

ETHICS POLICY

for Elected and Appointed Officials - City of Kerrville, Texas

I. Purpose.

City Council has adopted this Ethics Policy as a way to encourage and ensure the highest standards of personal and public conduct during tenure in office. Adherence to this Policy will help maintain confidence and trust in the representatives and decision-makers for the City of Kerrville, Texas (“City”), each of whom must remain independent, impartial, and accountable to the citizens and businesses that they serve. In addition to this Policy, elected and appointed officials must adhere to state laws, the City Charter, and other City policies, which govern their conduct.

II. Goals.

The goals of this Policy are that both Councilmembers and City Officials:

- A. comply with both the letter and spirit of the laws and policies affecting the operations of government;
- B. remain independent, impartial, and fair in their judgment and actions; and
- C. use their respective office or position for the public good and not for personal gain.

III. Definitions.

The following terms when used in this Policy have the following meanings:

Board means a board, commission, or committee of the City, in whatever form and whether advisory or nonadvisory and temporary or permanent.

City Council means the legislative and governing body of the City consisting of the mayor and councilmembers.

City Official means City Council and any appointed member of a Board.

IV. Standards of Conduct.

A. *Act in the Public Interest:* Recognizing that stewardship of the public interest must be their primary concern, City Officials shall work for the common good of the whole City and not for any private or personal interest. Furthermore, each City Official shall assure fair and equal treatment of all persons and matters presented to them in their service to the City. City Officials are prohibited from using their positions to influence any City-government decision in which they have a personal interest. Under the City Charter, City Council assumes the duties of office without party or partisan mark or designation.

B. *Comply with Laws*: City officials shall comply with the laws of the nation, the State of Texas, and the City in the performance of their public duties. These laws include the United States and Texas constitutions; laws pertaining to conflicts of interest, election campaigns, financial disclosures, open government; and the City Charter, ordinances, and policies. City officials acknowledge that most information created by a City Official, regardless of whether it is created on a personal electronic device or with a personal email account, is subject to public disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act.

C. *Civility*: The professional and personal conduct of City Officials must be above reproach and avoid even the appearance of impropriety. City Officials shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges, or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of the public or other City Officials and employees. Each Official should strive to promote and maintain courtesy, civility, and collegiality.

D. *Respect the Process*: City Officials shall perform their duties in accordance with the processes and rules of order established by the City Council, which govern the public deliberation of public policy issues, meaningful involvement of the public, and implementation of policy decisions of the City Council by City staff.

E. *Meeting Attendance*: City Officials are obligated to attend meetings and come prepared with an awareness and a fairly good and well-informed understanding of the agenda issues; listen courteously and attentively to all public discussions before the body; and focus on the business at hand. City Officials shall refrain from interrupting other speakers, making personal comments not germane to the business of the body, or to otherwise interfere with the orderly conduct of meetings, all of which is in accordance with Council's applicable meeting rules and procedures.

F. *Meeting Preparation*: Where a question arises during the preparation for meetings and with the goal of making meetings as efficient as possible, City Officials should submit their question to the appropriate staff person for research and response prior to the meeting. The question and response may certainly be discussed during the upcoming meeting. In the case of City Council, the question should be submitted to the City Manager.

G. *Decisions Based on Merit*: City Officials should review the agenda material, participate in public discussion, and base all decisions on the merits and substance of the matter at hand.

H. *Communication*: Prior to taking final action on a matter under consideration, City Officials shall publicly share any substantive information, which they may have received from sources outside the public decision-making process that is relevant to such action by the Council or Board. Where a City Official cites to a document or information that is received through independent research or study, the City Official should provide a copy of such document to the other City Officials, or at a minimum, provide the citation to where the information may be found.

I. *Strict Confidentiality*:

1. In the course of performing official duties, City Officials may, and City Council will, be privy to confidential information, defined as any information that the City Official is notified is confidential at the time it is shared with the member or that a reasonable person would understand to be confidential from the totality of the circumstances surrounding how the member is made aware of the information. Every City Official shall maintain the strictest confidentiality of all such information received, regardless of whether said information is discussed in an Executive Session. No City Official shall divulge or cause or permit to be disclosed any confidential information to any person not included in the communication by which the City Official received the confidential information.

2. Legal counsel from and matters discussed with the City Attorney are confidential and legally protected by the attorney-client privilege. This privilege belongs to the entire City Council or Board and may be waived only by majority vote of the Council or Board. No member of Council or Board member shall divulge or disclose any such privileged matter unless the Council or Board has voted to waive the privilege.

J. *Conflicts of Interest and Disclosure*: City Officials shall familiarize themselves and adhere to the following conflicts of interest and disclosure statutes and principles:

1. Ch. 171, Tx. Local Gov't Code – requires City Council and some City Officials to file an affidavit disclosing a substantial interest in a business or property that would be beneficially affected by a decision of the Council or Board and thereafter abstaining from participation in discussion and a vote. Once disclosure is made, the City Official shall leave the meeting to ensure their presence does not hinder the discussion of the item or influence the vote.

2. Ch. 176, Tx. Local Gov't Code – requires City Council to file a conflicts disclosure statement disclosing any business relationship with a person or business doing business with the City or being considered by the City for a business relationship.

3. Section 176.003(a)(2)(B), Tx. Local Gov't Code – requires the disclosure of gifts of an aggregate value of more than \$250.00 in a twelve (12) month period, other than gifts of food, lodging, transportation, or entertainment and accepted as a gift.

4. Sections 553.001-553.003, Tx. Gov't Code – requires the filing of an affidavit before the date the City will acquire a property in which a public servant has an interest.

5. Chs. 36 and 39, Tx. Penal Code – penal Code provisions concerning corruption, including Section 36.02 prohibiting bribes, Section 36.08(d) prohibiting illegal benefits, Section 36.09 prohibiting receipt of prohibited gifts, Section 39.02 concerning abuse of official capacity, and Section 39.06(a) concerning misuse of official information.

K. *Advocacy*: City Officials shall not utilize the City's name or logo for purposes of endorsing any political candidate or business. City Officials shall only represent the official policies or positions of the City Council or Board to the best of their ability, and such representation may only occur upon receiving the specific approval of City Council or Board. When presenting

their individual opinions and positions, City Officials shall explicitly state they do not represent their body or the City nor will they allow any inference that they do.

L. Confidential Information: City Officials shall respect the confidentiality of information concerning City property, personnel, or proceedings of the City. They shall neither disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization nor use such information to advance their personal interests.

M. Use of Public Resources: City Officials shall not use public resources generally unavailable to the public, such as City staff time, equipment, supplies, or facilities for private gain or personal purposes.

N. Representation of Private Interests: In keeping with their role as stewards of public interests, City Officials shall not appear on behalf of private interests of third parties before the Council or Board.

O. Policy Role of City Officials: City Officials shall respect and adhere to the City's governmental structure as outlined in the City's charter, policies, and procedures. In this structure, the City Council determines the policies of the City with information, analysis, and advice provided by the public, Boards, and staff. City Officials therefore shall not interfere with the administrative functions of the City or the professional duties of the City staff; nor shall they impair the ability of staff to implement Council policy decisions.

P. Independence of Boards: Because of the value of the independent advice of Boards to the public decision-making process, City Officials shall refrain from using their position to unduly influence the deliberations or outcomes of Board proceedings.

Q. Positive Workplace Environment: City Officials shall support the maintenance of a positive and constructive work place environment for City employees and for citizens and businesses interacting with the City. City Officials shall recognize their special role in dealing with City employees and refrain from creating the perception of inappropriate direction to staff.

V. Implementation.

As an expression of the expected standards of conduct for City Officials, the Policy is self-enforcing. It therefore is most effective when City Officials are thoroughly familiar with it and embrace its provisions. Ethical standards will be included in the orientation for new Councilmembers and new Board members. City Officials entering office must sign the attached statement affirming that they have read, understood, and agree to follow this Policy. City Council shall periodically review this Policy and consider any revisions.

VI. Compliance and Enforcement.

The Policy expresses standards of ethical conduct expected for City Officials. City Officials have the primary responsibility to assure that ethical standards are understood and met and that the public maintains full confidence in the integrity of City government. Councilmembers, as well as Board members, have the responsibility to intervene when a City Official's actions appear to be in

violation of the Policy and such actions or inactions are brought to their attention. The City Council may impose sanctions, such as reprimand, formal censure, or loss of assignment on a City Official whose conduct does not comply with this Policy. The City Council also may act to remove members of Boards from office.

