

# Council Norms: Is This Tool in Your Toolbox?

## Learning Lounge Session

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# Session Topics

- ① What are Council norms?
- ① Why it is helpful to have them?
- ① What do Council members need to be effective in their Council roles?
  - From other Council members?
  - From staff?
- Review examples of Council norms





# What is a norm?



An *agreed upon behavior* or procedure that all team members will demonstrate for the *benefit of the organization*.





# Why is it helpful to have Council norms?



# What do Council members need to be effective in their Council roles?

- **From other Council members**
  - Once a vote is taken, respect the Council direction
  - Discuss issues openly at Council meetings
  - Strive for consensus
  - Demonstrate respect, consideration, and courtesy
- **From City staff**
  - Thorough staff work
  - Professional recommendations



# What does staff need from Council?

- Prepare for Council meetings
- Ask clarifying questions in advance of a Council meeting
- Communicate to staff as appropriate based on the City Manager's direction
- Communicate questions about legal issues to the City Attorney
- Keep confidential matters confidential



# Examples of Norms

## General Council Behavior

Work for the common good, not personal interest.

Respect the proper roles of elected officials and City staff in ensuring open and effective government.

Serve as a model of leadership and civility to the community.

Prepare in advance of Council meetings and be familiar with issues on the agenda.

Demonstrate respect, consideration, and courtesy to other Council members and the public verbally or in writing .

Inspire public confidence in City government.



# Examples of Norms

## Council Conduct with One Another

Work together as a body, modeling teamwork and civility

Be respectful of other people's time

Honor the role of the presiding officer in maintaining order

Be respectful of diverse opinions

Have high ethical standards in all Council matters

Encourage public participation





# Examples of Norms

## Council Conduct with Staff

Treat all staff as professionals

Practice civility and decorum in all interactions with City staff

Direct questions to City staff through the City Manager

Never publicly criticize an individual employee or Council member


Support a positive and productive work environment

Do not get involved in administrative functions; Council's responsibility is to make policy



# Establish Norms Collaboratively

- Valuable exercise for all Councils
- Norms vary by city and depend on organizational culture
- Ideally, establishing norms is a collaborative exercise that involves all Council members and some city staff



**Council Norms Worksheet**

Below is a list of norms taken from other city councils across the country. Please review each and indicate if it should be part of the City's Council Norms. The results of this worksheet will be used during the workshop.

Behavior	YES	NO
<b>General Council Member Behavior</b>		
1. Demonstrate honesty and integrity in every action and statement		
2. Serve as a model of leadership and civility to the community		
3. Inspire public confidence in City government		
4. Work for the common good, not personal interest		
5. Demonstrate respect, consideration, and courtesy to other Council members and the public verbally or in writing.		
6. Respect the proper roles of elected officials and City staff in ensuring open and effective government.		
<b>Council Conduct with One Another</b>		
7. Refer to one another formally during Council meetings as Mayor or Council Member followed by the individual's last name.		
8. Stay focused and act efficiently during public meetings. Be respectful of other people's time.		
9. Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of a free democracy in action. Be respectful of diverse opinions.		
10. Honor the role of the presiding officer in maintaining order and equity.		
<b>Council Conduct with City Staff</b>		
11. Treat all staff as professionals. Practice civility and decorum in all interactions with City staff.		
12. Questions to City staff should be directed <u>only</u> to the City Manager, Legal Counsel, or department heads. The City Manager should be copied on any request to department heads.		
13. Never publicly criticize an individual employee or Council Member. Criticism is differentiated from questioning facts or the opinion of staff. All critical comments about staff performance should only be made to the City Manager through private correspondence or conversation.		

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# Questions/Comments?

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