

Gilroy City Council Norms

1. Meetings Guidelines:

- 1.1. Three (3) minutes per public comment per agenda item. Five (5) minutes for applicants, with two (2) minute rebuttal for applicant. City Clerk will provide a timer. Staff will make every effort to limit staff reports to five (5) minutes, with opportunity for staff to elaborate based on Council questions. While the Mayor has the discretion to uniformly adjust speaking time, it is the goal of the Council to identify at the beginning of the public comment period the number of speakers present and to set the following time limits per speaker applicable to items on or off the agenda, keeping in mind that public comments may also be submitted in writing (*see Norm #1.24*): Up to ten (10) speakers, three (3) minutes each; eleven to twenty (11-20) speakers, two (2) minutes each; over twenty (20) speakers, one (1) minute each.
- 1.2. Council is encouraged to email questions to staff prior to the meeting. This promotes clear, available and concise answers.
- 1.3. Prepare for meetings by reading meeting materials in advance.
- 1.4. Reveal information gained from contacts.
- 1.5. Stay focused on the present agenda item.
- 1.6. Council reports and presentations should be concise and efficient, with a goal of limiting presentation to three (3) minutes. Council reports are to be focused on the boards on which a Council Member sits. Only designated Council representatives shall report the action of any board.
- 1.7. Follow Robert's Rules of Order.
- 1.8. Start all meetings on time.
- 1.9. Direct questions on the agenda to the City Administrator or the Mayor.
- 1.10. Public inquiries at meetings will be responded to as directed by the Mayor.
- 1.11. When meeting with citizens and receiving information, Council should ask if staff has received and analyzed the new information.
- 1.12. When a Regular City Council meeting falls on a holiday, that meeting will be moved to the following Monday, with the exception of the single meeting in July which shall be held on the first day of the month not a holiday, Friday, Saturday or Sunday.
- 1.13. A single meeting will be held in the month of July.
- 1.14. Council Members are encouraged to attend all meetings of the Council and to set the same attendance example expected of those appointed by the Council to Boards and Commissions. If a Council Member is unable to attend a Council meeting, they will notify the Mayor or the City Administrator as soon as reasonably practicable.
- 1.15. If a Council Member abstains on an item, the Council Member must explain the reason for the abstention.
- 1.16. External communication by Council Members during meetings (whether through cell phones, laptops, or other devices) creates the perception that private communications are influencing the outcome of decisions. This contradicts Gilroy's Open Government Ordinance. If a Council Member must engage in external communication for personal purposes, the Council Member should excuse themselves from the meeting.
- 1.17. Council Members should not view or interact with social media during meetings.
- 1.18. During City Council meetings, the Mayor will summarize the thumbs up/down direction given for the record.

- 1.19. Meetings will end at 11:00 p.m. unless a majority of Council Members present vote to extend the meeting.
- 1.20. Action style minutes will be taken by the City Clerk for all City Council meetings.
- 1.21. Notes will be taken for all City Council study sessions and workshops.
- 1.22. No motion should be made until Public Comment has been closed and Council has had an opportunity to deliberate on the item.
- 1.23. Council Members must be in the queue prior to making a motion on an item.
- 1.24. Written material provided by public members for Council agenda item “public comment on items not on the agenda” will be limited to 10 pages in hard copy. An unlimited amount of electronic material may be provided.
- 1.25. Meetings will be held or adjourned in the name of or in memory of a person only if that person has accomplishments specific to Gilroy.

2. **Adding Agenda Items:**

- 2.1. Any Council Member may propose an item for consideration as an agenda item for a future meeting by oral request during the portion of the Council meeting designated for Future Council Initiated Agenda Items. The Council will decide whether to agendize the item for a future Council meeting.

3. **Council Interactions:**

- 3.1. Show respect for differences and community.
- 3.2. Respect the Open Government process and the majority vote of the Council. Open Government is about the process, not the outcome.
- 3.3. Avoid negative non-verbal, judgmental stances, and personal attacks.
- 3.4. Exercise respect for Council Members, staff, and the public.
- 3.5. Minimize redundancy.
- 3.6. Listen attentively.
- 3.7. Confirm information presented as a rumor.
- 3.8. Keep a positive tone and body language.
- 3.9. Follow the Brown Act, including social media communications restrictions.
- 3.10. Give personal feedback to staff and Council Members privately.
- 3.11. All quasi-judicial ex parte communications (as defined by Council Policy) or conflict of interests will be disclosed by each Council Member.
- 3.12. To respect the independence of our commissions, no Council Member may attempt to influence any commission or regularly attend commission meetings, except with respect to a matter that affects the Council Member individually. Regular attendance may be seen as intimidating or an attempt to use “command influence” even when such is not the Council Member’s intent. However, Council Members are encouraged to watch recorded Commission meetings.
- 3.13. If any Council Member chooses to speak before or to submit written comment to another elected body or Board of elected officials on any item for which they are not a Council-appointed representative or for which they are not speaking from an official position of the Council, such Council Member shall state that they are communicating as an individual constituent only and shall not reference “Gilroy City Council” or “City

Council Member” in any written or verbal communications except to identify themselves. Council Members shall be mindful that no matter how many hats they may wear, they are still perceived by the public as a Council Member.

4. **Staff Relations:**

- 4.1. Council Members should be aware that staff responses to an individual Council Member’s questions may be forwarded to the entire Council.
- 4.2. Direct questions to the City Administrator and Department Heads. Project -related questions may be directed to the staff person working to the project. Responses may also be sent to all City Council Members.
- 4.3. City Attorney – maximum of one (1) hour of research for individual issues. If more time is needed, the majority of the Council must approve this extra time.
- 4.4. Forward any information to the City Administrator as necessary. Do not surprise the City Administrator or City Council with last-minute information.
- 4.5. The Council’s focus is policy. The staff focuses on professional execution and technical knowledge. Council Members shall not provide their own individual technical comments to City partners or other agencies (e.g. VTA, LAFCO, HSR, etc.), unless speaking solely as an individual constituent and not as a Council Member.
- 4.6. Show respect to staff.
- 4.7. Give as much lead-time as possible.
- 4.8. The City Clerk will attend all study sessions and workshops of the City Council.
- 4.9. Council Members, including the Mayor, do not have their own city staff. Council Members wishing to solicit their own volunteers should represent to the public that all oversight and decisions regarding such volunteer positions are at the sole discretion of that Council Member alone.
- 4.10. Council Members should not contact staff directly to attend or otherwise engage in events or causes of individual Council Members without the express permission of the City Administrator.

5. **Council Communications:**

- 5.1. Be mindful of each other’s diversity.
- 5.2. Be supportive and positive with each other.
- 5.3. When sitting as a representative of the City on another body, represent the City’s position and seek Council input as necessary by request of future agenda item or asking the Mayor to agendaize same.
- 5.4. Requests for proclamations should be addressed to the Mayor and the City Clerk.
- 5.5. Task Forces
 - 5.5.1. At the initial meeting, Council Member will be present and explain the Task Force’s goals and objectives. The Council Member will also explain that they are a recommendation body and the Council may revise their final actions.
 - 5.5.2. Staff will create a boiler plate document which will have the place for the goals and objectives of the Task Force, the norms of the group, and any other information Council and Staff feel is important.

5.6. Press Corrections

5.6.1. If City Council sees first, communicate to the City Administrator. The City Administrator will then have staff issue a correction.

5.7. When a Council Member endorses a person/position/issue/etc. separate from a position endorsed by a vote of the City Council, it is a personal endorsement, and not a City endorsement. Any reference or use of the name “Gilroy City Council” in association with the individual should be changed to “Gilroy City Council Member”. If a Council Member wishes a City of Gilroy endorsement, they may request to place the issue on a future agenda. The Council will then decide whether to take action or not.

5.8. When a Council Member is identified as spokesperson, then only they speak on behalf of the City Council.

5.9. Legal communications should go through the Mayor or their designee, following legal review.

5.10. Emergency communications shall follow the Council Emergency Communication document adopted in 2020.

5.11. No Council Member shall communicate in a manner that appears to come from the City or city staff or the City Council, or in a manner that suggests a position associated with the City or with the knowledge of the City Council.

5.12. Council Member elected offices are nonpartisan. No Council Member shall refer to their city council elected position as being associated with a political party.

5.13. Repeated or serious violation of these norms can be addressed by the Council by censure of a Council Member, following notice and an opportunity to be heard. This document formally authorizes the censure remedy to the City Council and allows for the basic due process protections of notice and hearing.

6. Council Travel and Training / Participation on Outside Boards and Memberships:

6.1. Council Members will check with the full Council via request under Future Council Initiated Items when they wish to go to meetings outside “normal” (e.g., League, assigned outside organization meetings) travel and training and wish the City to pay for it, such as specialized training and/or meetings of participation groups. If approved for a future agenda, Council Members will submit a short, written explanation of the request to the city clerk prior to publication of the preliminary agenda.

6.2. If a Council Member wishes to apply to participate in an outside government organization that is not part of the current City Council Advisory Committees & Representatives list, the Council Member will let Council know through a future agenda item request. If approved, the Council Member will submit a short, written explanation of the request to the city clerk prior to publication of the preliminary agenda.

6.3. If the primary Council representative to an organization cannot attend, they will contact the alternate.

6.4. The alternate Council representative can attend the outside organization meeting, even if the primary is there, to gain experience and knowledge.

Adopted as Council Agreements: February 7, 2011

Revisions Approved: February 15, 2022

Adopted as Council Norms: February 28, 2022

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- 6.5. If a Council Member must cancel a hotel reservation/registration, or the like, the Council Member will pay all costs associated with that cancellation. The City Clerk will give Council Members the cancellation policy of the event/hotel/etc. in advance if possible.
- 6.6. Any payment for travel and meeting expenses of a Council Member, or reimbursement thereof, shall be in accordance with the City of Gilroy Travel and Meeting Expense Policy, last revised on 3/2/2020.