

# CITY OF GEORGETOWN CITY COUNCIL GOVERNANCE POLICY

## INTRODUCTION

The Georgetown City Council, including Councilmembers and the Mayor, is the governing body for the City of Georgetown. Therefore, it must bear the initial responsibility for the integrity of governance. The Council is responsible for its own development (both as a body and as individuals), its own discipline, and its own performance. By adopting this policy the Council acknowledges its responsibility to each other, to the professional Staff, and to the public. This policy will be reviewed annually.

## GOVERNANCE GUIDELINES

The City Council will govern the City in a manner associated with a commitment to the preservation of the values and integrity of representative local government and democracy, and a dedication to the promotion of efficient and effective governing. The following statements will serve as a guide and acknowledge the commitment being made in this service to the community.

The City Council shall:

- be responsive to the needs of the citizens and the Georgetown Community by providing pro-active visionary and strategic leadership and focusing on the future rather than the past;
- recognize its responsibility to the future generations by developing goals that address the interrelatedness of the social, cultural, and natural characteristics of the community;
- communicate and serve with respect, dignity and courtesy in relations with Staff, all Councilmembers, members of the boards, commissions, committees, and the public;
- endeavor to keep the community informed on municipal affairs and encourage communication between citizens and the City Council;
- strive to develop strong working relationships among Georgetown, Williamson County, Southwestern University, Georgetown Independent School District, Georgetown Chamber of Commerce, and other community and civic organizations;
- be committed to improve the quality of life for the individual and the community; and

- be dedicated to the faithful stewardship of the public trust and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.

## **GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES**

The office of elected official is one of trust and service to the citizens of Georgetown. This position creates a special responsibility for the Georgetown City Councilmember, and the following principles shall govern the conduct of each Councilmember. A Councilmember shall:

- be loyal to the interests of the citizens of Georgetown, superseding conflicting loyalty to advocacy or interest groups, membership on other boards, employment with other organizations, and personal interests as an individual citizen of the City;
- be dedicated to the highest ideals of honor and integrity in all public and personal relationships and conduct themselves, both inside and outside the City's service, so as to give no occasion for the distrust of their integrity, impartiality or of their devotion to the best interests of the City and the public trust, to merit the respect and confidence of the citizens of Georgetown;
- refrain from any activity or action that may hinder the ability to be independent, objective and impartial on any matter coming before the Council, such as accepting gifts or special favors;
- not condone any unethical or illegal activity, such as using confidential information for personal gain or misusing public funds or time;
- recognize that public and political policy decisions, based on established values, are ultimately the responsibility of the City Council;
- comply with the City's Ethics Ordinance (Chapter 2.20 of the Georgetown Municipal Code) and other applicable rules governing the conduct of elected officials; and
- conduct business in open meetings for transparency and direct accountability to the citizens of Georgetown.

## **COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Each Councilmember shall:

- be familiar with and follow the "Council Meeting Procedures" Ordinance (Chapter 2.24 of the Georgetown Municipal Code);

- be familiar with and follow parliamentary rules applicable to the Council process and procedure;
- effectively use the Consent Agenda;
- avoid publicly stating an opinion on an item to be considered by the Council in situations where the Council is serving as an appellate body;
- be prepared for meetings and for discussion of the Agenda; and
- be informed about action taken by the Council when the Councilmember is absent.

### **MAYOR'S ROLE**

The Mayor is responsible for the integrity of the Council's process and is the authorized speaker for the Council. The Mayor shall be the presiding officer at all meetings, shall preserve order and decorum and encourage all Councilmembers to participate in discussion. The Mayor will act as mediator in any conflict and will seek consensus of Councilmembers. The Mayor is responsible for dissemination of ongoing information on Council procedures, current agenda items and meetings.

### **COUNCIL COMMITTEES**

In order for the Council to maximize its effectiveness it may choose to utilize any or all of the following processes:

- Council Subcommittees or Ad-Hoc Committees assist the Council by preparing policy alternatives and implications for Council deliberation.
- Citizen Advisory Committees assist the Council or Staff with technical expertise to resolve specific policy decisions.
- Advisory Boards, Commissions, and Committees thoroughly investigate, discuss and deliberate issues to make informed recommendations to Council.

### **COUNCIL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The City Manager shall coordinate and facilitate the orientation of new Councilmembers. Continuing education and training of Council is a priority. The Mayor and Councilmembers are encouraged to attend continuing education and training programs focusing on city/county/regional/state/national issues, policy and governance. The City Manager, City Secretary and City Attorney shall coordinate and facilitate the continuing education and training of Councilmembers.

## NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS

News media is an important link between the Council and the public. The Council desires a positive, professional working relationship with the media to inform and educate citizens about the issues facing the City. The City Manager, or his/her designee, is the City's official media relations representative on administrative and operational matters. The Mayor is the City's official representative and primary spokesperson for the Council regarding policy issues.

## COUNCIL RELATIONS WITH STAFF

The City of Georgetown recognizes the importance of a positive relationship between the City Council and the City Manager. The effectiveness of the organization is dependent on the respect of the flow of authority as established by the Charter: Public to Elected City Council to City Manager to Staff. In order to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council/Manager form of government, the following guidelines shall be adhered to by the Council ("elected officials"), appointed officials and Staff of the City of Georgetown.

Council authority is held collectively, not individually. The Mayor and Councilmembers have no authority to speak for or act on behalf of the Council without Council action or direction taken during an open meeting.

The City Manager is the Council's link to the City operating organization. The City Manager is authorized to make decisions and take actions, as long as they are consistent with Council policies, applicable ordinances and other law.

Items that may entail a change in daily operations or procedures shall go through the City Manager. Items that entail a change in the overall policy or an ordinance of the City shall require City Council approval.

The City Manager shall provide regular written updates to the City Council, City Attorney, and City Secretary informing them of the progress on projects, City events, and items of concern currently pending before the City.

The City Manager is responsible for facilitating communication between Council and Staff. For purposes of this paragraph "Staff" does not include the City Attorney or the City Secretary. Elected officials shall not give direction or orders to Staff. Communication between Council and Staff shall be through the City Manager. Specifically:

- The City Manager shall delegate Council action and/or direction to Staff, and shall coordinate appropriate Staff response to Council action and/or direction.

- Requests for Staff attendance at a meeting shall be made through the City Manager. The City Manager must approve the request for Staff attendance at the meeting.
- Requests for public presentations and public informational meetings conducted or attended by Staff shall be made through the City Manager. The City Manager must approve the public presentation or public informational meeting.
- Requests for information or questions to Staff shall be made through the City Manager. The City Manager will obtain the requested information or answers from Staff and will provide the request/question and the responsive information/answers to the Mayor and Councilmembers.
- Requests for work to be performed or for other items of an operational nature either in a specific district, or city wide, shall be presented to the City Manager.

Staff shall notify the City Manager of direct contact by an elected official concerning the above communication matters.

The City Manager shall demonstrate professional and ethical behavior and shall be responsible for the professional and ethical behavior of Staff. The City Manager is responsible for appropriate education and training of Staff.

#### **COUNCIL RELATIONS WITH THE CITY ATTORNEY**

The City Attorney is the legal advisor for the Council, its committees, commissions and boards, the City Manager, and all City officers and employees with respect to any legal question involving an official duty or any legal matter pertaining to the affairs of the City. The City Attorney represents the City, not individual Councilmembers, City officers or employees.

No Councilmember shall request or direct the City Attorney to initiate an action or prepare any report that is significant in nature, or initiate any significant project or study without the consent of a majority of the Council. The City Attorney shall determine whether or not a matter is significant. The City Manager and City Secretary shall be informed of any project, study, opinion or report prepared by the City Attorney s requested by the City Council. The City Manager shall not prevent Councilmembers from communication with the City Attorney.

#### **COUNCIL RELATIONS WITH THE CITY SECRETARY**

The City Secretary is the record keeper of documents resulting from Council action including the minutes, ordinances, and resolutions. The City Secretary, and/or his/her designee, shall oversee Records Management within the City and ensure compliance with applicable local and state laws.

The City Secretary shall serve Council as an administrative liaison and contact for citizens and City Staff in addition to assisting the Mayor with ceremonial activities, proclamations, and public appearances.

The City Secretary, and/or his/her designee, shall work with the Mayor and coordinate the administration of Council appointed boards, commissions, and committees. The City Secretary shall serve as the Staff Liaison to the City's Ethics Commission, and concurrently with the City Attorney's office, assist in compliance and education related to local and state ethics regulations.

The City Secretary is responsible for coordinating and managing the City's elections in collaboration with the City Attorney and Williamson County and shall communicate with current and prospective Councilmembers.

The City Manager and City Attorney shall be informed of any project, study, opinion or report prepared by the City Secretary requested by the City Council. The City Manager shall not prevent Councilmembers from communication with the City Secretary.

#### **STAFF AND COUNCIL RELATIONS WITH BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES**

Staff support and assistance may be provided to advisory boards, commissions and committees. Advisory bodies, however, do not have supervisory authority over City employees. While Staff may work closely with advisory bodies, Staff members remain responsible to their immediate supervisors and, ultimately, the City Manager. The members of the commissions, boards, or committees are responsible for the functions of the advisory body. The chairperson is responsible for committee compliance with the municipal code and/or bylaws. Staff members are to assist the advisory boards to ensure appropriate compliance with the Charter, ordinances, state and local laws and regulations.

Staff support includes: preparation of an agenda; preparation of reports providing a brief background of the issues, a list of alternatives, recommendations, and appropriate backup materials, if necessary; and preparation and maintenance of permanent minutes of advisory body meetings. Advisory body members should have sufficient information to reach decisions based upon a clear explanation of the issues. It is important to note that City Staff seeks to not influence boards, commissions and committees in their decision making process. Staff should provide information on options considered along with a summary of pros and cons of each

option. Any prior direction by City Council on a particular issue should be provided by Staff to any board, commission or committee considering the issue.

The role of the City's boards, commissions and committees is to perform the specific functions established in state statutes, City ordinances, resolutions, or minute orders as applicable and to advise the City Council about the topics assigned.

If a Councilmember attends a meeting of a board, commission or committee, the member shall not take part in the meeting nor address the board in any manner, whether by questions or statements. A Councilmember shall not attempt to influence the decisions of boards, commissions and committees, either directly or indirectly, nor express an opinion to a board, commission or committee about its actions unless at a City Council meeting. This policy provision does not apply to a Councilmember who is participating as a duly appointed member of a board, commission or committee.

All instructions to board, commissions and committees by the City Council shall be in writing or made on the record at a City Council meeting.

#### **VIOLATIONS OF THE GOVERNANCE POLICY**

City Council shall hold themselves accountable for their conduct, behavior and effectiveness. If at any time a Councilmember perceives an alleged violation of this policy, the alleged violation may be placed on an Agenda for discussion by the full City Council.