

FORT BRAGG CITY COUNCIL PROTOCOLS



Conduct of All Council Members

All members of the City Council, including those serving as Mayor and Vice Mayor, have equal votes. No Council Member has more power than any other Council Member, and all should be treated with equal respect.

All Council Members should:

- Demonstrate honesty and integrity in every action and statement
- Serve as a model of leadership and civility to the community
- Inspire public confidence in Fort Bragg government
- Prepare in advance of Council meetings and be familiar with issues on the agenda
- Fully participate in City Council meetings and other public forums while demonstrating respect, kindness, consideration, and courtesy to others
- Participate in scheduled activities to increase team effectiveness and review Council procedures
- Represent the City at ceremonial functions at the request of the Mayor
- Be responsible for the highest standards of civility and honesty in ensuring the effective maintenance of intergovernmental relations
- Respect the proper roles of elected officials and City staff in ensuring open and effective government
- Provide contact information to the City Manager in case an emergency or urgent situation arises while the Council Member is out of town.

Council Conduct with One Another

Councils are composed of individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, opinions, and goals. Despite this diversity, all have chosen to serve in public office in order to improve the quality of life in the community. In all cases, this common goal should be acknowledged, even as the Council may “agree to disagree” on contentious issues.

In Public Meetings, Council Members should:

- Use formal titles when addressing the Mayor
- Be respectful, listen, and practice civility and decorum in discussions and debate
- Honor the role of the presiding officer in maintaining order and equity
- Avoid personal comments that could offend other Council Members
- Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches

- Be respectful of other people's time.

In Private Encounters, Council Members should:

- Continue respectful behavior in private
- Be aware of the insecurity of written notes, voicemail messages, and email
- Be aware that even private conversations can have a public presence
- Observe the Golden Rule

Council Conduct with City Staff

The key provisions on Council-staff relations are found in Fort Bragg Municipal Code section 2.16.080, as follows:

The Council and its members shall deal with the administrative services of the City only through the City Manager, except for the purpose of inquiry, and neither the Council, nor any member thereof, shall give orders to any officer or employee of the City under the supervision of the City Manager. The City Manager shall take his/her orders and instructions only from the Council as a body, and no individual member of the Council shall give any orders or instructions to the City Manager.

Governance of a City relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials, who set policy, and City staff, who analyze problems and issues, make recommendations, and implement and administer the Council's policies. Therefore, every effort should be made to be cooperative and show mutual respect for the contributions made by each individual for the good of the community.

Council Members should:

- Treat all staff as professionals
- Channel communications through the City Manager or Department heads
- All be provided the same materials and information to assist with decision-making
- Never publicly criticize an individual employee
- Not get involved in administrative functions
- Check with City staff on correspondence before taking action
- Only attend staff meetings if requested by staff
- Limit requests for staff support and run such requests through the City Manager
- Refer citizen complaints to the City Manager who will follow-up with appropriate staff
- Not solicit political support from staff
- Submit questions on Council agenda items ahead of the meeting

Council Conduct with the Public

Making the public feel welcome is an important part of the democratic process. No signs of partiality, prejudice or disrespect should be evident on the part of individual Council Members

toward an individual participating in a public forum. Every effort should be made to be fair and impartial in listening to public testimony.

In public meetings, the Council Members should:

- Be welcoming to speakers and treat them with care and gentleness
- Be fair and equitable in allocating public hearing time to individual speakers
- Practice active listening
- Ask for clarification, but avoid debate and argument with the public
- Undertake no personal attacks of any kind, under any circumstance
- Follow parliamentary procedure in conducting public meetings

In unofficial settings, Council Members should:

- Make no promises on behalf of the Council
- Make no personal comments about other Council Members
- Remember that Council Members are always on display

Council Conduct with Other Public Agencies

In communications with other public agencies, Council Members should:

- Be clear about whether an oral statement reflects personal opinion or is the official stance of the City.
- If representing the City, Council Member must support and advocate the official City position
- Be clear in correspondence about whether representing Council positions or personal views

Council Conduct with Planning Commission and Advisory Boards

The City has established a Planning Commission and two Advisory Boards (CDAB and Promotions Committee) as a means of delegating decision-making authority, obtaining recommendations, and gathering community input. Citizens who serve on Boards and Commissions become more involved in government and serve as advisors to the City Council. They are a valuable resource to the City's leadership and should be treated with appreciation and respect.

In communicating with Boards and Commissions, Council Members should:

- If attending a Board or Commission meeting, express personal opinions only
- Remember that City Boards and Commissions are advisory to the Council as a whole, not to individual Council Members
- Be respectful of diverse opinions