



CITY OF ATASCADERO

COUNCIL NORMS AND PROCEDURES (2021)

GENERAL

- Council should primarily focus on vision, mission and policy. Staff should primarily focus on implementation and keeping the Council informed.
- 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.
- Council will encourage citizen participation on City programs and documents.
- Serving the City of Atascadero is the City Council's top priority.
- It is expected that each Council Member will represent the City of Atascadero as a member of various boards and committees, and will be participate in meetings as feasible.
- 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.
- 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.

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 responsibilities 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.
 - 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:
 - Issues being discussed
 - Options being considered
 - Progress
- Council and committees will give clear and focused direction as early as possible.

COUNCIL INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF

City Manager

- Council Members are encouraged to discuss City business with 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 her designee - 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.
- Requests by Council Members for information that will take more than one hour of staff time must be approved by a majority of the City Council at a Council meeting.
- Documents generated by Council Member requests for 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 Deputy City Manager deals with issues that cross department boundaries.
- Avoid giving direction individually to the City Manager; the majority of the Council should give the City Manager direction as a formal body.
- 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 the City Manager prior to the meeting).

Staff in General

- Council should work through the City Manager if asking for information, assistance or follow up as it pertains to an item on the upcoming Council agenda. If needed, the City Manager may arrange for Council Members to meet with a department head.
- Individual Council Members can talk directly with appropriate staff members when they have routine individual business dealings with the City of Atascadero. Council Members should inform the City Manager in advance of any individual business requiring staff discretion, other City business dealings that may put staff in awkward position, or any staff contacts that may give the perception of favorable treatment.

- 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.
- Department heads will generally attend every Council meeting; other staff attendance at Council meetings is at the City Manager's discretion.
- City Clerk will proactively inform the City Council of new or relevant information related to matters concerning the City Clerk's Office, such as meeting notifications, changes to laws regarding the Brown Act, FPPC requirements and ethics and harassment training.
- Individual Council Members may reach out directly to the City Clerk for clarification and advice on matters concerning the City Clerk's Office.

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 shall regularly consult with Council on items of concern on an 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 and Council Members to contact and inform the City Attorney of potential violations and conflicts.
- Where an individual Council Member requests guidance or research from the City Attorney, and it will require more than one hour of time, three Council Members must agree to the request.

COUNCIL ELECTRONIC 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.

- 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.
- City business will be conducted through your City email account. If an e-mail is received on an account other than your City email account, you should forward that email to your City email account and/or request that the person reaching out send their message through your City email account.
- If a Council Member will have a social media presence, they should meet with the City Clerk and/or City Attorney to discuss.

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.
- Regularly meet with City Manager
- Council Members who are appointed to regional Boards will keep other Council Members informed by communicating 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 is authorized in certain instances, on behalf of the City, to submit advocacy communications that are consistent with City position. At the discretion of the Mayor, the communication may be prepared and sent if it is time-sensitive and meets one or more of the following criteria:
 - In support of any policy issue previously agreed upon by the Council, or
 - In support of a consistently or emphatically expressed Council majority position, or
 - In support of and consistent with any Council Strategic Priority, or
 - In support of the fiscal health of the City or local-control, or
 - At the written request of the City Manager, to advocate a League of California Cities' position on bills that would have a substantial positive or negative effect on City operations.

A copy of the letter will be provided to the Council at the same time it is transmitted to the addressee. Any Member of the Council can request an item to be placed on an upcoming agenda to discuss that communication. If the requested communication does not meet at least one of the above criteria, the Mayor may submit the requested communication, but must clearly indicate therein that the Mayor is acting as an individual, speaking on their own behalf, and not on behalf of the City Council.

- 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.
- The Mayor will appoint Councilmembers to committees, allowing Councilmembers a chance to discuss the appointments at a meeting and the opportunity to vote confirming all of the appointments.
- The Mayor may appoint an ad hoc committee or a liaison for a specific purpose.
- The Mayor will work with the City Manager's Office to determine Proclamations and Certificates of Recognition for presentation at a City Council meeting. Any Council Member is welcome to write letters of recognition.

CITIZEN COMPLAINTS

- All citizen complaints will be sent by Council to the City Manager's Office for official response. Council may respond to acknowledge receipt of complaint.
- Staff will inform Council of staff responses to citizen complaints received by the 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.
- Council may respond but should not attempt to fix Citizens' problems on their own; it will be referred to the City Manager.
- Responses to citizens are customized.
- 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.
- No individual Council Member may direct the City Manager to place an item on the Council agenda except as outlined under Individual Determination. The majority of the Council may direct the City Manager to place an item on a future agenda complete with prepared staff report and any requested action items.
- Public comment shall be received on all action items.
- Individual Determination
 - Any Council Member may place any item under Individual Determinations
 - No report will be prepared by staff for those items placed by Council under Individual Determinations
 - Resolutions, Ordinances, Budget items or other action items may not be placed under individual determinations.
 - Typical items for Individual determinations include:
 - Request for Council direction to have the City Manager place an action item on a future agenda complete with prepared staff report and any requested draft resolutions, ordinances or other action items.
 - Request for Council input from other Council Members on upcoming agenda items for committees that Council Members serve on.
 - Request Council submit letters of support/oppose on State and federal legislation.
 - Request a brief factual clarification or to ask a question of staff.
 - Council Members should strive to notify the City Manager as soon as possible to place an individual determination item on the agenda. Understanding that there are instances where time is short, if an item comes up after the agenda has been published, the Council Member should notify the City Manager as soon as possible in order to discuss other options for including the item on the agenda.
 - Those items not on the published agenda will only be allowed very brief/limited Council discussion as determined by the City Attorney in accordance with the Brown Act
- 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.
- 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 normally allows other members to speak first and then gives his/her views and summarizes.
- Keep Community Forum to 30 minutes with additional time to be given at the Mayor's discretion.
- Consent Calendar
 - The Consent Calendar will be used for items 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 has an opportunity to speak before a motion.
 - Attempts will be made to get consensus on significant policy issues.
 - 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 when necessary; 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

Council shall consider holding a joint session with each Commission at least once every two years.

- 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.