

RESOLUTION 2025 - 69

**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF SUNNYSIDE,
WASHINGTON, APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO THE CITY
COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT**

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Sunnyside adopted a Council Code of Conduct on August 22, 2011 by Resolution No. 2011-62; and

WHEREAS, the Council Code of Conduct establishes expectations for ethical behavior, professionalism, and accountability by members of the City Council in order to ensure effective governance and public trust, and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds it necessary to update and amend the Council Code of Conduct to reflect evolving best practices, clarify procedures, and strengthen the Council's commitment to serving the residents of Sunnyside; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has reviewed and discussed the proposed amendments to the Council Code of Conduct and finds that adoption of the amended Code of Conduct is in the best interest of the city and its citizens;

**NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF
THE CITY OF SUNNYSIDE, WASHINGTON:**

SECTION 1. Approves and adopts the amended Council Code of Conduct which is attached here to as Exhibit A and incorporated herein by this reference.

SECTION 2. The amended Council Code of Conduct shall supersede the prior version adopted by Resolution 2011-62 and shall remain in effect until modified or repealed by subsequent resolution of the City Council.

SECTION 3. The City Clerk is authorized to make the correction of scrivener's/clerical errors, references, Resolution numbering, section/subsection numbering and any references thereto.

SECTION 4. This Resolution shall be effective upon passage, approval and signatures heron in accordance with law.

PASSED this 8th day of September, 2025.



DEAN BROERSMA, MAYOR

ATTEST:



JACQUELINE RENTERIA, CITY CLERK

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



JULIE K. NORTON, CITY ATTORNEY

The City of Sunnyside Council Code of Conduct

The Sunnyside City Council shall hold themselves accountable to the following principles and guidelines for Code of Conduct. This Code shall be read in conjunction with the most recently adopted Sunnyside City Council Rules of Procedure. In matters where both documents address procedural or enforcement issues, the provisions of the Rules of Procedure shall govern.

Council Member Conduct with One Another

This council is composed of individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, opinions, and goals. Despite this diversity, each council member has chosen to serve in public office in order to preserve and protect the present and the future of the city of Sunnyside. This common goal should be acknowledged even as council members may "agree to disagree" on contentious issues.

In Public Meetings

- 1. Practice Civility and Decorum in Discussions and Debate.** Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of a free democracy in action. This does not allow, however, council members to make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments. No shouting or physical actions that could be construed as threatening will be tolerated.

Council members shall preserve order and decorum during council meetings, and shall not, by conversation or other action, delay or interrupt the proceedings or refuse to obey the orders of the Chair or this Code of Conduct. Council members shall, when addressing staff or members of the public, confine themselves to questions or issues then under discussion, shall not engage in personal attacks, shall not impugn the motives of any speaker, and shall at all times, while in session or otherwise, conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the dignity of their office.

- 2. Honor the Role of the Chair in Maintaining Order.** It is the responsibility of the Chair to keep the comments of the council members on track during all meetings. Council members should honor efforts by the Chair to focus discussion on current agenda items. If there is a disagreement about the agenda or the Chair actions, those objections should be voiced politely and with reason, following procedures outlined in parliamentary procedures. The City Council shall follow Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised as its parliamentary authority unless otherwise provided in the Sunnyside Municipal Code or Council Rules of Procedure.
- 3. Avoid Personal Comments that Could Offend other Council Members.** If a council member is personally offended by remarks of another council member, the offended council member should make notes of the actual words used and call for a "point of personal privilege" that challenges the other council member to justify or apologize for the language used. The right of a council member to address the council on a question of personal privilege shall be limited to cases in which his or her integrity, character or motives are assailed, questioned or impugned. The Chair will maintain control of this discussion.
- 4. Demonstrate Effective Problem-Solving Approaches.** Council members have a public stage to show how individuals with disparate points of view can find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the community as a whole.

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5. **Code of Ethics.** Council members shall conduct themselves so as to bring credit upon the city as a whole, and to set an example of good ethical conduct for all citizens of the community. Council members should constantly bear in mind these responsibilities to the entire electorate, and refrain from actions benefiting any individual or special interest group at the expense of the city as a whole. Council members should likewise do everything in their power to insure impartial application of the law to all citizens, and equal treatment of each citizen without regard to race, national origin, sex, social station, or economic position.

In Private Encounters

6. **Continue Respectful Behavior in Private.** The same level of respect and consideration of differing points of view that is deemed appropriate for public discussions should be maintained in private conversations.
7. **Be Aware of the Insecurity (Non-Confidentiality) of Written Notes, Voicemail, and Email.** Technology allows words written or said without much forethought to be distributed wide and far. Would you feel comfortable to have this note faxed to others? How would you feel if this voicemail message was played on a speakerphone in a full office? What would happen if this Email message were forwarded to others? Written notes, voicemail messages and Email should be treated as potentially "public" communication!
8. **Even Private Conversations can have Public Presence.** Elected officials are always on display — their actions, mannerisms, and language are monitored by people around them that they may not know. Lunch table conversations will be eavesdropped upon, parking lot debates will be watched, and casual comments between individuals before and after public meetings noticed.
9. **Quick Tips:**
- a. Preserve dignity and self-respect.
 - b. Listen for the message even if you don't agree with it.
 - c. Respect others as they are.
 - d. Express your independent perspective.
 - e. Participate intelligently.
 - f. Be willing to delegate and let others make decisions.
 - g. Lead from the front of the parade.
 - h. Control all you should not all you can.
 - i. Use few words after much thought rather than many words after little thought.
 - j. Seek to create change and overcome the influence of conventional wisdom.
 - k. Recognize when you need outside experts.
 - l. Recognize the efforts of others.
 - m. Continuously pursue excellence.

Council Member Conduct with City Staff and City Attorney

Governance of the city of Sunnyside relies on the cooperative efforts of all council members, who set policy, and city staff who 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.

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- 10. Treat all Staff as Professionals.** Clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual is expected. Poor behavior towards staff is not acceptable.
- 11. Direct Administrative and Operational Questions to the City Manager.** Questions of city staff and/or requests for additional information that would be of interest to all councilors should be directed to the City Manager or designee. The City Manager should be copied on any inquiries sent to Department heads. Materials supplied to a council member in response to a request will be made available to all members of the council so that all have equal access to information.
- 12. When Possible, Keep Communication with City Staff Short, to the Point and at the Best Possible Time.** Every effort should be made to limit disruption to the work of city staff. Council members should avoid making requests to staff who are in meetings, on the phone, or engrossed in performing their job functions.
- 13. Never Publicly Criticize an Individual Employee.** Council members should refrain from expressing concerns about the performance of a city employee in public or to the employee directly. Comments about staff performance should only be made to the City Manager through private correspondence or conversation.
- 14. Do Not Get Involved in Administrative Functions.** Council members shall not attempt to unethically influence or coerce the City Manager or department heads concerning either their actions or recommendations to council about personnel, purchasing, awarding contracts, selection of consultants, processing of development applications, or the granting of city licenses and permits.
- 15. Check with City Staff on Correspondence Before Taking Action.** Before sending correspondence, council members should check with the City Manager to see if an official city response has already been sent or is in progress.
- 16. Do not Attend City Staff Meetings Unless Requested by Staff.** Even if the council member does not say anything, the council member's presence implies support, or may show partiality, intimidate staff, and hamper staffs' ability to do their job objectively.
- 17. Legal Advice.** Council members are encouraged to first consider whether requests for legal research or action by the City Attorney can be addressed more cost-effectively through consultation with the City Manager or through a consensus of the Council, particularly when the request involves administrative, policy, or operational matters.

Generally, requests to the City Attorney outside of a Council meeting should be submitted through the City Manager to promote coordination and reduce duplication of effort.

However, direct access to the City Attorney by individual Council members is permitted in the following circumstances:

- When the request relates to the performance, conduct, or evaluation of the City Manager;

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- When the issue involves a potential conflict of interest where disclosure to the City Manager would be inappropriate;
- When addressing sensitive, personal matters that are city business-related and require legal confidentiality.

In such cases, the City Attorney shall exercise independent judgment and professional ethics in determining whether and how to share the legal response. If a matter involves the City Manager, any written or verbal response shall be handled in a manner that preserves confidentiality and does not compromise the legal integrity of the inquiry.

The City Attorney's primary obligation is to the City of Sunnyside as a municipal corporation. They shall provide impartial, legally sound guidance consistent with laws, city ordinances, and adopted policies, irrespective of political, administrative, or individual interests.

Council Member 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

- 18. Be Welcoming to Speakers and Treat Them with Care and Gentleness.** Because personal concerns are often the issue of those who come to present to the council, council members should remember that how they treat the speaker will either help them relax or push their emotions to a higher level of intensity.
- 19. Give the Appearance of Active Listening. It is disconcerting to speakers to have council members not look at them when they are speaking.** It is fine to look down at documents or to make notes, but reading for a long period of time or gazing around the room gives the appearance of disinterest. Be aware of facial expressions, especially those that could be interpreted as "smirking," disbelief, anger, or boredom.
- 20. Ask for Clarification, But Avoid Debate and Argument With the Public.** Only the Chair (and not individual council members) may interrupt a speaker during a presentation. However, a council member may ask the Mayor for a "point of order" if the speaker is off the topic or exhibiting behavior or language the council member finds disturbing.

If speakers become flustered or defensive by council questions, it is the responsibility of the Chair to calm and focus the speaker and to maintain the order and decorum of the meeting. Questions by council members to members of the public should seek to clarify or expand information. It is never appropriate to belligerently challenge or belittle the speaker. Council member's personal opinions or inclinations about upcoming votes should not be revealed until after the public hearing.

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- 21. No Personal Attacks of any Kind, Under any Circumstances.** Council members should be aware that their body language and tone of voice, as well as the words they use, can appear to be intimidating or aggressive.
- 22. Make no Promises on Behalf of the Council or Staff.** It is inappropriate to overtly or implicitly promise council action, or to promise city staff will do something specific (i.e. fix a pothole, replace flowers, fix a leak, etc.) When approached by the public to correct a situation, council members should refer them to the City Manager. Council members are encouraged to contact the City Manager to report public's concerns.
- 23. Speak with One Voice.** Council members will frequently be asked to explain a council action or to give their opinion about an issue as they meet and talk with constituents in the community. It is appropriate to give a brief overview of the facts or city policies as they relate to council action. Objectively present the council's collective decision or direction, even when you may not agree. If you feel the need to express your own opinion, state it in terms such as: "I would have preferred "x" but the council wanted "y" so that's what we will be doing." Explaining council decisions, without giving your personal criticism of the council's actions, will serve to strengthen the community's image of the city council.
- 24. Make no Personal Comments About Other Council Members.** It is acceptable to publicly disagree about an issue, but it is unacceptable to make derogatory comments about other council members, their opinions, and their actions. Honesty and respect for the dignity of each individual should be reflected in every word and action taken by council members. It is a serious and continuous responsibility.
- 25. Right to Appeal.** Any member may appeal to the Council from a ruling of the Chair, and if the appeal is seconded, the member making the appeal may briefly state his reason for the appeal and the Chair may briefly explain his ruling; but there shall be no debate on the appeal and no other member shall participate in the discussion. The Chair shall then put the question, "Shall the decision of the chair stand as the decision of the Council?" If the majority of the members vote Aye, the ruling of the chair is sustained; otherwise, it is overruled.

The Sunnyside Council Principles of Proper Conduct

- Keep promises.
- Be dependable.
- Build a solid reputation.
- Participate and be available.
- Demonstrate patience.
- Show empathy.
- Hold onto ethical principles under stress.
- Listen attentively.
- Study thoroughly.
- Keep integrity intact.
- Overcome discouragement.
- Go above and beyond, time and time again.
- Model a professional manner.

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- Respect one another as individuals.
- Respect validity of different opinions.
- Respect the democratic process.
- Respect the community we serve.
- Respect diversity, equity, and inclusion in public service and policymaking.
- Commit to ongoing professional development, ethics training, and accountability to the public.

26. Social Media and Electronic Communication. Council members shall use social media and digital communication responsibly, professionally, and in compliance with applicable laws, including the Washington State Public Records Act (RCW 42.56)

City business includes any communication, comment, or activity that involves or relates to official city operations, council deliberations, interactions with city staff, public meetings, constituent services, policy discussions, or any matter currently or potentially before the Council. This definition applies regardless of the platform used, including personal devices or accounts.

Council members shall:

- Avoid posting or sharing false, defamatory, disrespectful or misleading content about city staff, the public, or fellow council members.
- Personal opinions shared online should be clearly identified as such and not misrepresented as official city positions.
- Understand that digital communications involving city business may be subject to public disclosure, regardless of whether they were made on personal or city-issued platforms.
- Treat all written or recorded communications emails, texts, voicemails, and social media messages as potentially public records.
- Members shall not use digital platforms to disparage fellow members, city staff, or members of the public.

Council members are encouraged to use sound judgment and discretion in all digital communication, particularly when discussing sensitive or confidential matters.

27. Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation Prohibited. Council members shall not engage in or tolerate harassment, discrimination, or retaliation of any kind, including on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, or any other protected status.

- Allegations of such misconduct should be reported to the City Manager or a designated authority in accordance with applicable city policies. (Rules and Procedures)
- The City Council is committed to fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful environment in all interactions with staff, the public, and fellow members.

28. Conflict of Interest and Disclosure. Council members shall avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest in accordance with RCW 42.23 (Code of Ethics for Municipal Officers).

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- A member must disclose any potential conflicts before participating in discussions or votes on matters that could result in personal, financial, or familial gain.
- When a conflict exists, the member must recuse themselves from the decision-making process.
- Any concern or complaint regarding unethical behavior may be referred to legal counsel, for review and resolution.

29. Violations and Consequences. Council members are expected to fully adhere to the standards outlined in this Code of Conduct. Alleged violations shall be addressed in accordance with the disciplinary procedures set forth in the most current Sunnyside City Council Rules of Procedure, Section 9.6.

Disciplinary action may include, but is not limited to:

- Verbal admonition
- Written reprimand
- Censure by the Council
- Required training or coaching
- Removal from Council-appointed committee assignments
- Removal from the Mayor's Chair (as defined in Rules Section 9.6.4)

30. Communication With the Press or Media. Council members speaking with media representatives must clarify whether they are expressing a personal opinion. Only the Mayor, or a designee authorized by the Council, shall issue official city statements unless otherwise directed.