

DECORUM AND ORDER FOR  
CITY COMMISSIONS, COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

PURPOSE

To establish a policy of the City Council that governs the actions and deliberations of City commissions, committees and boards so that their public deliberations and actions be conducted in an atmosphere free from personal animosity and hostility.

POLICY

Each member of all City commissions, committees and boards has the duty to:

- A. Respect and adhere to the American ideals of government, rule of law, principles of public administration and high ethical conduct in the performance of public duties.
- B. Represent and work for the common good of the City and not for any private interest.
- C. Refuse to accept gifts of favors or promises of future benefits which might compromise or tend to impair independent judgment or action.
- D. Provide fair and equal treatment for all persons and matters coming before the commission, committee or board.
- E. Learn and study the background and purpose of important items of business before voting.
- F. Faithfully perform all duties of office.
- G. Refrain from disclosing any information received confidentially concerning the business of the City or received during any closed session of the commission, committee or board held pursuant to state law.
- H. Decline any employment incompatible with public duty.

- I. Refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character, motives, ethics or morals of other members of the commission, committee or board, City staff, or the public, or other personal comments not germane to the issues before the body. Members are to be tolerant of all views expressed at public meetings.
- J. Listen courteously and attentively to all public discussions at commission, committee or board meetings and avoid interrupting other speakers, including other members except as permitted by established Rules of Order.
- K. Faithfully attend all sessions of the commission, committee or board unless unable to do so for some compelling reason or disability.
- L. Maintain the highest standards of public conduct by refusing to condone breaches of public trust or improper attempts to influence legislation.
- M. Especially in regards to filmed meetings, and where an agenda item may later be appealed to another body or involve an appeal of another decision, be cognizant of the need to serve in an adjudicatory role and to be direct and concise in one's comments, without grandstanding or operating in a manner which may prejudice the rights of the parties.

#### MINUTES

Written minutes, upon approval of the commission, committee or board, constitute the official record of its activities. Minutes will be prepared for all meetings by City support staff and distributed to the entire member body for review prior to official approval. Additions or corrections to the minutes are made at public meetings upon official commission or board approval. Member requests for inclusion on the record of a specific action or comment shall be recorded at the next publicly-noticed meeting.

#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No member of any board or commission created by the City Charter shall, at the time of appointment or during the term of office, hold a position or office in another entity or organization which imposes or creates a fiduciary duty or decision-making authority with respect to any subject matter that is within, or related to, the jurisdiction of the board or commission as specified by the City Charter or any ordinance adopted by the City Council.

## BROWN ACT

To ensure the public is informed about official actions of public organizations, the Brown Act specifies the requirements for noticing regular and special public meetings. The Ralph M. Brown Act states in the strongest terms the necessity for open public meetings:

"In enacting this chapter, the legislature finds and declares that the public commissions, boards and councils, and other public agencies in this state exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of the law that their actions be taken openly and that their deliberations be conducted openly."

"The people of this State do not yield their sovereignty to the agencies which serve them. The people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know. The people insist on remaining informed so that they may retain control over the instruments they have created." (Government Code, Title 5, § 54950.)

The provisions of the Brown Act are not intended to apply to meetings of less than a quorum of the body, nor to social gatherings where no action is taken or commitment made related to City affairs.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURES

All persons applying for a position on a City commission, committee or board shall receive a copy of the Council Policy on decorum and order. Applicants should carefully study the policy since commission, committee and board members are required to adhere to this policy if appointed. Upon taking the oath of office, member appointees will agree to abide by these rules of decorum and order. Once appointed, if a committee, commission or board member cannot abide by these provisions, he or she should submit a letter of resignation or be removed from office by action of the Mayor and City Council.

## CONCLUSION

Actions of commissions, boards and committees have significant impact on the residents of Newport Beach. Public participation in the democratic process is strongly supported and actively encouraged by the Mayor and City Council. Adherence to this policy will encourage broad public participation while ensuring meetings are conducted in the most professional and courteous manner possible.

**Adopted - May 28, 1996**  
**Amended - January 24, 2017**