

CITY COUNCIL PROTOCOLS

ADOPTED BY THE
CALABASAS CITY COUNCIL



CITY *of* CALABASAS

Adopted, As Amended
March 27, 2024

CITY OF CALABASAS

City Council Protocols

PREAMBLE

The Calabasas City Council is charged with taking appropriate, necessary, and timely action to maintain the City of Calabasas as a leading, well-managed, and innovative City at the forefront of desirable California cities.

It is the overall responsibility of the City Council: a) to gather information and knowledge; b) to take counsel; c) to keep a long-range perspective; d) to hold itself to the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct in the performance of its duties without regard to personal advantage; e) to be free of favoritism; f) to listen carefully to the public; and g) to conduct a reasonable and reasoned period of discussion prior to making decisions.

To accomplish the above-stated responsibilities, and as guidance for the orderly governance of the City, the Calabasas City Council has adopted the following protocols. Except for those protocols that are based on law, these protocols are voluntary and non-binding. They are set forth here to clarify what has become, over time, successful procedures or best practices for the conduct of civic affairs within our City.

These protocols are intended to be consistent with all legal requirements applicable to the conduct of City affairs. In the instance of any conflict with state or federal law, or with the Calabasas Municipal Code, such state, federal or municipal law requirements will control. In addition, official City meetings are generally conducted pursuant to the most current Roberts Rules of Order.

It is expected that the City Council will review these protocols and Roberts Rules of Order periodically, in order to consider appropriate additions, deletions, and/or amendments.

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GENERAL

1. The Council participates in regional, state and national programs and meetings which serve the best interests of the City of Calabasas.
2. The Council provides policy direction to the City Manager. The City Manager, through City staff, implements Council policy. The Council does not interfere with the operating decisions of the City, which are the responsibility of the City Manager.
3. The City Manager keeps each Councilmember fully, and equally, informed as to all matters of importance to the City, including agenda items, financial conditions, needs of the City, resident concerns, staffing needs, and urgency items.
4. The Council endeavors not to burden the City Manager or staff with demands for individual time or attention on matters that the City Manager can better handle with general communications to the Council as a whole.
5. The Council looks to the City Manager, staff, Commissions and Council Committees and Task Forces for timely, accurate and unbiased presentations and advice on City policies and legislative actions.
6. The Council complies with all laws relating to open meetings, public records, and conflicts of interest.
7. The Council encourages resident participation in the development of City policies.
8. The Council desires the public to be fully informed about decisions that impact the public, and encourages public comment as policies are set.
9. The Council makes adequate provision for the training and continuing education of the Council, Commissions, and City staff.
10. All Councilmembers should receive and review any documents shown or provided by City staff to any other Councilmember.
11. Councilmembers inform the City Manager as far in advance as possible of when they will be out of town or otherwise unavailable to conduct City business.

SELECTION OF THE MAYOR

1. The Mayor and Mayor pro Tem are nominated at the Council reorganization meeting in December of each year, and are selected by a vote of their peers on the Council. Each serves for a one-year term. In the customary rotation, the Mayor pro Tem is nominated to serve as Mayor at the end of the Mayor's one-year term.
2. The outgoing Mayor of an even-numbered year will follow [1] those already in the rotation and [2] first-time elected Councilmember(s).
3. The order of the first-time elected Councilmember(s) should be based on the order of finish in the election, with the first-time elected Councilmember receiving the most votes taking the first term, the next in line taking the second, and so on.
4. Once a Councilmember's position in the rotation is established, it does not change based upon the future order of election results.
5. If the election is canceled, the order of the rotation of the appointed candidates will remain the same.
6. The Mayor and Mayor pro Tem are peers of and serve at the pleasure of the other Councilmembers.
7. The Mayor assumes the center chair on the dais and oversees the seating location of the other Councilmembers.

MAYOR'S ROLE

1. The Mayor represents the City, is its official spokesperson, and presides over all City Council meetings.
2. Councilmembers recognize the unique role of representing the City, the Mayor recognizes the unique role of representing the Council and each takes great care to ensure that this always takes precedence over representing oneself or one's own personal agenda.
3. The Mayor is to preside at all meetings of the City Council and perform such other duties consistent with the office as may be imposed by the Council or by vote of the people. As presiding officer of the Council, the Mayor is to faithfully communicate the will of the Council majority in matters of policy. The Mayor is also recognized as the official head of the City for all ceremonial purposes. As such, the Mayor shall be the chief spokesperson for the City, representing the City at all ceremonial events and functions, and shall issue all ceremonial proclamations and certificates.
4. The Mayor shall sign all ordinances and other documents that have been adopted by the City Council and require an official signature; except when the City Manager has been authorized by Council action to sign documents. In the event the Mayor is unavailable or refuses to sign an urgent document, the Mayor pro Tem or another Councilmember's signature may be used.
5. It is the Mayor's prerogative to make Council Committee or Task Force assignments from choices provided by Councilmembers, subject to City Council ratification. The Mayor accommodates Council choices whenever possible.
6. The Mayor informs the Council by copying to them any correspondence sent under the Mayor's signature which relates to City business.
7. The City Manager, in consultation with the Mayor, sets the agenda for each Council meeting.
8. The Mayor or two Councilmembers may place an item on a future City Council agenda. Future items shall be agendaized within 90 days.
9. At a public meeting or a Closed Session of Council, the Mayor has discretion to move agenda items and/or to take them out of order to accommodate the needs of the Council or the public.
10. For a period of two years, no matter that has previously been decided, shall return to a City Council agenda for reconsideration unless there are demonstrably changed circumstances, which must be outlined in the staff report.
11. In the absence of the Mayor, the Mayor pro Tem performs the duties of Mayor.

MAYOR'S ROLE, Continued

12. The Mayor is obliged to act as a facilitator during public meetings. The Mayor ensures that all views are heard and that the meeting progresses in an orderly and timely fashion. The Mayor provides an equal opportunity for each Councilmember to be heard.
13. The Mayor is expected to be an advocate for his or her views, just as other Councilmembers are, but not to take advantage of the Mayor's status on the dais to coerce or to advocate in excess of what is allowed to other Councilmembers. The Mayor's role as a facilitator should not be compromised by his or her role as an advocate.
14. If a Councilmember, Council Committee or Task Force, brings an issue forward to the Council, it is appropriate for the Mayor to give that Councilmember or Council Committee or Task Force members the opportunity to introduce and/or speak first on that particular issue.
15. The Mayor presents the State of the City Address annually in November or December to inform the public of the actions of the Council, the events of last year, the health of the City and plans for the future. The focus should be on the accomplishments of the Council and the City as a whole, although the Mayor is free to advocate for his or her vision of the future.
16. If the Mayor or any Councilmember are up for election, the Mayor will appoint two Councilmembers who are not up for election to moderate any City voter outreach or election-related activities from the beginning of the nomination period until election day.

CITY COUNCIL PREPARATION

1. Councilmembers are prepared for Council, Committee or Task Force meetings, which includes having read all agendas and supporting documentation sufficiently in advance of the meeting to allow for questions, research and response by staff.
2. Councilmembers avoid surprising their colleagues or staff. To the maximum extent possible, Councilmembers advise the City Manager in advance of issues or questions they intend to bring up at a public meeting. This refers to issues and questions that the staff would not normally anticipate or have researched for that particular meeting. Getting questions resolved with staff prior to a public meeting will shorten meetings and move the agenda forward in a timely manner.
3. Councilmembers stay abreast of regional issues affecting neighboring cities, counties, and the operations of other districts or agencies.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

1. Public meetings and discussion items at Council meetings proceed generally in the following order:
 - a. City staff presents a report of the item under consideration.
 - b. Councilmembers have an opportunity to ask questions of staff for clarification or to gather additional information.
 - c. Public testimony is taken from affected parties or members of the public who wish to be heard.
 - d. At the close of public testimony, the Mayor may allow staff to respond to any public testimony which supplement or clarify the information.
 - e. The Mayor generally allows other Councilmembers to speak first, and then summarizes or provides the final comments before asking for a motion or direction to staff on the item. The Mayor does not interject in between Councilmembers.
 - f. The order of Council comments is at the discretion of the Mayor. If the item under consideration was studied first by a Committee or Task Force of the Council, members of the Committee or Task Force would be expected to lead off the discussion.
2. Any Councilmember who desires to recuse himself or herself for conflict of interest or any other reason shall do so as soon as the item is called and shall leave the Council Chambers until the item is concluded.
3. Any Councilmember may request a continuance of an item on the agenda if that Councilmember needs more time to become fully informed and able to render a decision. However, a continuance must be approved by a majority of the Council.
4. If a Councilmember is ill or away for any agenda item of special interest to that Councilmember, the item may be continued or tabled at that Councilmember's request, subject to any applicable statutory time periods, and only if such delay would not be averse to the City's best interests. However, Councilmembers should not request a continuance without justifiable reason. Bear in mind that the public may attend expecting discussion or action on the issue, staff has prepared reports, and there may be staff or consultants present just for that item. Councilmembers should coordinate with the City Manager about future agendas and their own schedules to avoid missing items that may be of particular interest to them.

PUBLIC MEETINGS, Continued

5. If any Councilmember becomes aware of an unexpected issue that may be brought up by a member of the public at a Council, Commission, Council Committee or Task Force meeting, that Councilmember will, as a courtesy, inform the other Councilmembers and the City Manager to the extent legally permissible.
6. Councilmembers are expected to attempt to persuade their colleagues to their point of view through reasoned debate, but also to accept the Council's ultimate decision graciously and as final. Councilmembers should not place the City Manager or staff in the position of having to deal with minority positions which do not further established Council policy. Items shall not return to City Council unless there are demonstrably changed circumstances, which must be outlined in the staff report; and it is not requested by a member of the minority.
7. Public comments are limited to no more than three (3) minutes per speaker. In order to avoid repetition and to promote thorough and thoughtful arguments, one member of the public who is present in Council Chambers may cede their time to another speaker (six minutes maximum).
8. The Mayor requests speakers to direct their comments to the Council and not to the presenter, staff, the audience or the TV cameras.
9. The Mayor controls the meeting, and discourages personal attacks of any kind from speakers by encouraging them instead to productively address the issues at hand.
10. At the Mayor's discretion, a Councilmember may be permitted to respond to a personal attack directed at that Councilmember.
11. The Council listens carefully to the speakers and does not interrupt or engage in debate with the speakers. The three-minute period belongs to the speaker.
12. Subject to applicable legal deadlines, the Mayor or any Councilmember may move to refer back to staff any agenda item that is deemed to be incomplete or unready for final decision.
13. A Councilmember may suggest a change in procedure if he or she feels it will be helpful for the conduct of a particular meeting, understanding that the Mayor runs the meeting.
14. While unanimity is not required or always possible, the Mayor attempts to find consensus on discussion items.
15. On agendized items, Councilmembers provide succinct summaries of previous discussions with staff to assure the public that items have been thoroughly reviewed and concerns have been addressed.

PUBLIC MEETINGS, Continued

16. Councilmembers should make the reasons for their votes clear to their colleagues and to the public. This is particularly important when the Council is divided on an issue.
17. The Mayor and Councilmembers treat everyone with courtesy and respect.
18. Direction to staff must be determined by a majority of the Council and must be clearly identified at the Council meeting. Tacit approval, or lack of disagreement by others, is not considered direction. The Mayor should ensure that the direction staff receives is clear and represents the majority view of the Council.
19. Every Council action should be:
 - a. A reasoned decision that was arrived at in a fair way.
 - b. Not to the personal advantage of any Councilmember.
 - c. Free of favoritism.
 - d. Based on information and opinions from a variety of sources, and particularly, from those who would be most affected.
20. Councilmembers do not have private communications, among themselves or with members of the public, via electronic communication devices or otherwise, from the dais during public meetings.
21. All members of the public desiring to speak at a Council meeting shall complete a speaker card which will be made available at all such meetings. The speaker should provide his or her name and City of residence on the speaker card. Speaker cards shall be submitted to the City Clerk or meeting staff prior to the time the item begins. It is within the discretion of the Mayor to accept a late submitted speaker card.
22. To the extent public participation via Zoom is allowed, speakers participating via Zoom or any other remote/virtual communication system used by the City Council should press raise hand at the time the item they wish to comment on is heard. When they are brought into the meeting, they should state their name and City of residency.
23. All meeting participants will tell the truth to the best of their knowledge and ability when presenting testimony or oral comments to the Council.
24. All meeting participants shall conduct themselves in an orderly manner. As a last resort, any person conducting themselves in a disorderly manner may be removed from the meeting room pursuant to California Government Code Section 54954.3(c).

CITY COUNCIL INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION

1. Councilmembers treat each other with the respect and courtesy that is their due as residents and public officials.
2. Each Councilmember has the responsibility to initiate action to resolve problems cooperatively and as soon as possible, either directly with other Councilmembers or with the City Manager.
3. The Council maintains a respectful decorum, and avoids personal attacks during public meetings, in the press, or at any other time. Legitimate dissent or opposition to another Councilmember's voting record or positions on issues are within the bounds of appropriate political discourse.
4. Councilmembers should be sensitive to the negative impact that inappropriate conduct has on the public perception of the City. Councilmembers should be mindful of the fact that they are representatives of the City in all their public activities.
5. Councilmembers are flexible and cooperative in filling in for one another at meetings or important functions.
6. All official press releases shall be reviewed and approved by the City Manager.
7. If a Councilmember takes a position in the media, or at any public hearing, critical of a decision, or critical of fellow Councilmembers or members' positions on issues, such public comments should stick to the issues under contention and never involve personal attacks. Councilmembers shall be mindful when representing views or making comments and, if they do not reflect the majority of the Council, must claim the comments as their own personal opinion. If the Mayor takes a position in the media, he or she must note the Council's position if it runs contrary to his or her own opinion. Positions set forth in writing on City letterhead should clearly indicate if the position stated is one officially voted on by the City Council, or if it only represents the position of the individual Councilmember.
8. Councilmembers should avoid public expressions, comments, or opinions of City fault, responsibility or liability in any matters involving property damage, personal injury or alleged breach of contract or alleged violation of law.
9. These Protocols do not, by themselves, carry the weight of law. Councilmembers are expected to abide by them out of a desire to have a well-run City that treats its residents respectfully and with dignity. A governing body that strives to be fair, informed, honest, diligent, dignified, efficient and respectful of others will win the respect and trust of its residents.

CITY COUNCIL INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION, Continued

10. If any Councilmember feels that a Protocol is being violated, it is appropriate for that member to discuss it individually with the errant Councilmember. If the City Manager or staff are involved, it is appropriate to discuss it with the City Manager. If this does not resolve the situation, it is appropriate, as a last resort, to bring up the matter within the Future Agenda Item period of a public meeting and ask for the issue to be put on a future agenda.
11. A principal purpose of the Protocols is to establish or uphold procedures and behavior that win the trust of the public by promoting efficient, productive and civil interaction between Councilmembers. Any Councilmember who habitually ignores these Protocols should expect to be called to task by his or her fellow Councilmembers and by the public.
12. A Councilmember who originates an idea or program shall continue to be identified as the originator even if the idea or program is pursued by another Councilmember or City official.
13. Councilmembers may request, through the City Manager, resolutions, proclamations, adjourn in memory or similar initiatives. All such requests must be approved by the City Manager, who should ask staff to vet the cause, if necessary. The Mayor should limit the number of presentations made at City Council meetings to maintain sufficient time to conduct City business.
14. Two Councilmembers may request, through the City Manager, certificates or other awards recognizing special events, organizations or individuals of importance to the City. All such requests must be approved by the City Manager, who should ask staff to vet the organization, if necessary. Such certificates or awards are normally to include the name and/or signature of all Councilmembers. The Mayor should limit the number of presentations made at City Council meetings to maintain sufficient time to conduct City business. Other Councilmembers in attendance should be invited to participate in the presentation.
15. The Mayor or two Councilmembers may request, through the City Manager, speakers, briefs or informational presentations of importance to the City. All such requests must be approved by the City Manager, who should consider the value of the information and the authority of the City to utilize the information. The Mayor should limit the number of presentations made at City Council meetings to maintain sufficient time to conduct City business.

CITY COUNCIL INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION, Continued

16. The Mayor or two Councilmembers may request, through the City Manager, support or opposition of pending legislation, which must be related to municipal governance. All such requests must be reviewed and approved by the City Manager, who should evaluate the request in accordance with the City's legislative platform. The Mayor should limit the number of such requests made at City Council meeting to maintain sufficient time to conduct City business.
17. Councilmembers who plan to appear at programs or events which involve the use of City staff or resources shall provide notice of such programs or events to all Councilmembers.
18. All electronic mail communications between members of the City Council and any other person either relating to the City's business or communicated in the City Councilmember's official capacity must be sent using the City Councilmember's official electronic email address issued by City staff. Councilmembers are not to personally delete emails or texts from their accounts.

CITY COUNCIL INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF

1. The Council and City Manager work together as a solution-oriented team.
2. Councilmembers feel free to communicate with the City Manager about any City issues, including resident concerns. However, Councilmembers are also mindful of the City Manager's busy schedule and competing requests for access.
3. Complaints or concerns about any City departments or staff are first taken up with the City Manager. It is not appropriate, in any situation, to critique, ridicule, or complain about other staff to any staff person other than the City Manager.
4. Councilmembers may routinely ask department heads for information relative to their department. However, inquiries that require extensive research, or reports that may occupy more than cursory staff time should first be discussed with the City Manager, and may require action or approval by the entire Council.
5. Department heads report to the City Manager. Councilmembers do not insert themselves into or interfere with that chain of command. Neither the City Council nor any Councilmember shall give orders to, command the services of, or assign work to any subordinates of the City Manager, either publicly or privately. Alternately, contact may be made directly with Senior Management, as long as a copy of the communication is forwarded to the City Manager. Senior Management shall inform the City Manager of all Councilmember contact.
6. The Council should expect to be fully and promptly informed by the City Manager or his designee regarding any unusual activities or events of public concern.
7. Councilmembers keep a friendly, professional relationship with staff members, but avoid getting involved with personnel matters, operational matters, work assignments or projects with any staff other than the City Manager.
8. It is staff's role to provide factual, objective, and unbiased information to the Council and the public in its reports. Councilmembers do not interfere or attempt to unduly influence the content of reports being prepared by staff. If a Councilmember believes that information provided by staff is not factual, objective or unbiased, he or she should request the City Manager to review it.
9. Councilmembers establish action and budget priorities for the City at least once a year during the annual budget review process.
10. Changes from the priorities or budget allocations established during the annual budget review process should be pursued only after careful consideration, as they may involve changes in staff work load and appropriations, and because the original priorities were established with the benefit of a public hearing.

CITY COUNCIL INTERACTION AND COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF, Continued

11. Councilmembers should bring forward requests for deviations from the established budget priorities only if they involve a degree of urgency that cannot wait until the next budget review.
12. Councilmembers may individually ask the City Attorney general questions involving matters related to their performance as City officials. However, inquiries that require extensive research, opinions or reports should first be discussed with the City Manager, and may require action or approval by the Council.
13. Email correspondence is preferred when distributing information. Text messages should be used when the information is urgent or immediate replies are necessary.

COMMITTEES OR TASK FORCES OF THE COUNCIL

1. Committees or Task Forces of the Council serve the entire Council. Council Committees or Task Forces are not seen as territorial, but neither do Councilmembers interfere in the Council Committee or Task Force work of others.
2. Both Council Committee or Task Force members shall be included in all meetings, correspondence and communication.
3. The Council endeavors to define the jurisdiction and area of study of each Council Committee or Task Force so as to avoid conflicts or overlapping issues.
4. Council Committee or Task Force members keep the rest of the Council informed of their work, which may include the filing of reports, memoranda or minutes. This documentation will be produced by staff and reviewed by Council Committees or Task Forces prior to distribution to Council.
5. Each Council meeting agenda should include an opportunity for the making of Council Committee or Task Force reports. Whenever possible, written reports are provided to the Council prior to the public meeting.
6. Council Committees or Task Forces may recommend a course of action to the Council, but they never supplant the decision-making authority of the Council, unless authority to take specific action is expressly delegated to a Council Committee or Task Force by a vote of the Council at a public meeting.
7. Councilmembers who wish to call a Council Committee or Task Force meeting may do so by asking the City Manager to make the appropriate arrangements.
8. The need and effectiveness of the Council Committees or Task Forces are evaluated on an annual basis by the City Council.

COMMISSIONS AND BOARDS

1. The Council is responsible to make its vision for the City clear to all appointed and advisory bodies as policy guidance for those bodies.
2. The Council holds Commissions and Boards to the highest standards of ethical and professional conduct in the performance of their appointed duties.
3. The Council spells out the role, jurisdiction, authority and prerogatives of appointed bodies.
4. Councilmembers do not dictate the decisions of Commissioners and other Board members.
5. All persons requesting appointment or re-appointment to a Commission or Board shall submit an application to the City Clerk.
6. All nominations for appointment to a Commission or Board are to be placed on the Council's public agenda with the applicant's name and a copy of the application (with personal information redacted). All nominees are required to appear in person before the Council prior to appointment or re-appointment.

RESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS

1. Upon receiving a concern from the public, Councilmembers direct that concern to the City Manager for appropriate staff action and follow-up.
2. Councilmembers should refrain from making any public statements regarding what action, if any, the City should take.
3. The Council allows staff to handle resident concerns and does not attempt to direct resolution of the issue.
4. Upon receiving communications from the public regarding an agenda item, it should be forwarded to the City Clerk for distribution to all Councilmembers and for the record.