

Ten Thoughts on Being a Council Member

1. **Have fun** – Being a member of the Sunnyvale City Council is a lot of work, an intense responsibility and a great honor. But, just like anything else in life, you need to enjoy what you are doing. If you ever get to the point, where you are not enjoying yourself in this role – you need to reconsider if being a Council Member is for you. I guarantee, you cannot do a great job for the residents of the City, if you don't enjoy being on the Council.
2. **Remain Humble** - Take the role of Council Member very seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously in the role. Don't let your ego take over. Don't let the role of the office, go to your head. You're human, you don't know everything and you will make mistakes. Make sure you learn from everything you do.
3. **Listen** – The best tool you have; is the ability to truly listen to people. And then process what you hear and learn. That doesn't mean you have to do everything a Member of the Public tells you, but you do need to think about what they say and put it in the proper perspective.
4. **Be concise** – You are going to be given many opportunities to speak to individuals and groups. Be respectful of their time, get to the point of what you want to tell them. Don't drone on with stories that don't help your point. (OK, I may not have always followed this one).
5. **Have a purpose when you speak in a Council Meeting** – I have learned there are only three times to talk during a Council meeting.
 - a. **Ask a question, when you don't know the answer.** This is kind of self-evident. The part that is not self-evident; this shouldn't happen very often. Be engaged, be curious, do your research. Read the Staff Report.
 - b. **Ask the question, when you do know the answer.** Do this when you know the answer and you want to make sure your colleagues and the public learn the answer.
 - c. **Advocate/Explain.** After the public hearing, and you have heard from the public – then it is time to advocate a position to your colleagues. You also want to explain to the public why you have voted the way you have.

6. **Zoom-in/Zoom-out** - You have to be able to **Zoom-in** to the details of a topic and get enough information to make a decision. (You don't have to learn everything). But, remember to **Zoom-out** to the macro picture. Stay strategic and remember, the Council is generally making a Policy Decision. The tactics and operational implementation are Staff's responsibility.
7. **Be a Cheerleader** – You need to be the biggest supporter and cheerleader for the City, businesses and people of Sunnyvale. Understand the warts and issues of the City (and work to improve them), but always be a positive voice for the City.
8. **Support our employees** – The role of the City of Sunnyvale is to provide services to our residents. Our employees are the ones that provide those services. (And they do a great job at this). Be supportive of our employees, acknowledge the great work they do, and give them the appropriate tools to let them continue giving great services to our residents.
9. **Remember your role** – Remember your job is Vision, Direction, Policy and Budget. Stay within the bounds of your role. Take a strategic view of what you are doing. Be careful of expanding the reach of Sunnyvale governance into areas that are really not its purview. Be cautious of expanding the financial reach of our budget.
10. **Think strategically about Sunnyvale's role in the County and Region** – Sunnyvale is the second largest City in the County. Our Council has the ability and responsibility to provide useful and appropriate perspective/leadership on Regional issues. Use this voice with responsibility but do not over-reach. Remember your first responsibility is to Sunnyvale and keeping it a positive example; so that you can have credibility to speak on these larger Regional topics.