



**RIDGEFIELD CITY COUNCIL
PROFESSIONAL CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Ridgefield community is entitled to a fair, ethical and accountable local government. The general public should have full confidence that their elected and appointed officials:

- Are good stewards of the public’s trust and committed to serving in the best interest of the Ridgefield community;
- Comply with both the letter and spirit of the laws and policies affecting the operations of city government;
- Are independent, impartial and fair in their judgment and actions;
- Use their public office for the public good, not for personal gain; and
- Conduct public deliberations and processes openly, unless required by law to be confidential, in an atmosphere of respect and civility.

This document represents the Professional Code of Conduct for City Councilors. It describes core values: the traits and qualities that represent our highest priorities. These values are the fundamental forces that define our behavior. No doubt some of what is important is not mentioned here. We can add to this Code but will not subtract from it.

This document also creates a system which enables City Councilors and city residents to seek guidance and redress regarding potential violations of this Code of Conduct.

As Councilors for the City of Ridgefield, we are committed to these core values:

UNDERSTANDING THE COUNCIL ROLE

I understand that my role is to serve as policy maker – to represent the values, beliefs and priorities of the Ridgefield community while serving in the community’s best interest. My responsibilities include developing and adopting a vision and goals for the city, and aligning plans, policies, agreements and budgets in furtherance of this vision.

I understand that the city manager is responsible for undertaking and accomplishing the policy objectives of the council and for the day-to-day operations of the city. I will recognize the subject matter expertise of city manager and their staff, and utilize their knowledge and experience to guide and inform decision-making. I will strive to be informed about the issues facing the city and be prepared to ask questions of staff and colleagues.

STEWARDSHIP AND PUBLIC TRUST

I understand that public trust is the cornerstone of a healthy city government and that a public office is a public trust. When elected, I was entrusted with public power by the people to be used only for their benefit and never for personal benefit. I further understand that public trust is not fixed, it can be improved or damaged and that stewardship of the public interest must be my primary concern. I will act to promote the public good and protect the public trust with: *humanity* by demonstrating empathy and true care for the wants and needs of the Ridgefield community, *transparency* by openly sharing information and inviting public engagement, *capability* by creating high-quality short and long-term plans, and *reliability* by delivery on promises – all the time - with competence and good intent.



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INTEGRITY

I will strive for integrity in the broadest sense to guide my actions in all decisions and relationships, including those with constituents, employees and other Councilors. I will demonstrate sound moral and ethical principles on a daily basis. I will tell the full truth, keep promises, and will avoid misrepresenting facts. I will do the right thing, even when it is painful or difficult.

To that end:

- Except as required by law, I will not disclose or use privileged, confidential or propriety information obtained in executive session or otherwise in the course of duties.
- I will refrain from creating an appearance of impropriety in my actions and decisions. I will not use my official position to influence council decisions in which I have a material financial interest, an organizational responsibility or personal relationship which may give the appearance of a conflict of interest, or a strong personal bias.
- I will not use my political position to advance private interests.
- I will not use my position or City resources for personal, family, or financial gain.
- I will ensure that the public interest comes first, and that I do not advance my personal interests at the expense of the public.

PROFESSIONALISM AND RESPECT

My professional and personal conduct as a councilmember will be above reproach. I will conduct myself professionally and treat everyone with respect and dignity. Every person who comes in contact with me, including other Councilors, can expect honesty, fair dealing and kindness.

I will refrain from abusive conduct, intimidating or inappropriate behavior, and personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of others. No amount of authority, status or power can excuse anyone from treating another with rudeness, humiliation or disrespect.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Personal accountability is the basis of my commitment to the community. I will strive to meet or exceed expectations; accept responsibility for my behavior and disclose the results in a transparent manner. I have the courage to admit mistakes and the limitations of my knowledge and to take responsibility to find solutions.

CREATIVITY AND INITIATIVE

I never want to become complacent and accept the status quo just because that's the way things have always been done. I will approach new situations and challenges with an open mind, continuously look for innovative ways to meet the changing needs of the community, look ahead, think outside of the box and create a positive vision. I will plan imaginatively and strengthen the community's capacity to pursue opportunities for tomorrow's residents and address crises in an effective way.



COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION

We are one Council and one city. I will help to develop a sense of team – a partnership with council and the city manager to govern and manage the city. I will demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively and have a citywide perspective. I will freely join with colleagues and community partners to advance the interests of the community and to create a vibrant city where all people feel safe and welcome.

We depend on each other to build a quality community, create effective solutions and provide stable leadership for Ridgefield community during good and challenging times. Our decisions impact the residents, businesses, community organizations, city partners and others. I will consider those impacts and consequences when making decisions.

When there are differences of opinion and disagreements, I will listen to understand and learn; be open minded and focus on the issue not on the person. Blaming each other is not productive. Different people have different perspectives on issues, and that can be valuable for solving problems and generating new ideas. Being unable to understand why someone holds a viewpoint doesn't mean they are wrong. I will work to balance differing points of view and reach resolutions in a constructive way.

LEADERSHIP AND COMMITMENT

Ridgefield requires leadership marked by commitment to the community, the ability to see the big picture, active participation and the ability to speak with one voice.

I will actively demonstrate my commitment to Ridgefield by knowing the community inside and out, empowering community members to share their perspectives, being approachable and helpful for constituents; being accessible to my colleagues; being present and involved in community meetings and activities; and building my own knowledge, leadership and governance skills.

I will lead with thoughtful consideration of all opinions and information, and have the courage to make tough decisions. I will support the decisions of Council to represent alignment, cohesiveness and a stable, unified voice. I will represent that stated opinions are my own and do not represent those of Council unless Council has voted and passed an ordinance, resolution or motion that supports the opinion.

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Effective open public meetings are central to democratic decision-making. I will prepare in advance to assure meetings are organized, questions and discussions are focused, and good decisions can be made. I will adhere to meeting protocols and processes. I will honor the public's participation and use public meetings for information sharing and decision-making. I will be respectful of other Councilors, the public and everyone's time.

VIOLATIONS

Any person who has information that a Councilmember may have violated the Code of Conduct shall provide that information in writing to the City Council and the City Manager. The written



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complaint must be based substantially upon the personal knowledge of the complainant and signed by the person filing the complaint. No action will be taken on any complaint which is filed later than three (3) years after a violation of the Code of Ethics is alleged to have occurred.

Upon receipt of the complaint, the City Manager shall provide it to the City Attorney. The City Attorney shall promptly review the information, and in writing determine whether the complaint, on its face, alleges facts that, if true, would substantiate a violation of the Code of Conduct. If such a determination is made, then the City Manager and City Attorney shall jointly gather all information necessary for the City Council to determine whether a violation has occurred.

Within 30 days of receipt of the information from the City Manager, Council will determine, by majority vote, whether a violation has occurred. The accused member of City Council does not vote on any matter involving that member. Deliberation by the Council may be in executive session; however, upon request of the person complained against, the meeting shall be open to the public.

In the event that the City Council members agree that one or more violations occurred, the City Council will determine, by majority vote whether any of the following actions should be taken to assure that the violation does not recur:

(i) Admonition. An admonition shall be a verbal nonpublic statement made by the Council to the individual.

(ii) Reprimand. A reprimand shall be administered to the individual by letter. The letter shall be approved and signed by the City Council. The action of the City Council shall be final and not subject to further review.

(iii) Censure. A censure shall be a written statement administered personally to the individual as follows

- Council will provide notice of at least 20 days for the individual to appear at a specific time and place to receive the censure. The notice shall include a copy of the proposed censure.
 - Within five days of receipt of the notice, the individual may file a request for review of the content of the censure. The City Council shall review the proposed censure and determine whether or not any revisions should be made. The action of the City Council shall be final and not subject to further review. If no such request is received, the censure shall be administered at the time and place set.
 - The censure shall be given publicly, and the individual shall not make a statement for any reason. A censure shall be deemed administered at the time it is scheduled whether or not the individual appears.
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