administrative decisions** - requests to hear alternative interpretations from the Zoning Ordinance as interpreted by the Planning Director.

The ZBA meets on the third Tuesday of each month, at 6:30 pm, in City Hall. Members serve two-year terms, appointed on a staggered basis, and must be residents of the city of Suwanee.

7.5. Downtown Development Authority

The Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is a seven-member board of directors appointed by the City Council to serve as advocates and advisors to the City on issues related to downtown Suwanee.

The DDA's mission is to strengthen the economic viability of downtown Suwanee through economic development, aesthetic improvements, historic preservation, and through promotion and image-building efforts. Its goal is to create and sustain a vibrant downtown in the heart of Suwanee. Its focus and planning are long-term in nature. The DDA is a hybrid agency- neither wholly a public agency nor wholly a private corporation- enacted by municipal government and authorized by State law. The DDA also oversees the implementation of the Main Street program.

The DDA meets the third Tuesday of each month, at 7:30 AM, at City Hall. Members serve four year staggered terms, and must be either residents of the city of Suwanee and/or own a business within Downtown Suwanee. A Council member has historically served on the DDA, as one of the seven members.

7.6. Public Arts Commission

The Suwanee Public Arts Commission (PAC) is a seven-member board appointed by the City Council and began in 2008 through the creation of a City ordinance. Members should represent a broad diversity of backgrounds and may be selected because of their expertise and/or interest in the arts, architecture, development, etc. and must be City residents or affiliated with a business located in the City. Per the ordinance, one member of the PAC may be a City Council member and one member may be a Planning Commission member.

The PAC is charged with the following tasks and responsibilities:

- Expand community awareness and appreciation of the value of art;
- Advise the City Council and staff on art-related issues;
- Assist the City and other organizations and businesses in the commission and selection of artists for public works of art;
- Develop art master plans, policies, and other program elements;
- Serve in an advisory capacity to other organizations and businesses pursuing public art projects;
- Hold pre-development meeting with applicants seeking a development permit from the City, to encourage and assist in the creation of public art projects;
- Solicit temporary and/or permanent displays of art in City facilities;
- Commission public art projects and assist with other public art initiatives, as appropriate.

The PAC meets monthly at City Hall. Board members serve a two-year term and are appointed on a staggered basis.

7.7. Urban Redevelopment Authority

The Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA) is a five-member board comprised of volunteers appointed by the City Council. URA's are created and defined by the State of Georgia's Urban Redevelopment Law which outlines specific powers relating to the rehabilitation, conservation, or redevelopment of a specific area identified by the municipality. For Suwanee, the URA area is the downtown district which includes Town Center, as well as the historic Main Street area, and mirrors the DDA boundaries. The City has primarily used the URA to facilitate low-interest financing for projects completed in the downtown area (including the Town Center Commercial area and the new City Hall building).

The URA meets annually. Board members serve a two-year term and are appointed on a staggered basis.

7.8. Harvest Farm Managing Board

The Harvest Farm Managing Board is comprised of volunteers appointed by the City Council to oversee the daily operations of the Harvest Farm Community Garden at White Street Park. It's duties and responsibilities include the following:

- General management and oversight of the garden and its resources
- Assignment of plots and collection of plot fees
- Enforcement the rules and guidelines of the garden
- Handle issues of concern and dispute among the gardeners

- Coordinate volunteer work days
- Plan and carry out educational programs and other events
- Coordinate with the City for maintenance needs of the garden
- Plan fundraising events and programs

The Board is comprised of nine volunteer members, seven whom are appointed from members of the garden and the remaining two as ex-Oficio. The seven garden members serve two-year terms, appointed on a staggered basis. The Board accepts applications for its expiring terms, conducts interviews, and forwards a recommendation of appointment to the Council for consideration. The Board has a sunset provision created by Council and shall exist until December 31, 2012, and must be reauthorized at that time by Council. The enabling ordinance for the Board is included in the appendix.

The Board meets on the first Wednesday of each month, at 4:00 pm, at City Hall.

7.9. Municipal Court

The Council appoints staff to the City’s Municipal Court for the purposes of hearing and adjudicating traffic offenses and violation of City ordinances that occur within the City limits. The Court also hears Gwinnett County Animal Control violations and Georgia State Park traffic offenses that occur within the City limits.

Appointed staff include: Chief Judge; Associate Judge(s); Chief Solicitor; and Associate Solicitor(s). Each position is appointed for a one-year term. The City also contracts its professional probation services. This contract is typically reviewed every three years.

Councilmembers should be aware that circumstances may arise where individuals who have received a ticket or other violation might request a Councilmember(s) to assist in achieving a reduced fine or dismissal. From both an ethical and legal standpoint, it is important that the Municipal Court be operated independently and without influence from the Council, as the Charter and Code establishes.

Municipal Court hearings are held every Wednesday at 5:30 pm in the Municipal Court building. For more details on the role of Municipal Court, please see Article 4 of the City Charter.

7.10. Election Superintendent

State law requires the Council to appoint an election superintendent. This person is responsible for carrying out the administrative duties associated with conducting an election. The City Clerk has historically served in this capacity.

8. Financial Matters

It is important to recognize the key distinctions between the financial operations of a municipality compared to the commercial world. Cities have very different objectives from those of commercial enterprises. A city's primary goal is to provide services to its constituents within budgetary constraints; business enterprises exist to maximize economic profit. A city's capital assets are used to provide services whereas they are used to generate revenue for a business. Cities operate in an entirely different economic, legal, political and social environment, which requires different objectives, financial reporting requirements, etc. For more information on the City's financial operations, please see Article 6 of the City Charter and Chapter 5 of the *GMA Handbook for Georgia Mayors and Councilmembers*.

8.1. Budget

Each year, the City adopts an annual budget that determines where the funds to operate the City will come from and how they will be spent. The adopted budget serves as an important internal tool and control to both guide the services to be provided and ensure spending limits are not exceeded. The budget has an important role externally and, with public participation in the budget development, is one of the most significant ways the City can provide open and transparent leadership. Cities are required to adopt a balanced budget, meaning expenditures and revenues are equal.

8.1.1. Preparation

One of the first steps in the annual budget development process is the Council's annual work retreat, held in late winter. During this retreat, Council establishes the Short Term Work Program, which will include new projects and initiatives to be evaluated in the budget. After returning from the retreat, staff continues the process by analyzing trends, researching updated information, preparing revenue forecasts, identifying department goals and objectives, reviewing department requests, etc. to put together a draft budget for Council to review. The first draft is typically forwarded to Council in April. A series of budget review workshops will be held during late April/May for Council to review and discuss the proposed budget in detail with staff. After receiving Council input, staff revises the draft budget accordingly and the final draft is typically available for public review by late May. Public hearings are then scheduled during June, with the Council considering the final draft at the June Council meeting.

8.1.2. Millage Rate

Setting the millage rate each year is closely related to budget development. The millage is the rate of taxes charged and collected by the City for all real and personal property within the City limits. Gwinnett County provides tax assessment services for the City and forwards a consolidated, estimated digest to the City in the spring. This draft digest is considered in the budget development and the adopted budget assumes an estimated millage rate, based on the consolidated digest, proposed revenues to balance the budget, collectability rate, etc. In mid-summer, the City receives a detailed digest from the County, which allows staff to confirm assumptions that were made in the adopted budget and recommend a final millage rate. The Council will then schedule a public hearing(s) for the citizens to comment on the proposed millage rate. The public hearing(s) and vote by Council typically takes place in August.

8.1.3. Monthly Financial Statements

At the close of each month, the Finance Department prepares a financial statement that compares budgeted revenues and expenditures with actual revenues and expenditures. These reports allow Council and staff to monitor budget compliance throughout the fiscal year. A digital copy of the statement will be uploaded each month to the Council's Websharing folder. Monthly financial statements are provided for informational purposes only; Council does not officially approve them.

8.1.4. Audit

At the close of each fiscal year on June 30, an independent audit is conducted in compliance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) and governmental auditing standards (GAGAS). This is a requirement of state law. The purpose of the audit is to verify that the City's financial statements present the City's financial position in a fair and accurate manner and can provide citizens with a degree of trust that public funds have been expended as legally requirement. The audit also allows holders of debt securities to better understand the City's financial position. The audit also includes a review of the City's internal accounting controls, and if necessary, will include suggestions to help avoid circumstances that might permit inefficiencies or fraud. A copy of the final audit will be provided to Council, as well as presented in a Council meeting, typically in November or December of each year.

8.2. Council Compensation

Council establishes the rate of compensation for the Mayor, Mayor Pro-Tem, and Councilmembers in accordance with O.C.G.A. 36-35-4. This rate is currently set at \$1250/month (\$15,000/year) for the Mayor, \$925/month (\$11,100/year)

for the Mayor Pro-Tem, and \$750/month (\$9000/year) for the Councilmembers. Council is compensated monthly and can elect to have this as a check or direct-deposit.

8.3. Council Campaign Disclosures

State law requires Council to submit public disclosure forms for campaign contributions and expenditures. More details on this filing, including the forms, can be obtained from the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Committee at <http://ethics.georgia.gov/>.

8.4. Adopted Policies

The following is an overview of the applicable policies the City has adopted to govern its financial operations. With the exception of the Purchasing Policy, all policies can be found in the Executive Summary of the adopted budget.

8.4.1. Purchasing Policy

The City's purchasing policy outlines requirements to ensure competitive pricing of goods and services. It also includes specific tiers, based on cost, and the level of competition and approval that is required for each. Competitive pricing is always given high consideration. For some goods and services when there may be distinctions in the good or service depending on the provider, factors other than pricing will determine the successful provider; this is particularly true in the case of professional services. Change orders are subject to standard purchasing policy limits; the City Manager is authorized to approve change orders up to \$25,000, provided the overall approved budget is not exceeded. For more details, please see the City's Purchasing Policy, as well as GMA's *Public Works Construction Projects* report, both included in the Appendix.

8.4.2. Capital Improvement Policy

The City's Capital Improvement policy outlines the types of projects that are appropriate for evaluation and inclusion in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). To be considered, a project should have an estimated cost of at least \$10,000 and should not be considered an operating expense, such as maintenance agreements, software upgrades, etc. The policy also includes the criteria for evaluating and prioritizing projects.

8.4.3. Debt Management Policy

The Debt Management policy sets forth the parameters for issuing debt and managing outstanding debt. It provides guidance to decision makers regarding the timing and purposes for which debt may be issued, types and amounts of permissible debt, method of sale that may be used, and the structural features that may be incorporated. Compliance with the debt policy helps to ensure that the City maintains a sound debt position and protects its credit.

8.4.4. Investment Policy

The Investment policy includes various guidelines to ensure the City's investments comply with four objectives: safety of the principal; liquidity to meet all anticipated operating requirements; market- average return on investment; and maintaining the public's trust. The policy applies to all City investments, with the exception of the employee retirement funds and accounts.

8.4.5. Fund Balance Policy

This policy established guidelines on managing the City's fund balance, which is the surplus of funds accrued from unexpended operating budgets and unanticipated revenues. The policy ensures that an adequate fund balance is maintained in order to sustain financial sustainability and to provide prudent management of the City's financial reserves.

8.5. Land Acquisitions

The City has established specific procedures regarding land acquisition to ensure competitive and ethical practices are used. An independent appraisal is obtained in order to establish an appropriate value. The City Manager is authorized to negotiate a purchase price up to a maximum of 110% of the appraisal. Beyond that, City Council approval is required. Discussion of land acquisitions takes place in an executive session, with an affirmative vote in an open meeting.

8.6. Donations & Grants

The City's Donation policy establishes a uniform set of procedures for the review and acceptance of donations to the City and/or specific departments. The City Manager can review and approve a donation with a value less than \$5,000; the Council reviews and approves those above \$5,000. The review includes an evaluation of the appropriateness of the donation, based on criteria such as long-term maintenance requirements, providing a public benefit, consistent with the City's plans, etc.

In order to apply for a grant, regardless of whether it has a City funding match, staff must submit the project and grant details to the Council for review and approval.

9. Communications

One of the Council's fundamental roles is communication. The Council communicates with the public to share the City's vision and goals and to determine community opinions, needs, and desires. Council must also communicate with staff, in order to provide direction on policy.

9.1. Communications from Council

The Council acts as a body and it is important that individual Councilmembers understand general guidelines when speaking on behalf of the Council. The Council's adopted Code of Conduct references this in part, stating, "We will support the actions of the Council even though we may continue to disagree." On occasion, Councilmembers may wish to communicate on an issue on which the Council has not yet taken a position or about an issue for which the Council has no position. In these cases, the Councilmember should make it clear that he/she is expressing a personal view, rather than that of the Council.

The City Charter specifies that the Mayor serves as "the official spokesperson for the City." With that in mind, Councilmembers should defer to the Mayor the role of communicating the City's position on policy matters to the public and other external bodies.

Members of Council will often be requested to correspond with citizens, business, and public agencies. Such correspondence might be a response to an inquiry, a reference for an individual or business, etc. In the case of communicating the City's position on a policy matter, the Mayor will generally handle such correspondence.

It is appropriate for the Council to use City letterhead, e-mail address, and Council titles when sending correspondence that communicates official City business. Staff support is also available for preparing and sending such correspondence; please forward requests to the City Manager. City letterhead, e-mail, staff support, and postage may not be used for personal or political purposes.

9.2. Communications to Council

Mail, including letters, memos, etc. that is received by the City and addressed to an individual Councilmember(s), will either be copied or scanned and forwarded to all Councilmembers.

9.3. Local Ballot Measures

At times, initiatives may be placed on ballots that affect City policy. Individual Councilmembers may express their personal options on such initiatives. The City may provide education on the initiatives, but may not use personnel, equipment, materials, buildings, or other resources for the purposes of trying to influence the outcome of such elections. The City Attorney and City Manager will provide specific direction, as appropriate.

9.4. Proclamations

The Mayor issues proclamations as a way to give special recognition by the City to an individual, event, issue, etc. Proclamations are not statements of policy and do not require the official approval or action of Council.

9.5. State Open Records Law

Generally, any item, such as letters, e-mails, maps, photographs, audio recordings, etc. that is prepared and/or maintained or which is received in the course of operation of a public office is defined as a public record by state law. Such records must then be maintained and produced, if requested. E-mail messages generated and received through the City e-mail system are City property and may be retrieved from storage even if they have been deleted by the sender and receiver.

The regulations concerning open records are covered extensively in various training courses for elected officials, as well as in Chapter 2 of the *GMA Handbook for Georgia Mayors & Councilmembers*, and the *GMA Government in the Sunshine* guide. Questions may also be directed to either the City Attorney or the City Manager.

9.6. Communications from the City

9.6.1. Press Releases

City press releases are written and distributed by the City's Public Information Officer several times each week or as needed. Press releases are also posted on the City's website.

9.6.2. City Website

Content for the City's website, www.suwanee.com, is managed by staff. The home page of the site is updated approximately every three weeks with current information. The website is a tool that is used for communicating news from the City as a whole and is not used for communicating from individuals or specific departments, including Council.

9.6.3. Social Media

In an effort to build relationships, reach audiences that don't have access to or typically utilize the City's more traditional means of communication (e.g., newsletter), share information on a real-time basis, and retain its reputation as a progressive community, Suwanee uses social media outlets for City communications. The City uses one central account with each network, e.g. Facebook, Twitter, etc. Staff manages the City's social media accounts.

Elected officials should not post as "City of Suwanee." Campaigning, on behalf of political candidates or in support or opposition to issues, is discouraged on the City's pages. Political candidates are encouraged to establish their own fan pages and accounts. City staff members are discouraged from becoming "fans" of candidates' election pages/accounts; elected officials should avoid asking staff to do so.

For more information on the City's social media policies, please see Section 7-15 of the Employee Handbook and the City's Social Media Policy.

9.6.4. Crossroads

The City publishes the *Crossroads* newsletter six times each year – in February, April, June, August, September, and December. The newsletter is used to communicate with the community on upcoming events, interesting news, etc. One copy of the newsletter is mailed to each City residence and business location.

Staff manages the production process, including selecting items for publication, writing articles, and editing the newsletter. Much like the City website, *Crossroads* is a tool that is used for communicating news from the City as a whole and is not used for communicating from individuals or specific departments, including Council. City staff may contact Councilmembers for information and quotes to be included in articles.

10. Interaction with City Staff

10.1. Council Manager Form of Government

As a Council-Manager form of government, the policy of Suwanee's City Council is carried out by a dedicated and professional staff, under the oversight of a City Manager. The Council-Manager form of government allows Council to direct their time and energies to legislation and policy development, while the City Manager focuses on the organizational, legal, personnel, financial, and other administrative matters that occur on a daily basis. As there is a clear distinction between the roles of both, it is critical that the relationship between Council and staff be well understood by all parties. The Council and City Manager are most effective when there is mutual respect between both parties and Council supports the organizational teamwork necessary to successfully implement Council's policies.

10.2. City Council Non-Interference

The City Council is to work through the City Manager when dealing with administrative duties of the City.

The Council or its individual members shall not, either directly or indirectly, be involved in or attempt to influence administrative matters that are under the direction of the City Manager, such as staff decision-making, the development of staff recommendations, scheduling of work, executing department priorities, personnel issues, purchasing, etc. This is necessary to protect staff from undue influence and pressure from individual Councilmembers and to allow staff to execute work in the priority set by management. If a Councilmembers wishes to influence an administrative action, decision, recommendation, workload, work schedule, etc., he/she must bring it to the attention of Council so that Council can decide whether to address it as a matter of policy.

Requests for staff assistance shall be directed to the City Manager. The City Manager will assign such requests to the appropriate staff person(s) and they will be completed in a timely and professional manner, as appropriate. The City Manager will forward requests to Council that are of the magnitude, either in terms of workload or policy, that are more appropriately assigned to staff as a matter of Council policy.

The Council shall not give any orders to staff under the direction of the City Manager. All communications from Council to staff shall be directed to the City Manager, with the exception of a general inquiry, which may be directed to the appropriate department director. All non-emergency communications to staff, with the exception of the City Manager, shall be during business hours.

It will not be unusual for Council to receive requests from citizens, vendors, personal contacts, etc. requesting a Councilmember's assistance with certain administrative functions of the City. This is particularly true for the more visible functions, such as event management, marketing and promotion, etc. For example, event management is a staff-driven administrative function – setting the event calendar, selecting entertainment and vendors, etc. Staff's approach to event management combines professional judgment with past experiences in order to create well-rounded quality events for the community. Staff takes a similar approach to the City's marketing plan, using professionally developed materials and a strategic plan for how and where the City will market itself. Council should be respectful of the need for a managed, professional approach and refrain from committing the City and/or staff in such administrative functions.

10.3. Council/Manager Relationship

An effective professional relationship between the Council and City Manager honors the City Manager's role as chief executive of the City. All dealings with the City Manager, whether publicly or privately, shall respect the City Manager's role. Public disagreements should be centered on issues of policy, rather than in terms that question satisfaction with or support of the City Manager.

The City Manager respects and is sensitive to the responsibilities of Council in setting policy and acknowledges that the Council holds the final responsibility for establishing the policy direction of the City.

10.3.1. City Manager Code of Ethics

As a member of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), the City Manager is bound to a professional code of ethics. The code addresses certain practices that are designed to ensure the Manager's actions are in the best interests of the City. Violation of the code can result in censure of the Manager by ICMA. The Code is included in the Appendix.

10.4. Council & Staff Communications

10.4.1. Council Requests for Information

The City Manager serves as the liaison for communication between Council and City staff. The sharing of timely, accurate information is one of the City Manager's highest priorities. Council requests for information shall be forwarded to the City Manager who will ensure a prompt and professional response. Such information requests, and the subsequent response, will be copied to the full Council so that each member may be equally informed.

10.4.2. Staff Communications to Council

The City Manager and staff use a variety of methods to share information with Council. The City Manager's open-door policy allows for impromptu meetings. Monthly workshops allow for detailed presentations and discussions of City business. In an effort to consolidate the communication of non-emergency information, the City Manager will provide regular updates. Work retreats with Council and senior staff allow for in-depth, focused discussion on both strategic and tactical topics.

10.4.3. Restricted Information

There are certain circumstances under which the City Manager is restricted from providing information to Council, such as confidential personnel information, certain aspects of Police affairs, etc.

10.4.4. Citizen Requests for Service

Council will receive frequent contacts from citizens regarding requests for service by the City, such as repair of potholes, code enforcement issues, replacement of street lights, etc. In addition to calling or e-mailing staff, Council or citizens can make these requests directly to staff through the S.E.E. Online Citizen Service Request system, which can be accessed through the home page of www.suwanee.com. This allows requests to be made during non-business hours and the requestor will receive details on the status of the request.

10.5. Staff Relationship to Appointed Boards

Staff provides support and assistance to the City's appointed boards. Such support includes assistance with agenda development, preparation of reports and background materials on issues before the boards, etc. This assistance allows the boards to have sufficient information to discuss the issues before them.

Appointed boards do not have supervisory authority over City staff. While staff members may work closely with the boards, staff remains responsible to their immediate supervisor, and ultimately, the City Manager. Appointed boards shall not give any orders to staff.

10.6. Political Involvement by Staff

Suwanee is a nonpartisan local government. Professional staff prepares recommendations and carries out policy in compliance with Council policy for the good of the entire community and is not influenced by political factors.

Employees are prohibited from using their position with the City to advance or promote political office. Such involvement may impair the employee's independence of his or her judgment or action in the performance of official duties. Additionally, no employees are allowed to continue in service upon qualifying as a candidate for nomination or election to any public office.

By working for the City, staff does not surrender their rights to be involved in political activities as private citizens. Employees may privately express their personal opinions, register to vote, sign petitions, and vote in any election.

II. Support Provided to City Council

II.1. Staff Support

Staff in the City Manager's office, usually the Office Administrator, provides administrative support to Councilmembers, such as appointment scheduling, receipt of phone messages, word processing, etc. As staff may have work assignments with high priority, sensitivity to workload is appreciated. Should requested tasks require significant time, the Councilmember shall direct the request to the City Manager.

II.1.1. IT Support

The City uses a contractor to perform Information Technology (IT) work. Councilmembers who need IT assistance shall forward a request to the Office Administrator, who will coordinate with the IT staff. IT assistance is limited to the maintenance of applications/hardware related to City business only.

II.2. Technology

II.2.1. Computers/iPads

Computers are provided in the Council's two cubicles for the purposes of accessing the City's e-mail and file network. The City does not provide computer hardware individual Councilmembers.

As of April 2011, the City implemented electronic distribution of agendas, reports, budget documents, etc. In order to access and use such documents, a City-issued iPad will be provided for each Councilmember. City-issued iPads are for official City business only; personal use is prohibited. The City understands that it is often inefficient to use both personal and City-issued hardware, such as iPads. Therefore, Councilmembers have the option of using a personal iPad or purchasing their City-issued iPads from the City, at which time ownership will transfer to the individual. The purchase may be funded through a payroll deduction, if desired. The City does not pay for any accessories for any of the iPads, such as cases, styluses, screen covers, personal applications, etc.

When Councilmembers complete their term of office, all City-issued equipment shall be returned to the City Manager.

II.2.2. Cell Phones

The duties of Councilmembers require them to be readily accessible for frequent or critical contact with staff and the public. Should a Councilmember request, the City will provide a City-issued cell phone for City business only. As with other devices, the City understands that it is often inefficient to use both a personal and City-issued phone. Councilmembers therefore have the option of being issued a City-provided cell phone or receiving a monthly allowance consistent with City policy to help defray the costs of his/her personal cell phone plan.

II.2.3. E-mail account

Each Councilmember is assigned an individual City e-mail address with the suwanee.com domain. E-mails to the Council as a whole can be sent to council@suwanee.com. The City's e-mail system shall be used for the communication and exchange of information related to City business. City e-mail may not be used for personal or political purposes.

Councilmembers can access their e-mail from their computer, phone, iPad, etc. through a web-based client; IT staff will assist with the set-up.

There should be no expectation of privacy when using City e-mail.

Please note, Councilmembers are subject to the City's e-mail policy; please see Section 7-13 of the Employee Handbook for more details.

II.3. Office & Meeting Rooms

II.3.1. Office & Equipment in City Hall

As the Mayor and Council are part-time positions, and not responsible for day-to-day operations, the City has chosen not to provide offices for elected officials. Elected officials are free to visit City Hall and other facilities, but should limit the frequency and length of their visits. There are two cubicles assigned for Council use on the second floor of City Hall, one for the Mayor and the other for the five Councilmembers to share. Each cubicle includes a desk, computer, and telephone.

Councilmembers may use office equipment on the second floor of City Hall, such as the copier, scanner, etc. for official City business.

11.3.2. Meeting Rooms

There are five meeting rooms available in City Hall – the Council Chambers, Big Splash room, Library, Gateway room, and Greenway room. Councilmembers may reserve the rooms for meeting with the public. Rooms may be reserved for City business only and may not be used for personal or political business. The Office Administrator can assist Councilmembers with reserving the meeting rooms.

The City does rent out its meeting rooms to community and non-profit groups. The City Manager's staff coordinates these rentals. Generally, alcohol is not allowed during rentals, unless specifically approved by the City Manager.

11.4. City Vehicles

Councilmembers shall use their personal vehicles for daily use within the City limits. Council members typically use their personal vehicles for City-related travel, as well, receiving a reimbursement for mileage. The City has one vehicle that can be reserved for out-of-town official business, such as attending training classes, conferences, etc. To reserve a City vehicle, Councilmembers should contact the Public Works Administrative Assistant.

The City does not provide drivers for either the Mayor or Councilmembers, regardless of the vehicle that is used.

For more details on the use of City vehicles, please see Section 7-06 of the Employee Handbook.

11.5. Mail

Members of the City Council receive a large volume of mail and other materials that are usually delivered to City Hall. Individual mailboxes are maintained for the use of Council. Mail received at City Hall will be placed in the Councilmember's box, to be picked up at his/her convenience. Councilmembers are provided a key card to access City Hall after hours, if needed, for this purpose.