



AGENDA

CITY OF TAYLOR, TEXAS
SPECIAL CALLED CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 400 PORTER STREET
AUGUST 15, 2024, 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER AND DECLARE A QUORUM

INVOCATION

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CITIZENS COMMUNICATION

(The City Council welcomes public comments on items not listed on the agenda. However, the Council cannot respond until the item is posted on a future meeting agenda. Public comments are limited to 3 minutes.)

REGULAR AGENDA; REVIEW/DISCUSS AND CONSIDER ACTION

1. Receive a presentation on the Council Relations Policy and discuss the policy and any possible actions. *Jeffery Jenkins*

ADJOURN

The Council may vote and/or act upon each of the items listed in this Agenda. The Council reserves the right to retire into executive session concerning any of the items listed on this Agenda, whenever it is considered necessary and legally justified under the Open Meetings Act including: Section 551.071 (Consult with attorney); Section 551.072 (Real Property); Section 551.073 (Gifts and Donations); Section 551.074 (Personnel Matters); Section 551.076 (Security Devices); and Section 551.087 (Economic Development). I certify that the notice of meeting was posted in the Taylor City Hall Lobby before 6:00 p.m. on August 12, 2024 and remained posted for at least 72 hours continuously before the scheduled time of said meeting. I further certify that the following news media was notified of this meeting: Taylor Press.

In compliance with the ADA the City Hall and Council Chambers is wheelchair accessible. Reasonable accommodations will be provided for persons attending city council meetings in need of special assistance. Please contact the City Clerk at least 24 hours prior to the meeting for special assistance.

Posted by: Dianna McLean Date: August 12, 2024



City Council Meeting August 15, 2024 Transmittal Letter

STRATEGIC PILLAR

Agenda Item Number: 1.

Agenda Title: Receive a presentation on the Council Relations Policy and discuss the policy and any possible actions.

Council Action to be Taken: Receive the presentation and consider possible next step actions.

Department Submitted: City Management

Staff Contact: Jeffery Jenkins, Deputy City Manager

1. PURPOSE / DESCRIPTION

To provide a presentation regarding the adopted City of Taylor Council Relations Policy. The purpose is to provide Council an overview of the policy and for Council to provide direction regarding any possible changes to the policy.

2. STAFF ANALYSIS / BACKGROUND / PRIOR COUNCIL ACTIONS

In 2010, the City Council adopted a Council Relations Policy. The policy was designed to make public meetings and the process of governance run more smoothly. The policy is intended to maintain a high level of integrity by providing protocol for members and calling for respect for everyone through words and actions. The policy is a compass to guide each Council Member. The policy is about 15 years old and may need updating. During this meeting, Council will receive a presentation on the policy and Council could consider making any updates as determined by the Council. One area noted as an example that does not have much background in the current policy is guidance on the use of social media. This may be one area to amend within the policy. I've included an example policy that is mostly directed toward the Council.

Staff will need direction regarding how Council would like to proceed with this item after the presentation.

3. PROS and CONS

<u>PROS</u>	<u>CONS</u>
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• Provides good governance standards	•
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4. RECOMMENDATION

Receive presentation and provide staff direction on next steps.

5. FUNDING SOURCE

NA

6. TIMELINE

Timeline will vary depending on direction and if time needed to further research.

7. OTHER OPTIONS

NA

8. ATTACHMENTS

1. Council Relations Policy with Resol and contents (002)
2. Leander Social Media Participation Policy City Council
3. Presentation - Council Relations Policy 8.15.24 Modified

CITY OF TAYLOR



CITY COUNCIL RELATIONS POLICY

Adopted
By
Resolution R10-8 on October 14, 2010

RESOLUTION R10-18

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF TAYLOR ADOPTING A
COUNCIL RELATIONS POLICY**

WHEREAS, the Taylor City Council must bear the initial responsibility for the integrity of governance;

WHEREAS, the Council is responsible for its own development, its responsibilities, its own discipline, and its own performance;

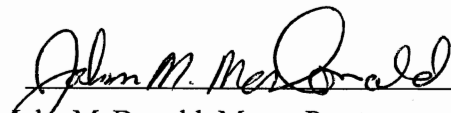
WHEREAS, the development of the Council Relations Policy is designed to ensure effective and efficient governance;

WHEREAS, by adopting these guidelines, the Council acknowledges their responsibility to each other, to the City's professional staff, and to the public.

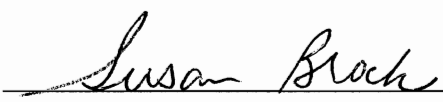
**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF TAYLOR THAT:**

The City of Taylor Council Relations Policy is adopted to serve as the guidelines to preserve the values and integrity of representative local government and democracy.

PASSED, APPROVED AND ADOPTED THIS THE 21st DAY OF OCTOBER, 2010.


John McDonald, Mayor Pro-tem

ATTEST:


Susan Brock, City Clerk

City of Taylor Council Relations Policy

The City Council for the City of Taylor is dedicated to ethical, efficient and orderly government wherein opportunities must be created to allow citizens to have a say in their representative government. This policy addresses the responsibilities the Council has to provide those openings. The City of Taylor Council Relations Policy is designed to make public meetings and the process of governance run more smoothly.

The integrity of the City of Taylor is built on the interaction between elected officials, City employees, and the citizens. The Council Relations Policy is intended to maintain a high level of integrity by providing a protocol for how Council members treat one another, City staff, constituents, and others they come into contact with in representing the City of Taylor. The Council Relations Policy reflects the intentions of the Taylor City Council in defining the behaviors, manners, and courtesies that are suitable for various occasions.

The constant and consistent theme through all of the conduct guidelines is “respect.” Council members experience huge workloads and tremendous stress in making decisions that could impact thousands of lives. Despite these pressures, elected officials are called upon to exhibit appropriate behavior at all times. Demonstrating respect for each individual through words and actions is the compass that can help guide Council members to do the right thing in even the most difficult situations.

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I. Overview of Roles and Responsibilities

Other resources that are helpful in defining the roles and responsibilities of elected officials can be found in the Taylor City Charter and in the Handbook for Mayors and Council members (Home Rule Cities) published by the Texas Municipal League.

Mayor's Responsibilities

- Acts as the official head of the City for all ceremonial purposes
- Chairs Council meetings
- Recognizes comments from citizens at public meetings
- Calls for special meetings
- Makes judgment calls on proclamations, special presentations, etc.
- Signs documents on behalf of the City
- Works with City Manager to prepare Council agenda
- Serves at the pleasure of the Council

Mayor Pro Tem's Responsibilities

- Serves at the pleasure of the Council
- Performs the duties of Mayor if the Mayor is absent or unable to perform mayoral duties for any reason

Council Members' Responsibilities

All members of the City Council, including those serving as Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem, have equal votes. No Council member has more power than any other Council member, and all should be treated with equal respect.

All Council members should:

- Fully participate in City Council meetings and other public forums while demonstrating respect, kindness, consideration, and courtesy to others.
- Prepare in advance of Council meetings and be familiar with issues on the agenda.
- Represent the City at ceremonial functions at the request of the Mayor.
- Be respectful of other people's time. Stay focused and act efficiently during public meetings.
- Serve as a model of leadership and civility to the community.
- Inspire public confidence in Taylor government.
- Provide contact information to the City Manager's Office in case an emergency or urgent situation arises while a Council member is out of town.
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity in every action and statement
- Participate in scheduled activities to increase team effectiveness and review Council procedures, such as this Council Relations Policy

Meeting Chair's Responsibilities

The Mayor chairs official meetings of the City Council, unless the Mayor Pro Tem or another Council member is designated as Chair of a specific meeting.

- Maintains order, decorum, and the fair and equitable treatment of all speakers
- Keeps discussion and questions focused on the specific agenda item under consideration

II. Policies and Protocol Related to Conduct

Reflecting Council Opinions Council members should remember they speak only for themselves and not other Council members.

Ceremonial Events

Requests for a City representative at ceremonial events will be handled by City staff. The Mayor will serve as the designated City representative. If the Mayor is unavailable, then City staff will determine if event organizers would like another representative from the Council. If yes, then the Mayor Pro-Tem will serve as a substitute. Invitations received at City Hall are presumed to be for unofficial, personal consideration.

E-Mail Guidelines

E-mail has become a familiar form of communication between the public and its elected officials. It is important to remember that e-mails held by elected officials regarding their position are a form of public record and must be maintained as per the Open Records Act. When a Council member receives a personalized e-mail, the Council member should acknowledge the receipt of the e-mail and concern voiced through a reply e-mail. The response should be polite and careful in regard to any personal opinions expressed on the issue. If a reply is sent, the City Manager and/or City Clerk should be copied if there is any further action and/or official response needed in regard to the e-mail.

Correspondence Signatures

Council members do not need to acknowledge the receipt of correspondence, or copies of correspondence, during Council meetings. City staff will prepare official letters in response to public inquiries and concerns. These letters will carry the signature of the Mayor unless the Mayor requests that they be signed by another Council member or City staff. If correspondence is addressed only to one Council member, that Council member should check with staff on the best way to respond to the sender.

Public Hearing Protocol

The applicant or appellant shall have the right to speak first. The Chair will determine the length of time allowed for this presentation. Speakers representing either pro or con points of view will be allowed to follow. The Chair will determine how much time will be allowed for each speaker, with 3 to 5 minutes the standard time granted. The applicant or appellant will may be allowed to make closing comments. The Chair has the responsibility to run an efficient public meeting and has the discretion to modify the public hearing process in order to make the meeting run smoothly.

Council members will not express opinions during the public hearing portion of the meeting except to ask pertinent questions of the speaker and staff. "I think" and "I feel" comments by Council members are not appropriate until after the close of the public hearing. Council members should refrain from arguing or debating with the public during a public hearing and shall always show respect for different points of view.

Main motions may be followed by amendments, followed by substitute motions. Any Councilmember can call for a point of order. Only Council members who voted on the prevailing side may make motions to reconsider.

Agenda Development Participation

Any Council member can request an item be placed on the agenda for future discussion. The request should be made to the City Manager generally before noon a two weeks before the meeting. The City Manager will discuss the item with the Council member and the Mayor to determine the appropriate placement of the item on the agenda.

III. Council Relations with One Another

Councils are composed of individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, opinions, and goals. Despite this diversity, all have chosen to serve in public office in order to preserve and protect the present and the future of the community. In all cases, this common goal should be acknowledged even as Council members may “agree to disagree” on contentious issues.

IN PUBLIC MEETINGS

Practice civility and decorum in discussions and debate

Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of a free democracy in action. This does not allow, however, Council members to make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments. No shouting or physical actions that could be construed as threatening will be tolerated.

Honor the role of the Chair in maintaining order

It is the responsibility of the Chair to keep the comments of Council members on track during public meetings. Council members should honor efforts by the Chair to focus discussion on current agenda items. If there is disagreement about the agenda or the Chair’s actions, those objections should be voiced politely and with reason, following procedures outlined in parliamentary procedure.

Avoid personal comments that could offend other Council members If a Council member is personally offended by the remarks of another Council member, the offended Council member should make notes of the actual words used and call for a “point of personal privilege” that challenges the other Council member to justify or apologize for the language used. The Chair will maintain control of this discussion.

Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches Council members have a public stage to show how individuals with disparate points of view can find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the community as a whole.

IN PRIVATE ENCOUNTERS

Continue respectful behavior in private

The same level of respect and consideration of differing points of view deemed appropriate for public discussions should be maintained in private conversations.

Be aware of the insecurity of written notes, voicemail messages, and e-mail

Technology allows words written or said without much forethought to be distributed wide and far. Council members should take into consideration that anything sent out via fax, voicemail, e-mails, or correspondence could be distributed to the media and citizens. Written notes, voicemail messages and e-mail should be treated as potentially “public” communication.

Even private conversations can have a public presence

Elected officials are always on display – their actions, mannerisms, and language are monitored by people around them that they may not know. Lunch table conversations will be eavesdropped upon, parking lot debates will be watched, and casual comments between individuals before and after public meetings noted.

IV. Council Relations with City Staff

Governance of a City relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials, who set policy, and City staff who implement and administer the Council's policies. Woodrow Wilson called this the politics-administration dichotomy, but governance of a municipality is in reality a team effort. Cooperation and mutual respect are essential from each individual for the good of the community.

Treat all staff as professionals

Clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual is expected. Poor behavior towards staff is not acceptable.

Limit contact to specific City staff

Questions of City staff and/or requests for additional background information should be directed only to the City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk or Department Directors. The City Manager's Office should be copied on any request, except those to the City Attorney.

Requests for follow-up or directions to staff should be made only through the City Manager or the City Attorney when appropriate. When in doubt about what staff contact is appropriate, Council members should ask the City Manager for assistance. Materials supplied to a Council member in response to a request will be made available to all members of the Council so that all have equal access to information.

The Council should not entertain or respond to any staff complaints. Any discussions of this nature should be referred directly to the City Manager. The Council should never speak critically to a member of City staff about other City staff, other Council members, and/or Council decisions.

Do not disrupt City staff from their jobs

Council members should not disrupt City staff while they are in meetings, on the phone, or engrossed in performing their job functions in order to have their individual needs met.

Never publicly criticize an individual employee

Council should never express concerns about the performance of a City employee in public, to the employee directly, or to the employee's manager. Comments about staff performance should only be made to the City Manager through private correspondence or conversation.

Do not get involved in administrative functions

Council members must not attempt to influence City staff on the making of appointments, awarding of contracts, selecting of consultants, or granting of City licenses and permits. The Taylor City Charter also addresses the role of the City Council in regard to administrative functions.

Check with City staff on correspondence before taking action

Before sending correspondence, Council members should check with City staff to see if an official City response has already been sent or is in progress.

Be selective and careful attending meetings with City staff unless requested by staff

Even if the Council member does not say anything, the Council member's presence implies support, shows partiality, intimidates staff, and hampers staff's ability to do their job objectively. This policy does not apply to social functions, such as conferences, etc.

Do not solicit political support from staff

Council members should not solicit any type of political support (financial contributions, display of posters or lawn signs, name on support list, etc.) from City staff. City staff may, as private citizens with constitutional rights, support political candidates but all such activities must be done away from the workplace.

V. Council Relations with Citizens

IN PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Taylor City Council welcomes requests, suggestions, and viewpoints of residents of the City and considers the responsible presentation of these viewpoints as vital to effective municipal government. Council members also recognize their responsibility for proper governance and the need to conduct its business in an orderly and effective manner. The Council therefore establishes the following procedures to receive citizen input during public meetings.

1. Amount of time allocated

The Mayor will be responsible for recognizing any speakers, maintaining proper order, and adhering to any time limit set. Ordinarily, each speaker shall be afforded three minutes in which to make their presentation to the Council. Groups of citizens who wish to be heard on the same topic should designate a spokesperson when requested to do so by the Mayor.

2. Protocol for addressing the City Council

There shall be a time designated for the City Council to hear from the public at the beginning of City Council meetings held at City Hall. The Mayor has the right to limit the number of speakers, as well as the amount of presentation time allocated to each speaker. If there are a large number of speakers wanting to address an issue, the Mayor may request or designate a spokesperson for groups wanting to speak with the Council.

If an item on the Council agenda for that meeting provides for a public hearing, the person wishing to make comments on that item shall speak at the time of the public hearing. (See Public Hearing Protocol under Policies and Protocol Relating to Conduct)

Requests to be heard regarding an item(s) on the regular agenda that does not have a public hearing should be made to the City Clerk prior to the start of the meeting. A "request to speak" form, provided by the City, requesting to be heard regarding a specific agenda item(s) shall contain the citizen's name, address, telephone number, and subject agenda item(s) number, which the speaker wishes to address. The form can be picked up at City Hall or in the Council Chambers, and must be turned in to the City Clerk prior to the item being addressed.

Speakers shall address the Council from the podium where a microphone insures that the audience can hear the speaker and a record of all comments may be made. If a speaker asks a question during the time designated for public comment under this policy, it will be not be answered at this time but may be answered during the agenda item. Any comment or discussion by any Council member about the subject of the inquiry shall only be made at the time the subject is scheduled for consideration on the Council agenda (Government Code 551.042).

3. Protocol for dealing with requests made by citizens

Citizens with specific requests should first discuss them with the City Manager or City staff. The Council will consider requests that remain unresolved after being addressed through proper administration channels. Citizens who have not attempted to resolve situations at lower levels will be directed to the City Manager.

4. Protocol regarding complaints against City personnel

Negative comments regarding City personnel by name or title may not be made in open session (due to confidentiality provisions contained in the Texas Public Information Act and other state and federal laws). Specific complaints regarding municipal employees may be taken up with the employee's supervisor or City Manager.

Disruption of meetings by word or actions of any person may result in removal from the meeting by law enforcement officials.

IN UNOFFICIAL SETTINGS

Make no promises on behalf of the Council

Council members will frequently be asked to explain a Council action or give their opinion about an issue as they meet and talk with constituents in the community. It is appropriate to give a brief overview of City policy and to refer to City staff for further information. It is inappropriate to overtly or implicitly promise Council action, or to promise City staff will do something specific (fix a pothole, plant new flowers in the median, etc.).

Make no personal comments about other Council members

It is acceptable to publicly disagree about an issue, but it is unacceptable to make derogatory comments about other Council members, their opinions and actions.

Remember that Taylor is a small town

Council members are constantly being observed by the community every day that they serve in office. Their behaviors and comments serve as models for proper behavior in the City of Taylor. Honesty and respect for the dignity of each individual should be reflected in every word and action taken by Council members, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is a serious and continuous responsibility.

VI. Council Relations with Other Public Agencies

Be clear about representing the City or personal interests

If a Council member appears before another governmental agency or organization to give a statement on an issue, the Council member must clearly state: 1) if his or her statement reflects personal opinion or is the official stance of the City; 2) whether this is the majority or minority opinion of the Council.

If the Council member is representing the City, the Council member must support and advocate the official City position on an issue, not a personal viewpoint.

If the Council member is representing another organization whose position is different from the City, the Council member should withdraw from voting on the issue if it significantly impacts or is detrimental to the City's interest. Council members should be clear about which organizations they represent and inform the Mayor and Council of their involvement.

Correspondence also should be equally clear about representation

City letterhead may be used when the Council member is representing the City and the City's official position. A copy of official correspondence should be given to the City Clerk to be filed as part of the permanent public record.

City letterhead will not be used for correspondence of Council members representing a personal point of view, or a dissenting point of view from an official Council position.

VII. Council Relations with Boards and Commissions

The City has established several boards and commissions as a means of gathering more community input. Citizens who serve on boards and commissions become more involved in government and serve as advisors to the City Council. They are a valuable resource to the City's leadership and should be treated with appreciation and respect.

If attending a board or commission meeting, be careful to only express personal opinions

Council members may attend any board or commission meeting, which are always open to any member of the public. However, they should be sensitive to the way their participation – especially if it is on behalf of an individual, business or developer – could be viewed as unfairly affecting the process. Any public comments by a Council member at a board or commission meeting should be clearly made as individual opinion and not a representation of the feelings of the entire City Council.

Limit contact with board and commission members to questions of clarification

It is inappropriate for a Council member to contact a board or commission member to lobby on behalf of an individual, business, or developer. It is acceptable for Council members to contact board or commission members in order to clarify a position taken by the board or commission.

Remember that boards and commissions serve the community, not individual Council members

The City Council appoints individuals to serve on boards and commissions, and it is the responsibility of boards and commissions to follow policy established by the Council. But board and commission members do not report to individual Council members, nor should Council members feel they have the power or right to threaten board and commission members with removal if they disagree about an issue. Appointment and re-appointment to a board or commission should be based on such criteria as expertise, attendance records, ability to work with staff and the public, and commitment to fulfilling official duties. A board or commission appointment should not be used as a political "reward."

Be respectful of diverse opinions

A primary role of boards and commissions is to represent many points of view in the community and to provide the Council with advice based on a full spectrum of concerns and perspectives. Council members may have a closer working relationship with some individuals serving on boards and commissions, but must be fair and respectful of all citizens serving on boards and commissions.

Keep political support away from public forums

Board and commission members may offer political support to a Council member, but not in a public forum while conducting official duties. Conversely, Council members may support board and commission members who are running for office, but not in an official forum in their capacity as a Council member.

Inappropriate behavior can lead to removal

Inappropriate behavior by a board or commission member should be noted to the Mayor, and the Mayor should counsel the offending member. If inappropriate behavior continues, the Mayor should bring the situation to the attention of the Council and the individual is subject to removal from the board or commission.

VIII. Council Relations with the Media

The media (newspapers, radio, television, etc.) frequently contacts Council members for information and quotes.

The best advice for dealing with the media is to never go “off the record”

Most members of the media represent the highest levels of journalistic integrity and ethics, and can be trusted to keep their word. But one bad experience can be catastrophic. Words that are not said cannot be quoted. Council members should not feel obligated to speak to the media. “No comment” can be an acceptable response.

The Public Information Officer is the official spokesperson for the representative on City positions

The Public Information Officer, appointed by the City Manager is the designated representative to present and speak on the official City position. If the media contacts an individual Council member, the Council member should be clear about whether their comments represent the official City position or a personal viewpoint. Council members are encouraged to refer media contacts to the Public Information Officer.

All City press releases should go through the Public Information Officer’s Office for distribution

The Public Information Officer’s Office maintains up-to-date contact information for all local media outlets that cover Taylor. In order to insure that all media outlets are treated fairly, news releases should be submitted to the PIO’s Office for review and distribution coordination. Some items may be best handled as a “media advisory” or a feature story suggestion. Other items may be best handled as correspondence to a particular group.

Choose words carefully and cautiously

Comments taken out of context can cause problems. Be especially cautious about humor, sardonic asides, sarcasm, or word play. It is never appropriate to use personal slurs or swear words when talking with the media.

Remember the media lives by a tight deadline

Because of the daily demands of the media business, deadlines are one of the most important factors for members of the media in determining what stories will be run. Because of these deadlines, it is essential for Council members to quickly reply to members of the media when they call for information on a story.

IX. Sanctions**Public Disruption**

Members of the public who do not follow proper conduct after a warning in a public hearing may be barred from further testimony at that meeting or removed from the Council Chambers.

Inappropriate Staff Behavior

Council members should refer to the City Manager any City staff that does not follow proper conduct in their dealings with Council members, other City staff, or the public. These employees may be disciplined in accordance with standard City procedures for such actions. Please refer to the section on Council Relations with City Staff for more details on interaction with City staff.

Council Members Behavior and Conduct

City Council members who intentionally and repeatedly do not follow proper conduct may be reprimanded or formally censured by the Council, lose seniority or committee assignments (both within the City of Taylor and with inter-government agencies). Serious infractions of the Council Relations Policy could lead to other sanctions as deemed appropriate by Council.

Council members should point out the offending Councilmember infractions of the Council Relations Policy. If the offenses continue, then the matter should be referred to the Mayor, City Manager, and/or City Attorney in private. It is the responsibility of the City Manager and/or City Attorney to speak with the offending Council member in private about the offenses.

It is the responsibility of the City Manager and/or City Attorney to inform Council members of the repeated infractions and initiate action if a Council member's behavior may warrant sanction.

X. Principles of Proper Conduct

Proper conduct IS...

- Keeping promises
- Being dependable
- Building a solid reputation
- Participating and being available
- Demonstrating patience
- Showing empathy
- Holding onto ethical principles under stress
- Listening attentively
- Studying thoroughly
- Keeping integrity intact
- Overcoming discouragement
- Going above and beyond, time and time again
- Modeling a professional manner

Proper conduct IS NOT...

- Showing antagonism or hostility
- Deliberately lying or misleading
- Speaking recklessly
- Spreading rumors
- Stirring up bad feelings, divisiveness
- Acting in a self-righteous manner
- Any conduct which could bring disrespect and tarnish the reputation of the Council, their office or the City

It all comes down to respect

Respect for one another as individuals ... respect for the validity of different opinions ... respect for the democratic process ... respect for the community that we serve.

XI. Glossary of Terms

Attitude: The manner in which one shows one's dispositions, opinions, and feelings.

Behavior: External appearance or action; manner of behaving; carriage of oneself.

Civility: Politeness, consideration, courtesy.

Conduct: The way one acts; personal behavior.

Courtesy: Politeness connected with kindness.

Decorum: Suitable, proper, good taste in behavior.

Manners: A way of acting; a style, method, or form; the way in which things are done.

Point of Order: An interruption of a meeting to question whether rules or bylaws are being broken, such as the speaker has strayed from the motion currently under consideration.

Point of Personal Privilege: A challenge to a speaker to defend or apologize for comments that a fellow Councilmember considers offensive.

Propriety: Conforming to acceptable standards of behavior.

Protocol: The courtesies that are established as proper and correct.

Respect: The act of noticing with attention; holding in esteem, courteous regard.

Social Media Participation Policy City Council

The term “social media” refers to forms of electronic communication through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages and other content. Some examples include, but are not limited to, Internet-based platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube.

Many local governments use social media as a tool to communicate with citizens. Rather than waiting until a regularly scheduled council meeting to receive citizen input, city officials are able to instantly interact with them via social media. Although this technology greatly increases communication outreach and efficiency, some restrictions are required in order to comport with federal and state law.

Commenting on City Accounts

The City of Leander uses social media to send and receive messages about city information, services and related programs with community stakeholders, including employees, vendors, citizens, media and other members of the public.

1. Similar others who engage with the City on social media, as an elected official you should understand the City’s current guidelines for public participation, which are subject to change as new technology and tools emerge.
2. Public comments may be removed from City-administered social media accounts if they contain any one or more of the following:
 - a. Vulgar, physically threatening or harassing language.
 - b. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, religion, gender, marital status, familial status, national origin, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, source of income or other protected status under applicable law.
 - c. Inappropriate sexual content or similar links.
 - d. Private or otherwise confidential information.
 - e. Content that promotes illegal activity or encouragement of actions that may compromise public safety.
 - f. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
 - g. Comments not topically related to the original article or post.
 - h. Comments in support of or opposition to political candidates, campaigns or ballot measures during an election season.

- i. Promoting or advertising a commercial transaction, organization or event that is not sponsored or in direct relationship with the City.
- j. Organized political activity.
- k. Information that may compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems.

Use of Personal Accounts

As a policy-making body, Council members are given more latitude than City employees to publicly express thoughts and opinions on local issues. However, as an elected official, you should be aware of additional risks related to your general participation on social media.

1. Open Meetings Act – Communications between a quorum of Council members about public business, no matter the forum or time, can constitute a “meeting” to which the Texas Open Meetings Act applies. If the Act applies to a discussion, an agenda must be posted 72 hours in advance, and the public must be allowed to attend.

Therefore, you should consider the following when using personal social media accounts:

- a. Remove elected titles from profiles used to identify a personal social media account, and clearly state how constituents should communicate regarding public matters.
- b. Include an introductory statement in the profile or about section of your account that defines the purpose and topical scope of your page:

“This account is intended for personal use only. The views, postings, positions or opinions expressed on this site are my own and do not represent those of the City of Leander. If you are a citizen of Leander and would like to discuss city business, please go to [official page] or contact me at [official email].”

- c. Redirect information to official government sources and avoid making posts related to your official duties or governmental bodies.
- d. Redirect political dialogue requests to an alternative means of communication (i.e. email, phone or other preferred social media account).
- e. Avoid commenting on local issues where other Council members are also participating in discussion.
- f. Avoid making posts and/or comments on behalf of the City and/or the City Council.
- g. Avoid making posts and/or comments in your official capacity as an elected official.
- h. Avoid making posts and/or comments regarding City business.

2. Public Information Act – State law clarifies the definition of “public information” as information that is written, produced, collected, assembled, or maintained in connection with the transaction of official business, which includes email, Internet posting, text message, instant message, and other electronic communication.

Therefore, you should consider the following:

- a. Hide, rather than delete, clearly inappropriate public comments on your personal or official social media account, if possible. In some cases, these comments may still be subject to verification or public disclosure in the future. When in doubt, don’t delete it.
 - b. Avoid responding to inappropriate comments or personal attacks on social media. If the commenter persists, redirect them to an alternate method of communication (i.e. email).
 - c. Be aware that a personal social media account, depending on its content, may still be subject to the Public Information Act.
3. First Amendment – More constituents are posting comments on elected officials’ personal pages to voice concerns on public issues. Once an elected official’s social media page is opened for political discussion, it is transformed into a public forum for speech and debate, instantly granting every user a First Amendment right to comment.

Therefore, you should consider the following:

- a. Limit open-ended political and city business discussions from your personal social media accounts and redirect dialogue requests to an alternate channel.
- b. When in doubt, don’t block users. Especially those with whom you have previously engaged. If you must, consult with legal counsel first, and then document your actions and reasons for blocking.

Use of Official Accounts

If you choose to create a social media account to engage with constituents, a best practice is to keep this account distinct and separate from other personal accounts that you maintain.

Elected officials increasingly use social media for reelection purposes as well. However, mixing campaign and constituent communications from the same account could put you at risk for violating laws that prohibit using government resources for political purposes.

Therefore, you should consider the following:

1. Make it official – Your account profile, description and photo should clearly indicate your position as a member of the Leander City Council and your intent to use the account as a way of communicating with constituents.
2. Your account is a public forum – Your engagement with the public on social media as an elected official establishes your platform as a limited public forum, which affords users the right to comment on content you publish. It also means that any speech restrictions or

censorship is subject to strict scrutiny, and First Amendment activities generally may not be prohibited. So, when in doubt, don't delete it.

3. Prohibited content is defined by City policy – For consistency, consider managing prohibited content on your accounts in the same way City-administered accounts are managed.
4. Campaign separately – Council members in office should not use City administered or funded social media accounts for electioneering. It's equivalent to campaigning from the dais during a public meeting, which may violate state law.
5. Involve legal counsel – If you are unsure about publishing certain content, or feel you are justified in the removal of content, involve legal counsel before making a decision.

General Guidelines

1. Be transparent – Your honesty will be quickly noticed in the social media environment. If your private sector work could present a conflict of interest, be the first to point it out. And be clear about why you support, or don't support, certain policies or programs.
2. Be judicious – Make sure your efforts to be transparent do not violate any applicable legal guidelines for external communication. Consult with legal counsel before sharing conversations that are meant to be private or internal to the City or any other public entities. What is published is widely accessible, not easily retractable, and will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully. Also, be aware that the social media account and anything published on that social media account may be subject to the Public Information Act.
3. Be knowledgeable – Write in first-person and consider linking to your information sources. If you publish to a website outside of the City, consider using a clarifier such as: "These comments and opinions reflect my position as one member of Leander City Council." If you have any questions about complying with brand, trademark, copyright, fair use, confidentiality, or financial disclosure laws, seek an opinion from legal counsel.
4. Be perceptive – In online social networks, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are often blurred. By identifying yourself as an elected official, you are creating perceptions about your expertise and the City. Be sure that all content associated with you is consistent with the City's values and professional standards.
5. Be conversational – Talk to your readers like you would talk to people in professional situations. Avoid overly "composed" language. Bring in your own personality and say what is on your mind. Consider content that is open-ended and invites response. Encourage comments. Broaden the conversation by citing others who are commenting about the same topic and allow your content to be shared.
6. Be excited – The City is making important contributions to the community, state and nation, as well as to public dialogue on a broad range of issues. Our activities are focused on providing services and innovation that benefits citizens and stakeholders. Share what Leander is learning and doing, and open up social media channels to learn from others.

7. Be valuable – There is a lot of written content in the social media environment. The best way to reach an audience is to write about things that they value. Social communication from City leaders should help citizens, partners and families. It should be thought-provoking and build a sense of community. If it helps people improve knowledge or skills, build their businesses, do their jobs, solve problems, or understand the City better, then it adds value.
8. Be responsible – What you write is ultimately your responsibility. Pause. If you are about to publish something that makes you even the slightest bit uncomfortable, don't publish. If you are still unsure, you might want to check with the Public Information Officer or legal counsel. Ultimately, what you publish is yours, but so is the responsibility and potential consequence.
9. Mistakes happen – If you make a mistake, admit it. Be upfront and quick with your correction. If you are posting to a blog, you could choose to modify an earlier post. Make it clear that you have done so.

Records Retention

1. Because of your position as an elected official, activity on your social media accounts may create public records. Any content (messages, posts, photographs, videos, etc.) created or received using a social media account may be considered a record.

Therefore, you should consider the following:

- a. The City does not archive or manage Council member social media accounts. You are solely responsible for the retention and archival of content published to your individual accounts.
 - b. When in doubt, don't delete content without consulting with legal counsel first.
2. Social media content administered by City employees, and intended for public access and comments, will follow a minimum retention period of two years, as established by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. This includes Council member comments posted on City accounts.
 3. When applicable, the City will use a software-assisted social media capture tool to obtain and archive an authentic copy of monitored content. This includes Council member comments posted on City accounts.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions apply:

1. Comment – a message posted by site visitors, either in response to an existing topic or introducing a new topic. In general, the content of comments is controlled solely by the user, but often can be deleted, accepted or rejected prior to publishing by the site or page administrator.

2. Connections – Any deliberate links between a user and a social media channel or page, whether it is initiated by the individual or by the site moderator. Terms used by various sites to describe a connection include friend, fan, follower or subscriber.
3. Limited forum – a public forum created by the government voluntarily for expressive activity that may be restricted as to subject matter or class of speaker. Forum restrictions must be able to withstand strict judicial scrutiny of its effect on First Amendment rights.
4. Post – In relation to social media accounts or online activity, anything published in an online forum or social media account.
5. Social media – Internet based third-party platforms that facilitate interaction and engagement among individuals in a network or virtual community. Social media offers a participatory environment and includes user-generated content such as videos, photos, videos, blogs, and wikis.

Violation of Policy

This policy is not meant to circumvent or bypass any of the other processes, policies or laws that are applicable to the City Council. Social media activity and conduct by Council members should not only comply with these policy terms, but all other processes, policies and laws that may apply as well.

Policy Updates

The City Council reserves the right to update these terms of use at any time.

City of Taylor Council Relations Policy



City Council Meeting Presentation

August 15, 2024

Current Status and Next Steps



Current policy

Council Relations Policy adopted on October 21, 2010

- Designed to make public meetings and the process of governance run more smoothly
- Intended to maintain a high level of integrity by providing protocol for members
- Demonstrating respect for everyone through words and actions is the compass to guide each Council member
- May need updating with changes over time

Possible Next Steps

- Send in your list of amendments after this meeting
- Open discussion and possible changes
- Discuss at another meeting amendments
- Could lead to adopting updated policy



Section I: Overview of Roles and Responsibilities

Defines Mayor's Responsibilities

- Chairs meetings, calls special meetings, recognizes comments from citizens at public meetings, makes judgements calls on proclamations, signs documents, works with CM on Council agenda

Defines Mayor Pro Tem's Responsibilities

- Performs the duties of Mayor if absent or unable to perform

Council Members' Responsibilities

- All members have equal vote
- No Council member has more power than the other and should be treated with respect

All Council members

- List of Nine areas council should do. Prepare in advance, respectful of other people's time. Serve as model of leadership and civility.

Meeting Chair responsibilities: Maintain order and equitable treatment of all speakers and keep discussion focused on the agenda item



Section II: Policies and Protocol to Conduct

Reflecting Council Opinions

- Council members should remember they speak only for themselves and not other members

Ceremonial Events

- Requests for a City Representative for event will be handled by staff
- Mayor is designated City Representative at event
- If Mayor unavailable, Mayor Pro-Tem will substitute

Email Guidelines

- CC member should be polite and careful with any personal opinions expressed on an issue
- Emails are form of public record
- If email received by Council member, should acknowledge receipt and be careful of personal opinions expressed on the issue
- If reply is sent, City Manager or Clerk should be copied if further action is needed



Section II: Policies and Protocol to Conduct Continued

Correspondence Signatures

- City staff will prepare official responses to public inquiries with the Mayor signing or delegating to another member or city staff
- If correspondence sent to one Council member, should check with staff on best way to respond

Public Hearing Protocol

- The Chair: maintain efficiency, determine length of time for speakers 3-5 mins, applicant shall speak first/may be allowed closing comments
- CC members will not provide thoughts or express opinions during public hearing portion, only after this public hearing portion
- Motion may be followed by amendments, followed by substitute motions
- Any member can call “point of order” (interruption to question whether the rules or bylaws are being broken) and only members who voted on prevailing side of a motion may make a motion to reconsider

Agenda Development

- Council member can request an item for future discussion
- Request will be to CM before noon two weeks before meeting
- CM will discuss with CC member and the Mayor to determine the appropriate placement of the item on the agenda

Section III: Council Relations with One Another

Preserve and Protect the present and future of the community: Common goal should be acknowledged even as Council members may agree to disagree on contentious issues

Public Meetings

Practice civility and decorum in discussion and debate

- Council members should not make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments
- No shouting or physical actions that could be construed as threatening will be tolerated

Honor the role of the Chair in maintaining order

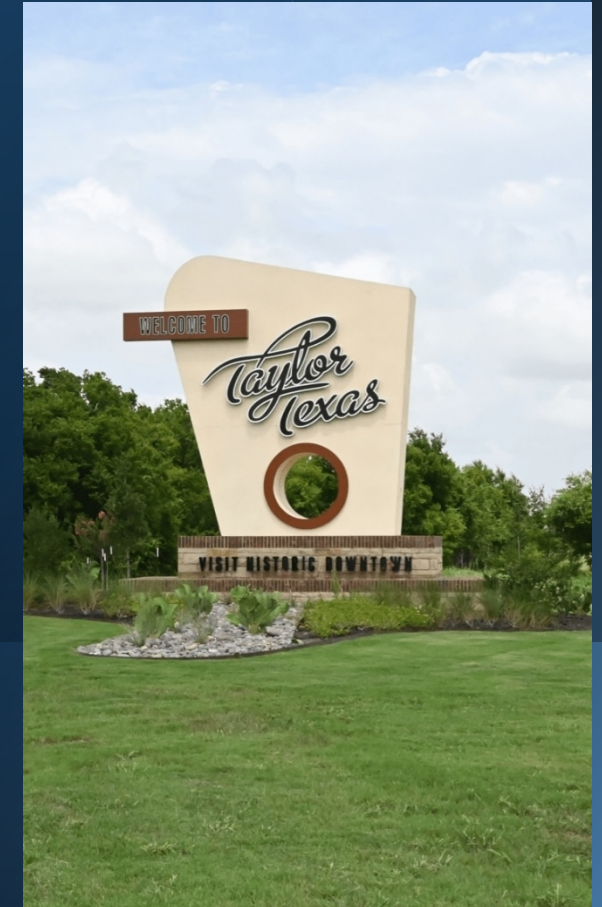
- Chair duty to keep Council members on track during the public meetings and Council focus on current agenda items
- Disagreement about the agenda or Chair's action, should be voiced politely, following parliamentary procedure

Avoid personal comments that could offend other Council members

- Council member personally offended by comment of another member, can call "point of personal privilege" challenge the other Council member to justify or apologize for the language. Chair maintain control of discussion

Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches

- Attempt to find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the community as a whole



Section III: Council Relations with One Another

In Private Encounters

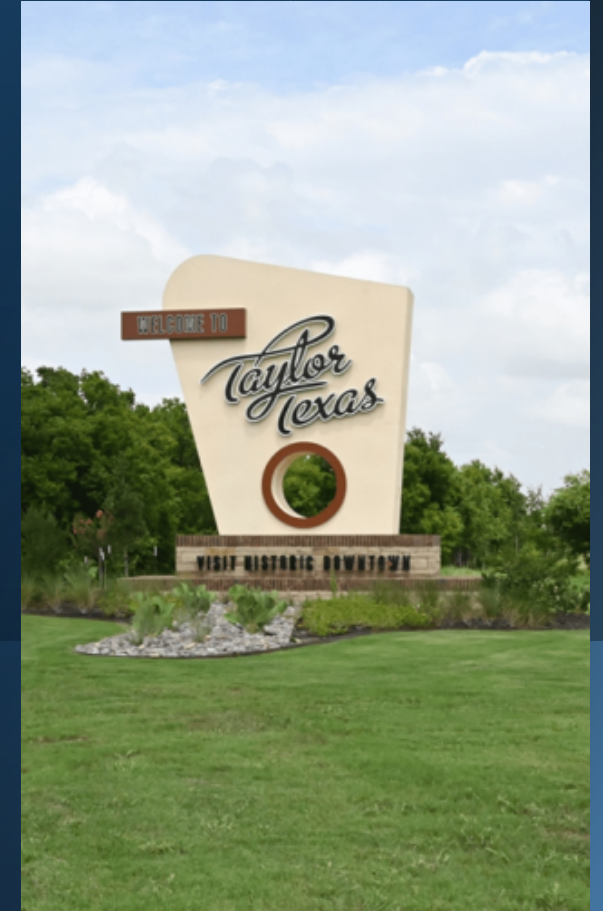
- Continue respectful behavior in private: same level of respect and consideration for differing views should be maintained in private conversations

Be aware of insecurity of written notes, voicemail messages, and e-mail

- All messages treated as potentially public communication

Even private conversation can have a public presence

- Always on display. Lunch table conversation eavesdropped upon, parking lot debates watched and casual comment between individual before and after meetings



Section IV: Council Relations with City Staff

Governance of a municipality is in reality a team effort. Cooperation and mutual respect are essential from each individual for the good of the community

Treat all staff as professionals

Clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experience and dignity of each individual. Poor behavior towards staff is not acceptable

Limit contact to specific City staff

- Questions of City staff and or requests for additional info should directed to City Manager, City Attorney, City Clerk or Department Directors. City Manager's office should be copied on requests, except those to the City Attorney
- Requests for follow-up or directions to staff should be made only through City Manager or City Attorney when appropriate
- When in doubt about staff contact, Council member should ask City Manager
- Materials supplied to a Council member in response to request will be made available to all members to have equal access
- Council should not entertain or respond to any staff complaints. Refer to City Manager.
- Council should never speak critically to staff about other City staff, Council members and or Council decisions

Section IV: Council Relations with City Staff continued

Do not disrupt City staff from their jobs

- Council member should not disrupt City staff while they are in meetings, on the phone or performing the job functions in order to have their individual needs met

Never publicly criticize an individual employee

- Council should never express concern with performance of an employee in public or to the employee's manager
- Comments about staff performance should only be made to the City Manager through private correspondence

Do not get involved in administrative functions

- Council members must not attempt to influence City staff on the making of appointments, awarding contracts, selecting of consultants, or granting of City licenses and permits
- The City Charter addresses the role of the City Council with administrative functions

Section IV: Council Relations with City Staff cont. 2

Check with City staff on correspondence before taking action

- Council members should check with City staff to see if an official City response has been sent or in progress

Be selective and careful attending meetings with City staff unless requested by staff

- Even if Council member does not say anything, the Council member's presence implies support, shows partiality, intimidates staff, and hampers staff's ability to do their job objectively.
- This does not apply to social functions or conferences

Do not solicit political support from staff

- Council member should not solicit any type of political support (financial, display of poster, name on a list) from City staff.
- City staff may support, as private citizen can support candidates, but must be away from workplace. Subject additionally to Employee Personnel Handbook

Section V: Council Relations with Citizen

In Public Meetings

- Welcome viewpoints of residents
- Conduct business in an orderly and effect manner. Procedure to receive citizen input:

Amount of Time Allocated- Mayor recognize speaker, maintain order and adhere to time limit of 3 minutes. Groups should designate a spokesperson

Protocol for addressing the City Council

- First paragraph reemphasizes point 1
- Person wanting to speak on Public Hearing item, will speak at Public Hearing
- Request to speak forms should be filled out and provided to City Clerk prior to the meeting
- Speakers address from the podium and if questioned asked, it will not be answered but may be answered during agenda item
- Any comment/discussion by Council member, only when subject on the Council agenda



Section V: Council Relations with Citizen continued

Protocol for dealing with request made by citizens

- Citizens with specific requests first discuss with City Manager or staff
- Council consider requests that remain unresolved through proper admin. channels
- Citizens who have not attempted to resolve situations, at lower levels, direct them to the City Manager

Protocol regarding complaints against City personnel

- Negative comments regarding City personnel by name or title may not be made in open session
- Specific complaints about staff refer to employee's supervisor or City Manager
- Disruption of meetings by words or actions may result in removal by law enforcement



Section V: Council Relations with Citizen continued 2

In Unofficial Settings

Make no promise on behalf of the Council

- Frequently CC members asked opinion about an issue in the community
- Give brief overview of City policy and refer to City staff for further information
- Inappropriate to promise Council action or City staff to do something specific

Make no personal comments about other Council members

- Acceptable to disagree about an issue, but unacceptable to make derogatory comments about other CC member, their opinions and actions

Remember that Taylor is a small town

- Council members are constantly observed in the community, comments and behaviors



Section VI: Council Relations with Other Public Agencies

Be clear about representing the City or personal interests

- If appear before another agency organization, to give a statement CC member should:
 - Provide whether statement made reflects personal opinion or official City stance
 - Whether this is majority or minority opinion of Council
- If the Council member representing the City, must support and advocate official City position, not personal viewpoint
- If CC member is representing another organization, whose position is different from the City, withdraw from voting on the issue if it significantly impacts or is detrimental to the City's interest. Inform Council of organization CC member represents and inform of involvement

Correspondence also should be equally clear about representation

- City letterhead may be used when Council member is representing City and the City's official position. Copy of letter to City Clerk
- Letterhead not used for representing personal point of view or dissenting point of view from election official

Section VII: Council Relations with Boards and Commissions

Boards are valuable resource to the City's leadership and should be treated with appreciation and respect

If attending a board or commission meeting, be careful to only express personal opinions

- Be sensitive to the way participating, especially if on behalf of an individual, business or developer. Could be viewed affecting process unfairly
- Comments made by Council member should be individual opinion and not represent Council

Limit contact with board and commission members to questions of clarification

- Inappropriate for Council member to contact board member to lobby on behalf of individual, business or developer
- Acceptable to contact board member to clarify a position taken by the board

Remember that boards and commissions serve the community, not individual Council members

- Board members do not report to individual Council members and Council members do not have the power or right to threaten board members removal due to disagreements on an issue
- Board appointments should be based on criteria like expertise, attendance, ability to work with staff and the public
- Board appointments should not be used as a political reward



Section VII: Council Relations with Boards and Commissions continued

Be respectful of diverse opinions

- Be respectful and fair of all citizens serving on boards

Keep political support away from public forums

- Board members may offer political support to a Council member, not in public forum while conducting duties
- Council member support board member running for office, not in official forum as a Council member

Inappropriate behavior can lead to removal

- Inappropriate behavior by a board member should be noted to the Mayor
- Mayor counsel offending member
- If behavior continues, Mayor should let Council know and individual is subject to removal from board





Section VIII: Council Relations with the Media

The media (newspapers, radio, television, etc.) frequently contacts Council member for information and quotes

Best advice for dealing with the media is to never go “off the record”

- Most media represent journalistic integrity and ethics and can be trusted to keep word
- One bad experience can be catastrophic
- Council members should not feel obligated to speak, “No comment” acceptable response

The Public Information Officer (Communications Director) is the official spokesperson for the representative on City positions

- Designated representative to present and speak on official City positions
- Council member contacted by media, make clear comments official City position or personal view
- Encourage to refer media to Communications



Section VIII: Council Relations with the Media cont.

All City press releases should go through the Public Information Officer's Office for distribution

- PIO maintains up to date contact info for media
- To treat all media fair, news releases submitted through PIO

Choose words carefully and cautiously

- Comments taken out of context can cause problems
- Be cautious of humor, sarcasm or word play
- Never appropriate to use slurs or swear words when talking with media

Remember the media lives by a tight deadline

- Council members should quickly reply to media (forward to Communications) when they call for information on a story

Section IX: Sanctions

Public Disruption

- Members of the public who do not follow proper conduct after a warning in a public hearing may be barred from further testimony at the meeting or removed from Council Chambers

Inappropriate Staff Behavior

- Council members should refer to the City Manager any City staff not following proper conduct in their dealings with Council members, other City Staff
- Employee may be disciplined in accordance with Personnel Policies

Council Members Behavior and Conduct

- Council member who intentionally and repeatedly do not follow proper conduct may be reprimanded or formally censured by the Council, lose seniority, or committee assignment (both with the City and inter-government agencies)
- Serious infraction can lead to other sanctions
- Council members should point out offending member infraction. If continues, then matter referred to the Mayor, City Manager or City Attorney in private
- City Manager and or City Attorney speak with offending member in private
- City Manager and or City Attorney inform Council members of the repeated infractions and initiate action if a Council member's behavior may warrant sanction

Section X: Principles of Conduct

Proper conduct is...

- Keeping promises, being dependable, building a solid reputation, participating and being available, demonstrating patience, showing empathy, holding onto ethical principles under stress, listening attentively, studying thoroughly, keeping integrity intact, overcoming discouragement, going above and beyond, time and time again, modeling a professional manner

Proper conduct is not...

- Showing antagonism or hostility, deliberately lying or misleading, speaking recklessly, spreading rumors, stirring up bad feelings, divisiveness, acting in a self-righteous manner, any conduct which could bring disrespect and tarnish the reputation of the Council their office or the City

It all comes down to respect

- Respect for one another as individuals... respect the validity of different opinions...respect the democratic process...respect for the community that we serve

Section XI: Glossary of Terms

Provides glossary and definition for:

- Attitude, behavior, civility, conduct, courtesy, decorum, manners, point of order, point of privilege, propriety, protocol and respect

*City of Taylor
Council
Relations
Policy*



Questions?