



CITY OF ATASCADERO

COUNCIL NORMS AND PROCEDURES (2012)

GENERAL

- To take courageous action when necessary to keep the City of Atascadero a well run, well managed innovative City.
- Council provides leadership and participates in regional, state and national programs and meetings.
- Council looks to Commissions and Committees for independent advice.
- Other community leaders are consulted in the decision making process when appropriate.
- There is extensive citizen participation and work on City programs and documents.
- There are numerous meetings, other than regular Council meetings.
- We stress training for staff, Council, and Commission members.
- Council Members will inform the City Manager's Administrative Assistant when they will be out of town as early as possible and it will be put on the Council Calendar.
- Council Members get the same information as much as possible: citizen complaints, letters, background, etc.
- Council Members will determine which specific Commission packets they want to receive.
- Use technology to improve information flow and communications.
- Individual Council Members may use the City letterhead as long as they clarify in the document that any opinions expressed are their own.

COUNCIL VALUES

- The Council and City Manager are a participatory team.
- The Council values high energy, open mindedness, and achievement orientation.
- Council Members will care and have respect for each other as individuals.
- Council Members will be straightforward; with no hidden agendas.
- The City Council values humor.
- Traditions are respected, but not binding.

COUNCIL INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION

- Individuals are responsible to initiate resolution of problems A.S.A.P. and not let them fester.
- City Council will not direct cheap shots at each other during public meetings, in the press, or any other place/time.
- Relationships are informal, but not casual in public [beware of impact on, and perception of, public].
- Council Members will be flexible in covering for each other.
- Council Members that are the Complainant on an issue before the Council must declare their involvement in the issue before the item is reviewed by the Council.
- Council Committees:
 - Committee areas belong to the whole Council; they are not seen as territorial.
 - Committees are responsible to keep rest of Council informed, and other members are responsible for letting committee know if they want more information or to give input.
 - Before committees start moving in new direction, they will get direction from the rest of Council.

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- Committee reports will be made under Council Reports, when appropriate.
- Committee summaries will be sent on an interim basis to update other Council Members on:
 - o Issues being discussed
 - o Options being considered
 - o Progress
- Council and committees will give clear and focused direction as early as possible.

COUNCIL INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF

City Manager

- Council Members should always feel free to go to the City Manager
- When a Council Member is unhappy about a department, he/she should always talk it over with the City Manager and/or the Assistant City Manager - not the department head.
- Concerns about a department head must be taken to the City Manager only.
- Critical information will be passed to all City Council Members by appropriate personnel.
- The Council will provide ongoing feedback, information, and perceptions to the City Manager, including some response to written communications requesting feedback.
- The City Manager or the Assistant City Manager deals with issues that cross department boundaries.
- Avoid giving direction individually to the City Manager via email; the majority of the Council should give the City Manager direction as a formal body.

Staff in General

- Council can talk with department heads if asking for information, assistance or follow up.
- Council will always be informed by staff when an unusual event occurs that the public would be concerned about, i.e., anyone wounded by gunfire, area cordoned off by police or fire, etc.
- The Council and staff will not blind side each other in public; if there is an issue or a question a Council Member has on an agenda item, that member will contact staff prior to the meeting.

City Attorney

- Contract Attorney will routinely forward relevant new legislation to the City Council.
- City Attorney shall be pro-active with Council, Manager and Staff when and where appropriate.
- City Attorney to regularly consult with Council on items of concern on upcoming agenda at the earliest time possible.
- City Attorney will track Commissions' actions, agenda of City Council and committees for needed input.
- City Attorney to pro-actively inform and protect City Council Members from potential violations and conflicts.

COUNCIL EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

- Think carefully before responding to any e-mail; never reply when angry or in a bad mood. Do not make derogatory personal comments.
- Do not reply to an e-mail if the reply will be directed to a majority of the Council.
- Do not take a position or make a commitment on matters yet to be decided by the Council. Remember, even if you don't do it, your e-mail can be forwarded by others to a majority of the Council.

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- Do not give instructions via email or otherwise to Staff under the managerial control of the City Manager.
- If e-mailing the entire Council, do so only to provide information, and do not solicit a response.

COUNCIL OPTIONS FOR KEEPING INFORMED

- Read Commission Minutes in order to find out what is being worked on.
- Read documents on Planning items.
- City Manager will discuss future Agenda topics with Council Members.
- Council Members will do their homework.
- There is extensive use of staff and Commission reports, and Commission minutes.
- Regular meeting with City Manager
- Council Members that are appointed to regional Boards will keep other Council Members informed by emailing updates to the City Manager to be shared with the entire City Council.

MAYOR'S ROLE

- Each Mayor is unique; the role is defined by the person, based on that person's style.
- The Mayor is the spokesperson for the City.
- The Mayor will inform the Council of any informal correspondence sent out to anyone in relation to City business - use e-mail whenever possible.
- The Mayor communicates with Commission Chairs.

CITIZEN COMPLAINTS

- Staff will attach their response to the copy of the letter received when sending to Council.
- By City Manager discretion, Council will be informed of significant, urgent and repetitive complaints.
- Staff will draft a response for Council's use for responding to the public. Letters over Council signatures will be reviewed by the signer before sent.
- Council should not attempt to fix Citizens' problems on their own; it will be referred to the City Manager.
- Responses to citizens are customized.
- Copies of responses to be included in individual packets.
- If a Council Member wants action based on a citizen's complaint, they should go through the City Manager's office to ensure it gets into the tracking system.
- The level of detail in written responses will be selective.
- Generally, communications are acknowledged with discretion.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

- City Manager sets the Agenda for regular City Council meetings – per the Ordinance
- Public comment shall be received on all action items.
- Any Council Member can place an item on the agenda under Council Announcements and Reports.
- City Council Members will treat everyone equally and with courtesy.
- Corrections to minutes are passed to the City Clerk before the meeting.
- Each member may share his/her views about the issue and the reasons for his/her vote.

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- When feasible, audio or video tape all public City Council meetings.
- Public Comment
 - Procedure will include: Staff Report, questions from Council, applicant report, public comment, close Public Hearing, any staff response, and bring item back to Council for discussion.
 - Once public comment is closed, further public input will not be allowed unless re-opened by Mayor.
 - Applicant's comments shall be limited to a reasonable time.
 - Public comments shall be limited to 3 minutes per speaker; per Municipal Code.
 - It is acceptable to ask questions of a speaker for clarification.
 - Each speaker will be thanked.
 - Council will not respond until all public comment has been reviewed.
 - Mayor allows other members to speak first and then gives his/her views and summarizes.
- Consent Calendar
 - There is judicious use of the Consent Calendar, such as minutes, routine City business, and things already approved in the budget.
 - If a Council Member has a question on a Consent Calendar item for their information only, they are to ask staff ahead of time, rather than having it pulled off for discussion during the meeting.
 - Staff is prepared to report on every agenda item.
- Voting
 - Everyone speaks before a motion.
 - Attempts will be made to get consensus on significant policy issues.

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- Department heads will generally attend every meeting; other staff attendance at Council meetings is at the City Manager's discretion.
- Council Member discussions will not be redundant if they concur with what has already been said.
- Closed Session
 - Council will get written reports for Closed Session items as much as possible; these reports are to be turned in at the end of the meeting.
 - City Manager will ask for pre-meeting closed sessions if it will save the City money (due to consultant fees, etc.); to be held no earlier than 5:00 p.m.
 - No violation of Closed Session confidentiality.
- Special Meetings
 - Special meetings may be called by Mayor, or a majority of the Council, pursuant to the Brown Act.

COMMISSIONS

- Problem solving issues with Commissions will be done as much as possible with chairs and vice chairs.
- Commission needs:
 - To know Council vision, community vision, and General Plan 2025
 - Understanding of their roles and authority.
 - To know annual prioritized goals of the City Council.
 - All commissioners receive an annual training.

- Criteria for commissioner for re-appointment (and in extreme cases, removal) shall include:
 - Issues of conflicts of interest.
 - Attendance (missing two meetings without excuse).
 - Support of General Plan.
 - Respect for staff/public.
 - Working for community versus personal purposes.