

COUNCIL POLICY MANUAL

Policy 7.3.4 Roles and Responsibilities of Mayor, Vice Mayor and Councilmembers

POLICY PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the roles and responsibilities of the Mayor, Vice Mayor and Councilmembers. With the exception of 1 D., this information was previously contained in the City's [Code of Ethics and Conduct for Elected and Appointed Officials](#), but it was determined that the emphasis of that policy was not on ethical behavior or proper conduct, and that a separate policy would assist those searching for related information. With the exception of those items identified as originating from the City Charter, any of the following roles and responsibilities may be changed by a majority vote of Council. Another resource helpful in defining the roles and responsibilities of elected officials can be found in the Leadership Guide for Mayors and Councilmembers published by the League of California Cities.

POLICY STATEMENT:

1. Roles and Responsibilities of the Mayor

- A.** Acts as the official head of the City for all ceremonial purposes (Sunnyvale City Charter, Section 607).
- B.** Chairs Council meetings.
- C.** May add items to the Council agenda without Council vote.
- D.** May revise the date or time a specific agenda item appears on the Tentative Council Meeting Agenda Calendar without Council vote.
- E.** Determines, after consultation with City Manager, the location of study session meetings.
- F.** Calls for special meetings (Sunnyvale City Charter, Section 612).
- G.** Recognized as spokesperson for the City Council on City positions.
- H.** Selects substitute for City representation when Mayor cannot attend.
- I.** Makes judgment calls on proclamations, Special Orders of the Day, etc.
- J.** Recommends subcommittees as appropriate for Council approval.
- K.** May appoint "blue ribbon" committees as sees fit.
- L.** Serves as the liaison between the Council and the city manager and city attorney in regards to employee relations.
- M.** Leads the Council into an effective, cohesive working team.
- N.** Signs documents on behalf of the City.
- O.** Serves as official delegate of the City to the U.S. Conference of Mayors and other events and conferences (and receives additional travel allowance for this purpose).
- P.** Determines theme and venue for annual State of the City event.

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- Q. Reviews all mail addressed to Mayor.
- R. May administer counseling, verbal reprimands and written warnings to board and commission members and call for investigations of board and commission member conduct.

2. Roles and Responsibilities of the Vice Mayor

- A. Serves at the pleasure of the Council (Sunnyvale City Charter, Section 608).
- B. Performs the duties of the Mayor if the Mayor is absent or disabled (Sunnyvale City Charter, Section 608).
- C. Chairs Council meetings at the request of the Mayor.
- D. Represents the City at ceremonial functions at the request of the Mayor.
- E. Reports closed session actions at public Council meetings.
- F. Initiates routine motion for consent calendar items on the City Council agenda.

3. Roles and Responsibilities of Councilmembers

All members of the City Council, including those serving as Mayor and Vice Mayor, have equal votes. No Councilmember has more power than any other Councilmember, and all should be treated with equal respect. Therefore, no ranking or pecking order shall be established for predetermining the order of roll call votes (which shall be determined on a random basis by the City Clerk) or public introductions, except that the Mayor and Vice Mayor shall be introduced first at public meetings and events. All Councilmembers should:

- A. Fully participate in City Council meetings and other public forums while demonstrating respect, kindness, consideration, and courtesy to others.
- B. Prepare in advance of Council meetings and be familiar with issues on the agenda.
- C. Represent the City at ceremonial functions at the request of the Mayor.
- D. Place activities and events on the Council's weekly activities calendar that invite official participation of all Councilmembers. A list of the activities of individual Councilmembers may also be submitted for public record at the option of the Councilmember.
- E. Be respectful of other people's time. Stay focused and act efficiently during public meetings.
- F. Serve as a model of leadership and civility to the community.
- G. Inspire public confidence in Sunnyvale government.
- H. Provide contact information with the Council Executive Assistant in case an emergency or urgent situation arises while the Councilmember is out of town.
- I. Demonstrate honesty and integrity in every action and statement.

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- J.** Participate in scheduled activities to increase team effectiveness and review Council procedures, such as the Code of Ethics and Conduct for Elected and Appointed Officials.
- K.** Make decisions that are in the interests of the entire community, hearing from residents and businesses with diverse viewpoints across the City, and giving equal consideration to issues and people inside and outside Councilmember election districts.
- L.** Fully engage regarding every issue before the City Council, regardless of which district(s) may be most directly impacted by the issue. This includes hearing all issues, without regard to which District they might reside, and acting without deference or preference to an individual Councilmember when issues are location specific.
- M.** Make decisions regarding resources of the City government based on the needs of all residents and businesses in the City, and not simply in a manner that divides resources by District.
- J.N.** Represent the entire City of Sunnyvale, including all neighborhoods in the City, and continue to work mutually as a City Council, to represent the greater good for the entire City.

4. Roles and Responsibilities of Meeting Chair

The Mayor will chair official meetings of the City Council unless the Vice Mayor or another Councilmember is designated as chair of a specific meeting.

- A.** Maintains order, decorum, and the fair and equitable treatment of all speakers.
- B.** Keeps discussion and questions focused on specific agenda item under consideration.
- C.** Makes parliamentary rulings with advice, if requested, from the city attorney who acts as an advisory parliamentarian. Chair rulings may be overturned if a Councilmember makes a motion as an individual and the majority of the Council votes to overrule the chair.

5. Former Councilmembers

Past members of the City Council who speak to the current City Council about a pending issue should disclose who they are speaking on behalf of (individual or organization).

(Adopted: RTC 09-062 (March 10, 2009); Clerical Update (January 29, 2013); Adopted: RTC 14-0387 (June 10, 2014); Clerical Update (February 24, 2022); RTC 24-0406 (May 7, 2024))

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Lead Department: Office of the City Manager