

CITY OF HUNTINGTON PARK

Ethics Handbook



Adopted: 01/06/09

CODE OF ETHICS
For City of Huntington Park City Council, Boards and Commission Members

Preamble

All citizens and businesses of Huntington Park 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 of Huntington Park'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.

This Code of Ethics, as adopted by the Huntington Park City Council pertains to members of the City Council and of the City's boards and commissions and to those vendors doing business with our city, to assure public confidence in the integrity of local government and its effective and fair operation.

1. Acts in the Public Interest

Members will work for the common good of the people of Huntington Park 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 Huntington Park City Council, boards and commissions.

2. Comply with the Law

Members shall comply with the laws of the nation, the State of California and the City of Huntington Park in the performance of their public duties. These laws include but are not limited to: The United States and California constitutions, Fair Political Practices laws pertaining to conflicts of interest, election campaigns, financial disclosures, employer responsibilities and open processes of government and adopted City ordinances and policies.

3. Conduct of Members

The professional and personal conduct of members must be above reproach and avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Members shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of the council, boards and commissions, the public and staff.

4. Respect for Process

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

5. 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. All meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and Roberts Rules of Order.

6. Decisions Based on Merit

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

7. 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.

8. 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.

In accordance with the law, members shall disclose investments, interests in real property, source of income, and gifts, and they shall abstain from participating in deliberations and decision-making where conflicts may exist.

9. Gifts and Favors

Members 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.

10. Confidential Information

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

11. Use of Public Resources

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

12. Representation of Public Interests

In keeping with their role as stewards of the public interest, members shall not appear on behalf of City, nor shall members of boards and commissions appear before their own bodies or before the Council on behalf of the private interests of third parties on matters related to the areas of service of their bodies.

13. 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 presenting their individual opinions and positions, members shall explicitly state they do not represent their body or the City of Huntington Park, nor will they allow inference that they do.

14. Policy Role of Members

Members shall respect and adhere to the council-manager structure of Huntington Park City government as outlined by the Huntington Park Municipal Code. In this structure, the City Council determines the policies of the City with the advice, information and analysis provided by the public, boards and commissions and City staff. The City Manager is responsible for implementation of said policies.

Except as provided by the City Municipal Code, members shall not interfere with the administrative functions of the City or the professional duties of City staff, nor shall they impair the ability of staff to implement Council policy decisions.

15. Independence of Boards and Commissions

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 or presence to unduly influence the deliberations or outcomes of board and commission proceedings.

16. Positive Work Place Environment

Members shall support the maintenance of a positive and constructive work place for the City employees and for the citizens and businesses dealing with the City. Members shall recognize their special role in dealings with City employees.

17. Implementation

The Huntington Park Code of Ethics is intended to be self-enforcing, and is an expression of standards of conduct for members expected by the City. 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 board and commissions, and newly elected and appointed officials. Members entering office shall sign a statement affirming they have read and understood the City of Huntington Park Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics shall be reviewed annually by the City Council, boards and commissions, and the City Council shall consider recommendations from boards and commissions and update as necessary.

18. Compliance and Enforcement

The chairs of boards and commissions and the Mayor have the additional responsibility to intervene when actions of members that appear to be in violation of the Code of Ethics are brought to their attention. The City Council may impose sanctions on members whose conduct does not comply with the City's ethical standards, such as reprimand, formal censure, loss of seniority or committee assignment, or budget restriction. Under the City's Municipal Code, the City Council may also remove members of boards and commissions from office. A violation of this Code of Ethics shall not be considered as a basis for challenging the validity of a Council, board or commission decision.