

City of Arcata Code of Ethics

Adopted by the City Council July 20, 2005

For Members of City Council, Boards, Commissions, Committees and Task Forces

Preamble:

The citizens, businesses and organizations of the City of Arcata are entitled to have fair, ethical and accountable local government, which has earned the public's full confidence for integrity. In keeping with the City's commitment to excellence, the effective functioning of democratic government, therefore, requires that:

- Public officials, both elected and appointed, comply with both the letter and spirit of the laws and policies affecting the operations of government;
- Public officials be independent, impartial and fair in their judgment and actions;
- Public office be used for public good, not for personal gain;
- Public deliberations and processes be conducted openly, unless legally confidential, in an atmosphere of respect and civility.

To this end, the City Council of the City of Arcata has adopted a Code of Ethics for members of the City Council and of the City's Boards, Commissions, Committees and Task Forces to assure public confidence in the integrity of local government and its effective and fair operation.

Acts in the Public Interest. Recognizing that stewardship of the public interest must be their primary concern, members will work for the common good of the people and not for any private or personal interest, and they will assure fair and equal treatment of all persons, claims and transactions coming before the City Council, Boards, Commissions and Committees.

Comply with the Law. Members shall adhere to their sworn oath of office to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America and the Constitution of the State of California against all enemies foreign and domestic. These laws include but are not limited to: the United States and California Constitutions, laws pertaining to conflicts of interest, election campaigns, financial disclosures, employer responsibilities and open processes of government and City ordinances and policies.

Conduct of Members. Members shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of council, boards and commissions, the staff or public.

Respect for Process. Members shall perform their duties in accordance with the processes and rules of order established by the City Council and boards and commissions governing the deliberation of public policy issues, meaningful involvement of the public and implementation of policy decisions of the City Council by City staff.

Conduct of Public Meetings. Members shall prepare themselves for public issues, listen courteously and attentively to all public discussions before the body and focus on the business at hand. They shall refrain from interrupting other speakers, making personal comments not germane to the business of the body or otherwise interfering with the orderly conduct of meetings.

Decisions Based on Merit. Members shall base their decisions on the merits and substance of the matter at hand, rather than on unrelated considerations.

Communication. Members shall publicly share substantive information that is relevant to a matter under consideration by the Council or boards and commissions, which they may have received from sources outside of the public decision-making process.

Conflict of Interest. In order to assure their independence and impartiality on behalf of the common good, members shall not use their official positions to influence government decisions in which they have a material financial interest or where they have an organizational responsibility or personal relationship, which may give the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Gifts and Favors. Members shall not take any special advantage of services or opportunities for personal gain by virtue of their public office that is not available to the public in general. They shall refrain from accepting any gifts, favors or promises of future benefits, which might compromise their independence of judgment or action or give the appearance of being compromised.

Confidential Information. Members shall respect the confidentiality of information concerning the property, personnel or affairs of the City of Arcata. They shall neither disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization, nor use such information to advance their personal, financial or other private interests.

Use of Public Resources. Members shall not use public resources not available to the public in general, such as City staff time, equipment, supplies or facilities, for private gain or personal purposes.

Representation of Private Interests. In keeping with their role as stewards of the public interest, members of Council shall not appear on behalf of the private interests of third parties before the Council or any board, commission or proceeding of the City of Arcata, nor shall members of Boards, Commissions and Committees appear before their own bodies or before the Council on behalf of private interests of third parties on matters related to the areas of service of their bodies.

Advocacy. Members shall represent the official policies or positions of the City Council, board or commission to the best of their ability when designated as delegates for this purpose. When representing their individual opinions and positions, members shall explicitly state they do not represent their body or the City, nor will they allow the inference that they do.

Independence of Boards, Commissions, Committees and Task Forces. Because of the value of the independent advice of boards and commissions to the public decision-making process, members of Council shall refrain from using their position to unduly influence the deliberations or outcomes of Board, Commission, Committee or Task Force proceedings.

Positive Work Place Environment. Members shall support the maintenance of a positive and constructive work place environment for City employees and for citizens and businesses dealing with the City. Members shall recognize their special role in dealings with City employees to in no way create the perception of inappropriate direction to staff.

Implementation. As an expression of the standards of conduct for members expected by the City, the Code of Ethics is intended to be self-enforcing. It therefore becomes most effective when members are thoroughly familiar with it and embrace its provisions. For this reason, ethical standards shall be included in the regular orientations for candidates for City Council, applicants to boards and commissions, and newly elected and appointed officials. Members entering office shall sign a statement affirming they read and understood the City Code of Ethics. In addition, the Code of Ethics shall be annually reviewed by the City Council, Boards, Commissions and Committees, and the City Council shall consider recommendations from boards and commissions and update it as necessary.

Compliance and Enforcement. The Code of Ethics expresses standards of ethical conduct expected for members of the City Council, Boards, Commissions and Committees. Members themselves have the primary responsibility to assure that ethical standards are understood and met and that the public can continue to have full confidence in the integrity of government.