

BUILDING A *COMMUNITY OF TRUST* IN THE CITY OF SANTA CLARA BEHAVIORAL STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL JANUARY 12, 2010

Six *Good Government Guiding Principles* are critical to public trust in the City of Santa Clara and are integral to the work of the City Council and all who seek to be *at their best* as they do the people's business and make sustainable decisions in the City's best long-term interests.

Fundamental to good government are public meetings where every person feels safe, welcome, respected, and free to address their government directly on matters under the government's jurisdiction. Only by engaging in robust public discussion in an organized and orderly way will the City make its best decisions and create a *community of trust*.

GOOD GOVERNMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

We foster public trust when we:

1. Honor the spirit and the letter of the law.
2. Treat everyone equitably and respectfully.
3. Do the greatest good and the least harm.
4. Impose the lightest burden possible.
5. Fulfill our duties and protect personal rights.
6. Act only in the community's best interests, guided by the City's *Code of Ethics & Values*.



City of Santa Clara

At Our Best Every Day For Public Trust

ETHICAL • PROFESSIONAL • SERVICE-ORIENTED • FISCALLY RESPONSIBLE • ORGANIZED • COMMUNICATIVE • COLLABORATIVE • PROGRESSIVE

The behavioral standards, listed below, reflect best practices for City meetings and are consistent with the *Good Government Guiding Principles*. The behavioral standards treat everyone with respect, protect diverse viewpoints, welcome divergent methods of expression, encourage robust discussion, and allow the people's business to be done in an efficient and consistent manner, free of disruptions, disorderly conduct, or anything else that impedes the work of the Council/Commission/Committee (i.e., the Body).

1. Every person has the right to address the Body on the agenda item under consideration or under public comment. Speakers are free to criticize policies, procedures, programs, and services, as well as acts and omissions, of the City, the legislative Body, and City staff. Speakers will seek to present information truthfully, and will not knowingly misrepresent, mischaracterize, or misquote others. Comments should be directed to the presiding Body, not to staff, the audience, or others.
2. Every person's right to comment is always respected, even if that opinion differs from the opinion of other speakers or the Body. Speakers who address matters not under the Body's jurisdiction will be so informed and referred to the appropriate agency.
3. If anyone engages in conduct which disturbs, disrupts, or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of any meeting, the Mayor or meeting Chair (the "presiding officer"), or a majority of the Body, shall have the discretion to ask to stop the disruptive behavior. The presiding officer will only interrupt if the behavior is disturbing or disrupting the meeting or otherwise impeding the work of the Body. Behavior with the potential to disturb, disrupt or otherwise impede the meeting includes the following:

- a. Impertinent, slanderous, or profane remarks to any member of the Body, staff, the public, or others
 - b. Disparaging an individual, group, or their associates on the basis of their ethnicity, race, gender, sexuality, age, disability, immigration status or religion
 - c. Loud, threatening, or abusive language, especially directed at individuals, causing fear, havoc, or similar reactions
 - d. Argumentative interruption of a speaker, the presiding officer, a member of the Body, staff, or meeting facilitator
 - e. Engaging in disorderly or boisterous conduct, including using loud, threatening or abusive language, whistling, clapping, stamping of feet, waving signs, or similar acts
 - f. Continuing to speak after exceeding a time limit and being asked to step down
4. Everyone, even persons disrupting a meeting, will be treated with equitability and respect. The presiding officer will issue a warning to stop the disruptive behavior. If the disruptive behavior continues, the presiding officer or a majority of the Body will take action to regain order and to continue the work of the Body.

Procedural Tips:

- Speakers may speak with or without notes, but many people find they make the best use of their time, communicate most clearly, and address items under the legislative Body's jurisdiction, if they have prepared their remarks ahead of time.
- Because of the number of items that may be on an agenda, individuals are invited to submit written comments to be included in the agenda packet. Written comments should be submitted to the City Clerk (for City Council meetings) by noon on the Wednesday prior to the meeting. If written material is presented to the Council for the first time at the Council meeting, speakers are asked to bring 14 copies for the Council and staff, and additional copies for the audience, if that is possible. (Commissions/Committees may have different deadlines, or may not have an agenda packet distributed in advance of a meeting; check with the Staff Liaison to the specific Commission/Committee you wish to address.)
- Each speaker will generally have three minutes to speak (certain meeting Bodies may have different time limits set by practice or procedure), unless the presiding officer announces at the start of the item that many people wish to address the item and each speaker will therefore have a shorter amount of time (for example, two minutes) to give as many people as possible the opportunity to speak.
- To facilitate the speaking process, the presiding officer may request that each speaker fill out a speaker card prior to the start of public comment on that agenda item and hand it to the City Clerk or another member of the City staff. The presiding officer will determine the order of the speakers, usually the order in which the cards are handed to the presiding officer. The presiding officer will announce the name of the speaker, who then comes to the podium. Time is indicated by the light system for meetings held in Council Chambers. The green light will turn to yellow when 30 seconds remains and to red at the end of the allotted time. When the buzzer sounds, the speaker promptly leaves the podium to allow equal time for the next speaker. If someone wishes to speak but does not choose to fill out a speaker card, they will still be provided with an opportunity to speak after those who filled out cards have spoken, and will also be subject to the time limit. Other Commissions/Committees may follow slightly different processes; for guidance, check with the Staff Liaison to the specific Commission/Committee you wish to address. For meetings held in locations other than Council Chambers, the presiding officer may appoint a timekeeper.