



CITY COUNCIL HANDBOOK

July 2025



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Mankato's Vision and Values

Public Service Philosophy: The Foundation for Serving Mankato

Our organization is dedicated to serving Mankato and creating a community where everyone belongs. We care about making a positive difference in the lives of others through responsive and efficient City services.

We embrace innovation to address community and organizational challenges. We listen and engage with each other and our community. We are empowered and trusted to make decisions that align with our vision and values and serve the greater good of the Mankato community.

Vision: Our Desired Future State

Leading the way as a vibrant, diverse, regional community

Values: What Guides Us

- **RESPECT:** We treat others with courtesy and dignity and value their perspectives. We embrace differences, creating a place where you belong.
- **INTEGRITY:** We lead by example by being trustworthy, honest, and doing the right thing. Our actions reflect our words.
- **POSITIVE ATTITUDE:** We use a positive approach, take initiative, are motivated to perform a good job, take pride in the work we do, and recognize individual and team contributions.
- **TEAMWORK:** Together, we collaborate on ideas and share information, resources, and responsibility for the best possible outcomes.
- **ACCOUNTABILITY:** We take responsibility for our actions and the completion of our work.



Chapter 1: Overview and Resources

Introduction

Welcome to the Mankato City Council. Mankato City Council Members are one of a seven-Member board of a public entity with a budget ranging from \$160 to 165 million. Council Members jointly establish community policies and spending limits and provide community leadership.

The City Council Handbook is offered as a resource to City officials to provide information about opportunities and topics related to their role and to local government. In addition to information found in this Handbook, Council Members are encouraged to work with the City Manager for additional guidance and input. The City Manager can be reached at sarntz@mankatomn.gov or 507-387-8695.

Resources

The following publications are available online or in the City Manager's office.

[League of Minnesota Cities \(LMC\)](#)

The League of Minnesota Cities provides information, education, and training to elected officials and staff. LMC has an annual conference that provides an opportunity to connect with other Member cities to learn how they have handled opportunities and issues. Throughout the year, the LMC provides legislative updates on the upcoming session and the implication of any new legislation. They hold a risk management seminar every year and other seminars and sessions as needed. If resources exist and personal schedules allow, Council Members are encouraged to attend LMC's local, state, and national conferences.

[League of Minnesota Cities Handbook for Minnesota Cities](#)

The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) assists cities by lobbying, providing training and serving as a resource for cities. The LMC Handbook provides information about Council Member roles and responsibilities, laws regulating Council action and special Council requirements.

[Mankato Charter and City Code](#)

Mankato is a Charter City, as authorized by [Minnesota Statutes Chapter 410](#). Mankato's City Charter is the City's constitution approved by citizens that establishes the City's form of government. Mankato is organized in the Council-Manager form (see Chapter 2 of this Handbook). Through Charters, citizens design their city's form of government. The Charter Commission is responsible for maintaining a responsive and efficient Charter. The chief judge of District Court appoints Charter commission Members, who meet periodically to review the City Charter, discuss issues affecting the Charter and makes recommendation for changes to the City Council and the public.

The City Code is a collection of ordinances that establishes City of Mankato laws and regulations. Examples of topics covered within the City Code include, but are not limited to administration, City organization, City management, roles of officers and administrative departments, Mayor and Council Member salaries, Council meeting procedures, roles, and responsibilities of various committees within the City organization, utility rates, licensing requirements and regulations, public safety, planning and zoning and City financing.



Note: Mankato’s City Charter and Code is also available for review at the Minnesota State University, Mankato, and Blue Earth County libraries.

[City of Mankato Employee Handbook](#)

This Handbook provides general City information and policies for employees.

[Minnesota State Law](#)

Minnesota state law establishes many rules and regulations for Minnesota cities.

[National League of Cities \(NLC\)](#)

The National League of Cities advocates and promotes cities and towns, provides programs and services, keeps leaders informed of critical issues, strengthens leadership skills by offering numerous training and education programs, recognizes municipal achievements, partners with state leagues, and provides opportunities for involvement and networking. This organization has an annual conference (in Washington D.C. in the spring and a fall conference in various locations) that focuses on lobbying and federal issues that impact cities and information about national policies.

[Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities \(CGMC\)](#)

The Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities is geared toward greater Minnesota issues and provides an opportunity for Council Members to network with other cities in outstate Minnesota.

Other

A number of professional associations and private firms provide training on a variety of city-related topics. More information is available from the City Manager. Contact staff at 507-387-8690.



Chapter 2: Form of Government

Council-Manager Plan

Mankato's City Charter established the Council-Manager plan as the City's form of government. The form of City government became popular at the turn of the century as part of the movement to reform and remove corruption from City organizations.

The Council-Manager plan combines the political leadership of elected officials with the Managerial experience of an appointed official. The Council is the policy making and legislative body; and the City Manager is responsible for administration of the City.

Discretionary powers of the City are vested in and executed by the City Council and are subject to initiatives, referendums, and recall powers of the people. The City Council oversees City administration but exercises this power through the City Manager. The City Manager is responsible for day-to-day City operations and is directly responsible to the City Council.

Mayor and Council

The City Council is composed of a Mayor and six Council Members. The Mayor and the at-large Council Member are elected at large (City wide) and the remaining five are elected from each of the City's five wards. Council Members must reside in the ward which they represent.

Council Member Terms

All Council Member terms are four years. Terms are staggered so only three Council Members are on the ballot at one time. Terms expire on the first Monday in January after the November election. The number of terms a Council Member may be elected to serve is unlimited.

Candidates may file for election or reelection in the even numbered years (i.e., 2026, 2028, 2030). If, at any time, the Mayor is unable to complete a term, the at-large Council Member will become Mayor pro tem and assume the Mayor's power and duties. See Chapter 3, of this Handbook.

Sources of City Authority

The U.S. Constitution does not mention cities. However, cities are influenced by the federal government indirectly through state government and directly through participation in federal funding of programs.

[Minnesota State Constitution](#) authorizes the Minnesota Legislature to provide for the "creation, organization, administration, consolidation, division and dissolution of local government units and their functions, for the change of boundaries thereof," ([Minnesota Constitution, Article XII, Section 3](#) is available online). The legislature provides general formation of cities; more specific details are included in the City Charter and Code. Additional City powers may be broadened or restricted by state statute. The legislature does provide cities with some discretion over policy areas as long as consistent with state statutes.



Chapter 3: City Council

The City Council includes a Mayor and six Council Members. Each must be eligible to vote in Minnesota, registered to vote in the City and a resident of the City. Council Members must live within the ward they represent when elected and continue to reside therein during their term unless boundaries change, at which time state statute allows them to finish their term. Each person on the Council, including the Mayor, has one vote.

Council Roles

Mayor

The Mayor serves as the presiding officer at Council meetings. If the Mayor cannot participate at a meeting, the at-large Council Member assumes the Mayor's duties as the Mayor pro tem. The Mayor is recognized as the head of City government for ceremonial purposes (examples: open houses, ribbon cuttings, citizen certificate presentations).

At-large Council Member

The at-large Council Member is the president of the City Council and is responsible for coordinating the City Manager's performance evaluation, acts as a liaison between the City Council and outside organizations and participates in legislative duties (includes lobbying, testifying, and establishing/maintaining relationships with Mankato area legislators and organizing annual Council retreat).

City Council

All City powers are vested in the City Council, except as otherwise specified by law or the Mankato City Charter. The Council ensures all obligations and duties imposed on the City by law are implemented. Since the City Council exercises its authority or takes action as one body, individual Council Members cannot act on behalf of the City.

The City Council is also the organization's legislative body. Council Members approve the tax rate, adopt the budget, and set the City's vision. The Council provides leadership for the community by identifying issues or opportunities and then implementing goals and strategies to solve issues. Council Members focus on City policies, the City vision, ordinances, and intergovernmental affairs. Some examples: land use development, comprehensive planning, capital improvement projects and strategic planning. The City Council gives the City Manager the authority to implement policy through direction of operations and execution of strategic plans.

Since the City Manager is responsible for the City's administrative duties, Council Members should work with the City Manager about items related to City employees, inquiries, or other City topics. City staff executes Council policy and actions and provides information to keep the Council informed. The City Manager and department director provides staff direction and guidance through the chain of command.

Stay informed and involved

A key to success is to know the roles of the City Council and City staff. Council Members receive a lot of information from a variety of sources. To be better prepared, it's recommended

Tip: Some Council Members have found it useful to dedicate a place in their home for City information.

Leading the Way as a Prosperous Diverse Regional Community

•Responsive

•Efficient

•Greater Good

•Innovative

•Open

•Neighborhoodly



that Council Members learn about current issues, past issues, legislation, and any other information which can be helpful to them. Opportunities to learn about the Council and the City:

- ◆ attend Council meetings;
- ◆ [view live](#) or view recorded meetings online at [Watch a Meeting | Mankato, MN \(mankatomn.gov\)](#)
- ◆ participate in City functions and events as outside of regular City Council meetings and work sessions.

Fiduciary Responsibilities

Members of the City Council have an absolute obligation to put the public's interest before their own direct or indirect personal interests. As such, the City has adopted [General Financial Policies](#) that cover the responsibilities of the elected officials and appointed staff. The Financial Policy is regularly reviewed and updated.



Chapter 4: City Manager

City Manager's Role

The City Manager serves the Council and community and brings local government projects and programs to community members on the Council's behalf. The City Manager prepares the budget, recruits, hires, and supervises department directors and is the Council's chief advisor. Community members and Council Members rely on the City Manager to provide unbiased and objective information while presenting both sides of an issue and information about long-term consequences.

The City Manager is appointed by the City Council and directs all City staff. See Mankato's City Charter [Section 3.01](#). Authority flow:

- ◆ Community members to the City Council;
- ◆ City Council to the City Manager;
- ◆ City Manager and deputy City Manager to department directors and then to subordinate staff.

Since the City Manager is the staff member hired by the Council, it is important that requests for information or community issues be brought directly to the City Manager. The City Manager is in the best position to provide a response because many issues involve multiple departments, or work may already be in progress.

If a Council Member wishes to influence actions, decisions, recommendations, workloads, work schedules or staff priorities, that Member must work with other Council Members to do so as a matter of Council policy, during open meetings of the body. The full City Council retains the authority to accept, reject or amend staff recommendations on policy matters.

Communication

The need for regular communication between the City Manager and Council is essential to maintain open communication with the organization. The Council establishes policy and programs, and the City Manager executes Council actions. The City Manager keeps the Council informed and is sensitive to Council issues. Similarly, Council Members need to keep the City Manager apprised of constituent concerns and future issues.

The City Manager provides information between Council and City staff. The City Manager is responsible for communicating the City's position about policy matters to outside agencies on the Council's behalf. Sharing information timely with the Council is one of the City Manager's highest priorities. The City Manager:

- ◆ ensures Council Members receive copies of correspondence that will assist them in policy-making;
- ◆ provides other documents to Council on a regular basis, such as monthly or bi-monthly status reports, executive summaries and other information vital to the Council Member's position;
- ◆ holds workshops and study sessions to provide detailed presentations about beneficial information;
- ◆ schedules Council/staff retreats to focus on topics and enhance information exchange;
- ◆ encourages presiding Member (either Mayor or Mayor pro tem) to meet with the City Manager prior to the Council meeting to review agenda items;



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- ◆ has an open-door policy so individual Council Members can meet with the City Manager on an impromptu and one-on-one basis.

Professional Associations

Like many other City Managers, Mankato's City Manager belongs to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), a professional and educational association for City administrative officers that was founded in 1914. ICMA's mission: "to strengthen the quality of local government through professional management." The City Manager is subject to ICMA's professional Code of ethics and the 12 ethical principles of personal and professional conduct.

Council Evaluation

The Mankato City Council completes an annual performance evaluation of the City Manager in early May of each year. This evaluation helps ensure City goals are achieved and provides direction and guidance to the City Manager. The City Manager may be evaluated in organizational management, fiscal/business management, program development and follow-through, relationship with the City Council, long-range planning, relationship with public and private sector organizations, interagency relations and professional/personal development.



Chapter 5: City Structure

Restrictions on Political Involvement

The City of Mankato is a nonpartisan local government. Professional staff formulates recommendations in compliance with Council policy and not influenced by political factors for the good of the organization.

City Departments

The City Manager is responsible for the day-to-day management of the City. The City Manager supervises the organization through department directors. City departments generally include:

- ◆ **Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center**

Located in downtown Mankato, the Event Center provides facilities for all occasions and has a 7,300-seat arena, a large banquet/exhibit hall, a state-of-the-art technology and conference center and a unique reception hall. The Event Center delivers outstanding experiences for every event from large scale concerts, athletic events (including an internationally renowned hockey league) and expos to weddings, meetings, holiday feasts, office parties and organizational gatherings.

- ◆ **Community Development**

Community Development is responsible for planning and managing Mankato's physical growth and expansion with an emphasis on orderly growth using an urban service matrix to make the community more sustainable in terms of land use and development, downtown development, and neighborhood preservation. Community Development includes housing, inspections, planning and zoning, economic development, mass transit, and Technology Plus.

- ◆ **Facilities**

Facilities staff handle new construction, remodeling, and repair of existing facilities. They develop and recommend long-range capital improvements, renovations, or replacements along with related cost estimates. In addition, they develop and implement preventative maintenance programs and schedules for facilities, including the parking district.

- ◆ **Finance**

Finance is responsible for administering all financial accounting and reporting functions for the City. Finance staff also compiles and produces Mankato's fiscal budget and City financial statements. The department maintains debt and treasury management, internal audits, budget control, purchasing, accounting activities, utility billing, and other general administrative tasks. Finance also oversees City insurance and building maintenance.

- ◆ **Human Resources**

Employees are the most valuable asset of an organization. Human Resources staff has an important role in the recruitment and selection of qualified people to serve community members in a positive and efficient manner. Staff is responsible for benefits administration, compensation administration, employee and labor relations, wellness, training and development, payroll, job descriptions, job openings and recruitment and selection. Human Resources coordinates the work of the Minnesota Valley Council of Governments.

◆ **Information Technology**

Information Technology staff strives to deliver innovative technology solutions to provide community members, businesses and City employees with efficient and reliable access to information and services. Staff manages multiple technology solutions including technology equipment, wireless devices, network security, network connectivity, cellular and desktop telephone communications, software application development and support, information management and training.

◆ **Legal**

There are contracts in place to provide prosecution and civil legal services for the City.

◆ **Engagement and Communications**

Mankato's Communications and Public Information staff oversee the communication efforts for the City of Mankato. A plan ensures that key messages are derived from the evolving work related to Mankato's strategic plan.

◆ **Customer Service**

311 Mankato provides customer service support for the City of Mankato. The public can call or email or fill out a request on our webpage.

◆ **Public Safety**

The Mankato Department of Public Safety consists of police, fire and emergency management services and is committed to the service model of community governance. Staff works in partnership with City departments, the residential and business community, and other governmental and non-profit agencies to reduce crime, provide a sense of safety and security and improve the quality of life for those who visit, live and work in the City of Mankato and the region.

◆ **Public Works and Engineering**

Public Works manages many vital functions, so Mankato has a clean, healthy, safe, and enjoyable environment. Public works staff ensure clean drinking water, manage effective wastewater treatment, oversee garbage and recycling collection, offer reliable transportation services, provide well-designed and maintained streets, walkways, storm drains, parks, public landscaping and offers reliable transportation opportunities. In addition, other services including leaf pick up, Christmas tree recycling and spring clean-up which are provided as an added value to community members monthly utility payments. Public works includes utilities/infrastructure, engineering, streets, parks, and the Mankato Regional Airport.



Chapter 6: Support and Technology

Support

Staff support is done in response to requests from the City Council as a whole. The City Manager's office provides administrative support to City Council Members including appointment scheduling, receipt of telephone messages and word processing as needed and upon request. If requested tasks require significant time commitments, please consult with the City Manager for support to complete these tasks.

Requests for information, service-related needs, or policy positions should be considered as an item for the City Council meeting agenda. Staff will complete work within a Council-established timeline if directed by Council action. To request support, contact the City Clerk at 507-387-8690 or rkopischke@mankatomn.gov.

Mailboxes

Council Members receive conference materials and other mail at meetings and in their mailboxes at the Intergovernmental Center. Mailboxes are maintained in the Mayor/Council office.

Scheduling meeting rooms

Meeting rooms may be scheduled through staff in the City Manager's office by calling 507-387-8690.

Technology

To enhance Council Members' service to the community and their ability to communicate with staff and the public, the City provides meeting facilities and office equipment for City business. City provides members with city issued email addresses which Members can use for city business. Use of personal email for city business may subject a member's personal email to public disclosure. For Members who do not have or do not wish to use personally owned computers, cell phones, or iPads for City business, the City provides technology equipment. Use of personal computer equipment may make its contents subject to public disclosure and review. Contact the Information Technology Director at 507-387-8683 with technology questions.

The use of technology such as computer, the Internet and email, cell phones, desktop phones, iPads and digital equipment must be done with integrity and able to withstand public scrutiny. Refer to Chapter 25 in Employee Handbook for technology use policies.



Chapter 7: Compensation

City Council Compensation

The Mayor and Council Members shall each receive an annual salary payable in equal monthly installments. Salaries shall be reviewed for possible adjustment by ordinance of the City Council and must be adopted at least six months before the election.

Per diems: The Mayor and Council Members are eligible to receive a per diem payment of \$150 per day, up to four days per calendar year. This compensation is expected to reimburse Council Members for full days to attend meetings, training, or legislative events on the City's behalf.

Payroll information

City Council Members are paid on the same pay schedule as regular employees. Pay days are bi-weekly on Fridays with the first payday in January. Payroll is automatic; no time sheets needed. Newly elected City Council Members must complete the following enrollment items before the year's first pay period:

- ◆ W-2
- ◆ I-9 document (additional documents needed included will need to be accompanied with this document, i.e., passport or driver's license and social security card)
- ◆ Direct deposit form
- ◆ Pay stub email notification form
- ◆ Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA) Membership election form
- ◆ Consent/Release form
- ◆ Accounts payable automatic clearing house (ACH) authorization form

To complete the necessary paperwork, contact the Human Resources at 507-387-8676.

Public Employees Retirement Association Benefit

Elected officials have the opportunity to be a Member of the Public Employers Retirement Association (PERA). A Membership election by public official's form must be completed even if one chooses not to become a member. City Council Members may also participate in the Defined Contribution Plan (DCP), contributing five percent of their bi-weekly salary into the DCP. The City also contributes an equal share into Members' plans. Participating Members do not pay social security taxes; however, they do still contribute to Medicare. Once the form is complete, Members who elect to participate are automatically enrolled. They will receive an information packet from PERA, which includes a beneficiary designation form and an election form (to designate where to invest contributions). Mailing forms to PERA as soon as possible ensures timely processing.

Chapter 8: Training and Travel Policy for City Council, City Boards and Commissions

Training Budget

Each Council Member is allotted \$3,000 annually for both training and travel. These funds can be used for training opportunities from resource organizations listed on pages 5 and 6 (primarily NLC, CGMC, LMC). Lobbying efforts and travel related to service on regional, state, and national boards are not funded through this allocation. Additional funding may be available to fund expenses related to training and representation regarding important policy issues, leading the way through service on additional boards, committees and working groups that impact City policy, meetings, and legislative activity regarding advocacy for City positions.

Travel Information/Policies

- ◆ Travel involving an overnight stay
 - Give prior notice to City Manager before traveling on overnight business explaining the trip's purpose, travel dates and other details. Doing so creates open lines of communication between Council Members and the City Manager.
- ◆ Travel expenses
 - Audit standards require a fully itemized claim for expense reimbursement along with any unexpended portion of the advance, to be submitted to the City Manager's office within 15 days of the close of the authorized travel period for which expenses have been advanced.
 - Transportation costs are reimbursed at the most reasonable means of transport. For example, if an elected or appointed official chooses to fly first class, the City reimburses the coach rate and the official pays the difference. Frequent flyer miles earned accrue to the individual and not the City. If lower-cost alternatives to frequent flyer miles are available, it's recommended to use those.
- ◆ Hotel/motel accommodations are reimbursed at the single-room rate per person. Government or discount rates should be used wherever possible.
 - Individual meals are reimbursed up to the established City reimbursement schedule. Contact rkopischke@mankatomn.gov for an expense voucher. **Expense reimbursement rates are regularly reviewed and may be adjusted from time-to-time as determined necessary.*
- ◆ Receipts must accompany all reimbursement claims.
- ◆ Meal costs for official functions (political or professional organizations) are paid at full actual cost (even if cost exceeds rates above).
- ◆ There is no reimbursement for alcoholic beverages.
- ◆ Expenses are not reimbursed for spouses, guests, those not employed by the City, or other persons not authorized to receive reimbursement under this policy or state regulations.
- ◆ Reimbursement may be claimed by one person for several employees or officials eating together. Please list all names on the reimbursement claim.
- ◆ Incidental expenses (i.e., telephone parking, taxis, buses, rental cars) are reimbursed. Use claim form and include any receipts. To request approval for rental cars, submit the travel

Tip: To take advantage of lower rates, it's recommended to book air travel at least two weeks or more in advance.

authorization form to the City Manager’s office. Long distance telephone calls to the City for City business and one telephone call home per day will be reimbursed.

- ◆ Personal vehicles may be used for City business. Prior to doing so, please submit proof of insurance to the City Manager’s office. Mileage for business use is reimbursed at the Internal Revenue Service’s allowable mileage rate.
- ◆ Report eligible expenses on an expense reimbursement request form within 15 days after the trip. Attach receipts for expenses claimed and submit them to the City Manager’s office.
- ◆ File trip reports with the City Manager upon return. The report should also be shared with all other City Council Members to share any valuable knowledge and insights gained.
- ◆ Also, refer to City Council compensation in Chapter 7 of the Handbook for per diem information.

For assistance with the above contact staff at 507-387-8690 or rkopischke@mankatomn.gov.

Commitment to Training and Representative Advocacy

The Council is committed to ongoing training, development, and advocacy of City policy positions. This commitment enables the most effective contribution to the City’s mission and objectives in providing the highest quality representation and services for the people of Mankato in a manner that supports Mankato’s vision of “leading the way as a vibrant diverse regional community.”

Mankato recognizes that its most important resource is people – elected officials, employees, and community members. The City is committed to encouraging Council Members and employees to enhance and share their knowledge and qualifications through further training and participation on regional, state, and national boards and commissions. Training is also necessary to ensure compliance with legal and statutory requirements. The Council supports continuing professional development in line with the City’s vision, values, service principles, legislative goals, and the requirements of requisite professional credentialing and certifications.

Providing training yields several benefits including:

- Improves the quality of the services and facilities that Mankato provides;
- Enables the organization to achieve its corporate aims and objectives;
- Improves the skills base of employees and elected officials;
- Produces a confident, highly qualified team; and
- Demonstrates that the employees are valued.

Training and development will be achieved by including a realistic financial allocation for training and development in the annual budget, as well as taking advantage of any relevant partnership or in-house provision available.

The process of development is as follows:

1. Training and advocacy needs should be identified by considering the overall objectives of the organization, as well as individual requirements.
2. Planning and organizing representation, time, and funding to meet those specific needs.
3. Evaluating the effectiveness of training, advocacy assignments, and resource allocation and adjusting as necessary.

Council Members identify time availability, areas of interest for issue advocacy, boards and committees benefit from Council liaison/representation and training/development needs during the annual business meeting (January). There are a few additional ways that the training needs of staff may be recognized:

- Additional work sessions
- Questionnaires
- Following confirmation of appointment
- Formal and informal discussion

Other circumstances may present the need for funding:

- Legislative requirements/mandates
- Changes in legislation
- Changes in systems
- New or revised qualifications become available
- Introduction of new equipment
- New working methods and practices
- Complaints to the Council
- A request from a member of staff
- Developed services / delivery of new services
- Value/request for service on a regional, state, national board or committee

Conferences and other dates to note throughout the year:

- League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) – Newly Elected Officials Conference
January (location changes annually)
- Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC) Legislative Action Day
January (St. Paul MN)
- League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) Legislative Conference
February (St. Paul MN)
- National League of Cities (NLC) Congressional Cities Conference
March (Washington DC)
- League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) Annual Conference
June (location changes annually)
- Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC) Summer Conference
July (location changes annually)
- Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC) Fall Conference
November (location changes annually)
- National League of Cities (NLC) Annual City Summit
November (location changes annually)



Chapter 9: Communications and Media Relations

Communications

As elected officials, Council Members have a responsibility to communicate information to the public. Communicating accurate, timely and professional information is important to ensure the quality and credibility of information being provided to the public.

Public Record

Communications (electronic or written) involving City Council Members and Members of advisory boards and commissions regarding city business generally are public data (with a few exceptions as stated by the [Minnesota Data Practices Act](#)). Requests for private data or information outside of the scope of a Council Member's role likely are protected by law and not available to Members, with a few exceptions. These requests should be made to the City Manager.

Align with Minnesota Open Meeting Law

Information shared or discussed between Council Members, including information posted or responded to by Council Members, should be done in alignment with the [Open Meeting Law](#). When unsure, Members should reach out to the City Manager.

Council and committee members should generally act with caution when communicating face-to-face or through written or electronic correspondence with each other or as a group. If a Council Member wishes to share information with other members, the best practice is to do so through the City Manager. Materials relating to agenda items for City business (including email) must be provided to the public at the meeting.

Keep in mind that email and, likely even social media communications, shared among four or more Council Members could violate the Open Meeting Law so Members should reserve their discussion for an open meeting rather than via email or social media.

- ◆ Example of a violation: A Council Member posts a comment on a Facebook page about a proposed ordinance. A second Council Member comments that they agree, and a third Council Member clicks the "like" button.

Community Member Questions, Comments, and Concerns

It's important that Council Members direct community member questions, comments, and concerns to 311 staff at 311, 507-387-8600 or 311@mankatomn.gov, or to the [online customer service form](#). Doing so ensures requests are routed to the appropriate staff and holds accountability that proper follow-up is done, and the task is completed. In addition, since some requests cover multiple departments there may be a request history that will be useful as staff works to resolve the issue.

Written Correspondence

City Council Members often need to write letters to community members, businesses, or other public agencies as well as constituents in response to inquiries, or to provide requested information. City letterhead and envelopes are available for City business use. Contact staff in the City Manager's office at 507-387-8690 for these items.



Recommendation Letters

Council Members may occasionally be asked to prepare letters of recommendation for students or others seeking employment or appointment.

Electronic Communications

Generally, the City Council receives agenda materials, background information and other meeting information via email. Contact the City Manager if there are questions about these items. Helpful information about [records management for cities](#) is available on the League of Minnesota Cities website.

Social Media

Since social media is an effective and frequently chosen communication tool among the public, the City of Mankato has official Facebook and Twitter pages. Helpful training about [Social Media for Elected Officials](#) is available on the League of Minnesota Cities website.

Communication Tips for Email and Social Media

Public Perception

City Council Members are public officials representing the City of Mankato and its policies and perspectives.

Official versus individual perspectives

Since the public connects City officials to the City of Mankato, it's important to clarify official perspectives from individual perspectives.

Public Information

Any published content, written or electronic (email, for example), may be considered public information or considered covered under the Minnesota data practices act. Generally, informal messages not related to a public official's role or official city business, such as meeting notices, reminders, telephone messages and some informal notes are not public record.

Tip: Separate official and private community member roles—when presenting information on behalf of the City of Mankato, identify the role as being an elected official for the City. When presenting individual perspectives, clarify that these viewpoints are not representative of the City of Mankato and instead are personal opinions. Personal social media account names or email names should not be tied to the City.

Large Outreach

Information posted on social media is public and is available online for a long time. Both email and social media posts can be quickly shared with other audiences, making it important to be positive, post professional messages and avoid political comments.

Discoverability

A recommended best practice is to use City issued email when available. When a personal account is used for City business the information created is considered discoverable. Generally, email is not removed from the system even if deleted. Email is discoverable in litigation, making it important to use it cautiously. When seeking legal advice or to discuss matters of pending litigation or other "confidential" City business ensure emails are sent to only those intended because the attorney-client privilege protecting the document from disclosure may be waived.

Media Relations

Good to Know

When the media calls about:

- ◆ **Upcoming agenda items, issues, or discussion topics:** Encourage the public to provide input on the item. Make sure, if the item hasn't been voted on yet, to let the media know when the item is scheduled to come before the City Council. If a Council Member discusses the issue with media before a decision is made, make sure to emphasize that you are speaking for yourself and your opinion, not the City Council's.
- ◆ **Routine or Public Information:** (i.e., a meeting time or agenda). Provide media with the information and notify City Manager of the request.
- ◆ **Other Information** City personnel, potential litigation, controversial issues, an opinion about a City matter, or if unsure of the type of question: it's recommended to work with the City Manager on these topics. The City Manager typically works with staff on these issues and can present the discussion scope or topic.

Tip: A good response to media if an answer isn't readily available: "I don't have all of the information about that. Let me find out and I'll return the call."

Find out the respective media's name, contact information and deadline.

City Manager's Role

- ◆ The City Manager communicates on the City's behalf and can assist the City Council with interviews, publications, news releases, on social media sites and related communications. The City Manager is in a good position to provide a response because many issues involve multiple departments or work may already be in progress. Many times, a department director will handle interviews and communications on behalf of the City Manager.



Chapter 10: Council Meetings

General

The Council decides public meeting times and places. Currently, the regular City Council Meetings are held on the second and fourth Monday of the month at 6 p.m. Work Sessions are held the first Monday and after the Council Meeting on the fourth Monday. Meetings are held on the first floor of the Intergovernmental Center, 10 Civic Center Plaza, in the Council Chambers/Mankato Room. If a legal holiday occurs on one of these Mondays, the Council meeting will be held the next business day. All meetings are held in compliance with Minnesota's Open Meeting Law. All regular and special meeting dates and times are posted at the Intergovernmental Center outside of the Mankato room and [online](#).

All regular and special Council meetings, including the public budget hearing, are videotaped and livestreamed and archived on the City of Mankato website.

Quorum

When holding meetings, the Council needs a quorum (majority) to legally conduct business. At least four City Council Members constitute a quorum.

Types of Meetings

Align with Minnesota Open Meeting Law

The City Council and any committee, subcommittee, board, department, or commission are subject to the [Minnesota Open Meeting Law](#). Communication among four or more Council Members should take place at an open meeting. Committee quorums depend on the number of people on the committee.

Regular Meetings

The Mankato City Council generally convenes twice each month. At the first meeting of the year, the Council:

- ◆ designates an official newspaper;
- ◆ assigns committee duties to the Members;
- ◆ establishes regular meeting dates for the year;
- ◆ reviews operational policies and guidelines and makes necessary changes;
- ◆ reads the City's Land Acknowledgement Statement; and
- ◆ works on other organizational business as deemed necessary.

Agenda

The Council packet contains an agenda with information about each agenda item. [Packets](#) are available on the city's website the Wednesday prior to each Monday Council meeting.

The Council agenda is generally set by the City Manager and staff. Certain agenda items are required by law, and others are selected based on the Council's established goals. Members of the Council can request items be placed on future agendas upon consensus of at least three. Members of the public can contact Council Members and ask them to make a request; however, unless the consensus is met the item may not be put on an agenda.

Special Meetings

Special meetings are any meeting other than a regular meeting and can be scheduled by the Mayor and three Council Members. These meetings could be scheduled to address additional business, budgets, or other pending items the Council was unable to discuss at a regular meeting or needs to address before the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Any special meeting must conform to Minnesota's Open Meeting Law. Council Members are notified of special meetings at least one day prior to the meeting. Written notices are posted at least three days before a special meeting and must state the purpose of the meeting. Those who have filed a written request of notice for special meetings are also notified.

Closed Meetings

The Mankato City Council **may** meet in a closed meeting:

- ◆ to consider strategies for labor negotiations under the Public Employer Labor Relations Association;
- ◆ to evaluate the performance of an individual the Council has authority over (i.e., City Manager);
- ◆ attorney-client privilege;
- ◆ purchase or sale of property;
- ◆ security briefings.

Meetings **must** be closed:

- ◆ preliminary consideration of allegations or charges against an individual the Council has authority over (i.e., City Manager);
- ◆ portions of meetings that include:
 - data that would identify alleged victims or reporters of criminal sexual conduct, domestic abuse, or maltreatment of minors or vulnerable adults;
 - internal affairs data relating to allegations of law enforcement personnel misconduct or active law enforcement investigative data;
 - educational data, health data, medical data, welfare data or mental health data that are not public;
 - an individual's medical records governed by certain sections of Minnesota law.

The City Council must follow Minnesota's Open Meeting Law procedures to hold a closed meeting. Before a meeting can be closed, the Council must state on the record specific grounds for permitting the meeting closed and describe the subject to be discussed. All closed meetings (except those closed as permitted by the attorney-client privilege) must be electronically recorded at the public body's expense. Unless otherwise provided by law, recordings must be preserved for at least three years after the meeting date.

If a closed meeting is to evaluate an individual's performance, this individual's name must be announced prior to closing the meeting. If the individual requests an open meeting, advance notice must be provided so he/she can make an informed decision about opening the meeting.



Work Sessions

Work sessions provide an opportunity for Council Members to discuss items that may be a future agenda item or for informational purposes. Several work sessions are held about the City's budget prior to its finalization and levy at the end of the year. Work sessions are typically held each month on the first (6 p.m.) and fourth Mondays (following the regular Council meeting, which begins at 6 p.m.). The [agenda and related work session materials](#) are posted on the city's website the Wednesday prior to the work session.

Work sessions are held in a less formal atmosphere, using a consensus building approach. No formal action can be taken. Work sessions are cancelled or adjourned if fewer than four Council Members are in attendance.

Emergency Meetings

The City Council has the statutory authority to call emergency meetings, which require immediate Council consideration. For example, a meeting may be called if there is a state of emergency, such as a natural disaster, to declare a local emergency. When special meetings are held the Council (through the City Manager) must notify the media and public.

Ward Meetings

Council Members are encouraged to hold quarterly ward meetings. If interested in holding a quarterly ward meeting, consult with the City Manager about scheduling and announcing the respective meeting.

Neighborhood Association Meetings

Council Members are encouraged to attend neighborhood association meetings because they provide an opportunity for involvement with engaged community members in their respective wards. Currently, there are six City neighborhood associations: Highland Park, Tourtellotte Park, Trail Creek, Diamond Creek, Lincoln Park and Washington Park. Council Members shall not act as they are representing the Council as a whole at any meetings.

Meeting Procedures

See Appendix I.



Chapter 11: Advisory Boards, Commissions, Committees and Task Forces

The City of Mankato has advisory boards, commissions, committees, and task forces that the public and City Council Members serve on. Some committees are created by ordinance, policy, or state statute. City Council Members pay dues to belong to some organizations, automatically making them a delegate to the organization.

Volunteer Appointments

More than 100 community volunteers serve in an advisory capacity on City boards and commissions designed to advise the Council on its decision-making process. Members are appointed by the City Council.

Representation by Council Members

City Council Members can also be appointed as a liaison to a committee or assigned to a task force to facilitate communication and interaction between the Council, internal advisory bodies, and other governmental and non-profit organizations. A liaison enhances communication between the City Council and other organizations. Liaison Members serve only for communication purposes and do not have any authority to vote or influence committee decisions.

Membership appointment to boards, commissions, committees, or task forces is made by City Council consensus, upon the Mayor's recommendation. If more than one Council Member wants to serve as a member of a particular outside group, the appointment is made by a majority vote of the Council. The City Council appoints liaisons or members to various boards, councils, commissions, committees, and tasks forces at the first Council meeting of the year or on an as-needed or as-requested basis.

Where applicable, the City Council appoints an alternate to attend outside boards, councils, commissions, or committees to attend a meeting if the main delegate is unable to do so. If after hours, the main delegate should notify the alternate as soon as possible. If during regular business hours, notify the City Manager so staff can assist with notifying the alternate.

Council Members participating in policy discussions at regional meetings represent the Council's consensus.

Staff Relationship to Advisory Bodies

The City Manager assigns and directs staff to advisory bodies. Staff support and assistance may be provided to advisory boards, commissions, and task forces. While staff may work closely with advisory bodies, staff members remain responsible to immediate supervisors and the City Manager. Members of commissions, boards, or committees are responsible for the advisory body. The chairperson is responsible for committee compliance with City Code and/or committee bylaws. Staff members assist the advisory body chair to ensure appropriate compliance with state and local laws and regulations.



Advisory bodies make recommendations to the City Council through adopted Council agenda procedures. When an advisory body wishes to correspond with an outside agency, the City Council needs to review and approve communication.

Commissions created by Charter and/or Statute

Charter Commission

Appointed by the chief judge of district court and is responsible for reviewing the City Charter and making recommendations to the City Council (and the public). This commission must follow [Minnesota statutes §410.05](#) and [§410.12](#).

Economic Development Authority (EDA)

Consists of seven voting Members who are currently the City Council. Appointed Members are the City Manager and economic development staff. Encourages economic development within the City and provides assistance to businesses whenever necessary. Generally, the EDA meets following the Council Meeting on the second Monday of each month.

Heritage Preservation Commission

Consists of seven voting Members. Makes recommendations to the Mankato City Council about promoting and preserving Mankato's historic neighborhoods, including designations of significant buildings and places locally significant to the City's heritage.

Local Board of Appeal and Equalization

Consists of five regular Members and two alternates appointed by the City Council. Listens to property owner concerns about property valuations. The Local Board of Appeal and Equalization has the authority to increase or decrease one percent of the aggregate property valuations.

Planning Commission

Consists of seven Members (one Council Member and six community members). Evaluates proposed planning and zoning requests. This includes variances from City Code, conditional use permits and rezoning applications. Other responsibilities include subdivision review, review of proposed ordinance changes and assistance in updating the comprehensive plan.

Committees created by Local Policy

Blue Earth County/City of Mankato Intergovernmental Committee

Consists of two Members of the Mankato City Council, two Members of the Blue Earth County Board, the Mankato City Manager, and the Blue Earth County administrator. The Committee meets to discuss items that impact the county and the City and develops opportunities to manage these items. Land-use and highways have been at the forefront.



Mankato/North Mankato Intergovernmental Committee

Comprised of two Council Members from each Council, ex officio Members are: North Mankato City administrator, Mankato City Manager. The committee helps enhance intergovernmental cooperation between the two cities.

Public Safety Advisory Committee

The Public Safety Advisory Committee (one Council Member and five community members representing each ward) proactively enables the City to get the community involved in public safety planning, hiring and promotion of a safe and livable community.

Joint Powers boards

Joint powers boards help shape public policy and create cooperation among governments. Two or more governments may create a joint powers board by signing a legal agreement to cooperate in providing services to the public.

All Seasons Arena Board

Consists of Members from Blue Earth County, the cities of Mankato and North Mankato. The board advises the City of Mankato about All Seasons Arena operations.

Regional Economic Development Alliance (REDA)

Includes Blue Earth and Nicollet counties and several communities. Each of the communities and counties has its own unique strengths, which together combine to create a robust portfolio of regional assets. In 2009, these communities and counties joined together with Greater Mankato Growth to efficiently provide both regional and individual city and county information to businesses interested in the Greater Mankato marketplace, this group is known as the Regional Economic Development Alliance or REDA. Also contributing to REDA, as a communication liaison between REDA partners and the rest of South Central Minnesota, is the Region Nine Development Commission.

City Manager Committees

These committees are established to assist the City Manager in areas of policy and direction for the City. They vary depending on the issue or policy in question.

Site Plan and Traffic Advisory Committee

Includes staff from major service departments, administrative services, and the City Manager's office. Makes recommendations to community development staff regarding proposed developments, planning and zoning requests. This includes commercial/industrial building permits, variances from the City Code, conditional use permits, rezoning and subdivision applications.

Task Forces

A task force is established by the City Council to address a specific issue. Once the issue has been addressed, the task force is usually disbanded or becomes inactive until it may be needed.



Committees or other Associations

The City of Mankato belongs to other organizations that serve various governments. As a member of the organization, the City of Mankato can share in the benefit and services available. By working cooperatively with other governments, the City can have a voice in issues affecting the City of Mankato and surrounding region.

Highway 14 Partnership

Mankato City Council Members and the City Manager participate in the Highway 14 partnership, an advocacy organization that supports the four-lane expansion of U.S. Highway 14 in southern Minnesota.

Region Nine Development Commission

Consists of 42 elected officials. Members represent counties, cities, townships, soil and water conservation districts, school districts and the Minnesota Valley Council of Governments. The Mayor is a voting Member. They serve to promote the economic development and provide policy direction to the social, physical, and governmental problems of the region.

Community Services Recreation Department Advisory Board/City Members

An intergovernmental board with representation from Mankato Area Public Schools and the cities of Mankato and North Mankato. The board advises on recreational programs, services and coordination of City facilities.

Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities

The City of Mankato is a member. The organization was created to influence legislation which impacts outstate Minnesota.

Blue Earth County Mayors/Clerks

Provides an opportunity to discuss issues of common concern to cities in Blue Earth County. The Mayor and City Clerk serve on this committee.

Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (MAPO)

MAPO is represented by the cities of Mankato, North Mankato, Eagle Lake, and Skyline; Blue Earth and Nicollet counties; and the townships of Belgrade, Lime, South Bend, LeRay and Mankato. MAPO meets and maintains a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive metropolitan transportation planning process to provide maximum service to citizens since roads don't start and stop at jurisdictional lines. In other words, the federal government wished to see federal transportation funds spent in a manner that has a basis in metropolitan region-wide plans developed through intergovernmental collaboration, rational analysis, and consensus-based decision making.

Minnesota Valley Council of Governments (MVCOG)

This is a voluntary association, through Member assessments, which provides administrative, planning, and technical assistance to Member jurisdictions. One Council Member serves on the board.



South Central Regional Radio Board

A board that meets about South Central Regional Radio Board opportunities. The Board can apply for and receive grants on behalf of one or more member counties. It's responsible for coordination with the State Radio Board and can contract with state agencies and local subdivisions for management of local radio subsystems.

Student Senates

A Council Member may serve as a liaison to meet with student senates to discuss campus and city items.

Chapter 12: Open Meeting Law and Data Practices

Open Meeting Law

With only a few exceptions, City Council meetings, including committees, subcommittees, board, department, and commission meetings are open to the public. The Open Meeting Law ensures the public are fully informed about decisions made by elected officials and ensures the public's right to participate in City Council actions. More information about the [Open Meeting Law](#) is available through the [League of Minnesota Cities](#).

Whenever the Council meets the following information should be available to the public:

- ◆ Date, time, and location.
- ◆ If Special Meeting, then also purpose for the meeting.

The public should be able to:

- ◆ be present;
- ◆ see how Council Members vote on issues;
- ◆ receive printed information the Council has at the meeting;
- ◆ have access to a summary of Council minutes.

With limited exceptions, any scheduled gathering of a quorum or more of City Council or committee must give proper notice and be open to the public. Chance meetings and social gatherings are excluded; however, Council Members cannot discuss or receive information on official business in private social settings.

There are few exceptions to the open meeting law and specific requirements regarding notice and subject of closed meetings. Strict adherence to these requirements is necessary to avoid violating the statute. The City Attorney should be consulted when the Council is considering conducting a closed meeting.

Council Members who intentionally violate the provisions of the open meeting law are subject to personal liability up to \$300 in civil penalties per single occurrence. Government entities are prohibited from paying these penalties for Council Members. If a Council Member has three or more intentional violations, the result may be forfeiture of the right to serve on the City Council. Examples of potential violations are:

- ◆ chamber of commerce gatherings with Council Members;
- ◆ planning sessions with staff;
- ◆ neighborhood land use gathering;
- ◆ hockey association discussion with Council Members.

Minnesota's Data Practices Act

Minnesota's Data Practices Act gives public access to City records and data to balance the public's right to know with respect for individuals' privacy. The act presumes that government data are public and accessible for inspection and copying unless a federal law, state statute, or temporary classification of data notes otherwise.



Since there are significant penalties for willfully releasing non-public, private, or confidential data. Council Members should consult the City Manager when there are questions about what information is public and what is non-public.

In addition, a City that violates any provision of the data practices act is liable for any damage as a result of the violation. The person damaged may bring action against the City to cover damages, plus costs and reasonable attorney fees.

- ◆ More information about the [Minnesota Data Practices Act](#) is available through the Minnesota House of Representatives.
- ◆ The League of Minnesota Cities provides helpful information about [data practices](#) online.

Public or Private?

Data is classified into categories to define confidentiality. These categories assist the City in deciding whether data can be released and to whom.

Public Record

Communications (electronic or written) involving City Council Members and Members of advisory boards and commissions are public records (with a few exceptions as stated by the [Minnesota Data Practices Act](#)).

Communications not considered public record may still be public information (i.e., email, text messages). Those interested in copies of these items must file a data practices request. Merely, because an elected or appointed official serves on the decision-making board does not mean they have access to non-public data. Requests for private data or information outside the scope of a Council Member's role should be routed to the City Manager for assistance.

Elected Officials and Financial Disclosures required by State Statute

Classified as public data on individuals.

Personnel Data

Some personnel data of City employment applications, present and past employees, members of advisory boards and commissions, volunteers and independent contractors is public. Personnel public data:

- ◆ name
- ◆ salary
- ◆ contract fees
- ◆ pension
- ◆ fringe benefits
- ◆ expense reimbursements
- ◆ job title and job description
- ◆ education, training and previous work experience
- ◆ terms of any administrative or judicial agreement
- ◆ work location and work telephone number

- ◆ time records
- ◆ date of first and last employment existence and status of any complaints or charges against an employee

Note: *actual complaint circumstances are not public, whether or not the charge or complaint resulted in disciplinary action. The final disposition of any disciplinary action, with the reasons the action was necessary, and information documenting those reasons are public when final disposition is made. Final disposition also includes resignation when the resignation occurs after the final decision of the City or arbitrator.*

The following is public and refers to former or current applicants; either for employment or an appointment to an advisory board.

- ◆ Veteran status
- ◆ relevant test scores
- ◆ rank on eligibility list
- ◆ education, training and work availability

Private Record

What is considered a non-public record can be confusing; thus the City Clerk or City Manager should be contacted if there are questions.

Some examples include:

Applicants for City Positions

Names are private except when certified as eligible for employment and considered a finalist by the City Manager. A finalist is someone called in for additional interviews, but has not been chosen for the position.

Appraisal Data: Appraisal data is confidential until released or until the property is sold.

Arrest Data, Response Data and Investigative Data: This type of data is classified as public information once the investigation is closed and charges are filed.

Elected Officials Correspondence: The data practices act states that correspondence between individuals and elected officials is private; however, it can be made public by the sender or recipient.

Property Complaints: Complaints to the City of Mankato that are ordinance violations related to real property are confidential data. For example, if a neighbor reports another neighbor is in violation of an ordinance, the name of the complainant cannot be disclosed.

Chapter 13: Mayor and Council Member Code of Conduct

The Mayor and Council Members are dedicated to promoting values and integrity of local government and democracy and committed to governing efficiently and effectively. After taking oath of office as a City Council Member, they agree to conduct themselves in accordance with the following Code of conduct:

- ◆ The professional and personal conduct of Council Members must be above reproach and avoid the appearance of impropriety. Members should refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other Members of the Council, boards, commissions, staff, or the public intended to disrupt and not further the City's business.
- ◆ Council Members abide by applicable state laws, City ordinances and other doctrines relating to conduct of a Council Member, including, but not limited to conflict of interest, data practices and the open meeting law.
- ◆ Council Members maintain the confidentiality of information concerning property, personnel, or legal affairs of the City. They shall neither disclose confidential information, without proper legal authorization, nor use such information to advance their personal, financial, or other private interests.
- ◆ A Council Member does not use the official position to secure special privileges or exemptions for themselves or others.
- ◆ Each Member supports the maintenance of a positive and constructive workplace environment for City staff, private community members and businesses dealing with the City. Council Members will recognize their roles, as delineated in the City Charter, City Code, and state statutes and in individual dealings with City staff.
- ◆ No Member shall, except as specifically permitted by Minnesota statutes, accept, or receive any gift of substance, whether in the form of money, services, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, promise or any other form under circumstances in which it could be reasonably expected to influence the Member in the performance of the Member's official duties or intended as a reward for the Member's official actions.
- ◆ Members of the Council will not testify in their capacity as a Council Member, before any other board, commission, administrative officer or agent of the federal government, the state of Minnesota or of any county or other municipal corporation, including cities, except as provided. Exceptions to the policy:
 - if the Member is testifying in such capacity pursuant to a lawfully issued subpoena.
 - in the event the Council has designated the Member or Members to act as a spokesperson for the Council as a whole to explain the majority vote or Council's position.
- ◆ Council Members serve as a whole when representing the official policies and positions of the City Council. If speaking as an individual community member, it's important to share that's the perspective being presented and not on behalf of the City or Council. In addition, Council Members refrain from testifying orally or in writing as to any quasi-judicial matter being heard or having the possibility of being heard by the Council.



Conflict of Interest

Generally, state law prohibits public officers from having a personal financial interest in a sale, lease, or contract they are authorized to make in their official capacity. A “public officer” would include a Mayor, Council Member, etc.

An interested officer should disclose his or her interest at the earliest stage and abstain from voting or deliberating on any contract in which he or she has an interest. There are some exceptions to the general prohibition on contracting with City officials defined in state law. When the exceptions are used, generally the contract must be approved by unanimous vote of the Council. To help determine if a conflict exists consider the:

- ◆ nature of the decision being made;
- ◆ nature of the financial interest;
- ◆ effect of the individual interest on the outcome of the decision by the Council.

Another conflict of interest situation may occur when the official’s own personal interest is so distinct from the public interest that the Member cannot be expected to represent the public interest fairly in deciding the matter. Some common areas are planning and zoning issues, public improvements, special assessments, licenses, land purchases and vacation of streets. Some other areas are church Memberships, family associations and club Memberships.

There are detailed procedures that must be followed to use any exception to the conflict of interest law. State statute and the City attorney should be consulted on procedures to follow.

Incompatible Offices

Generally, individuals in elected office are prohibited from holding incompatible offices. The City attorney should be consulted on concerns about elected officials holding two separate offices. Mankato City Council Members cannot hold any other City office or City employment during tenure as a Council Member. A former Member of the City Council cannot be employed by the City until one year after the term they were elected for has expired.

Gifts

Elected and appointed “local officials” may not receive a gift from any “interested person.” An “interested person” is a person, or representative of a person or an association, who has a direct financial interest in a decision that a local official is authorized to make. If a public official knowingly accepts a gift, the official may be guilty of a gross misdemeanor.

Some commonly encountered exceptions to the gift law include lawful campaign contributions and food or beverages given at a reception, meal, or meeting the official has been invited to attend. If there is ever any question about accepting or declining a gift, the best option may be to decline.

Liabilities

The City of Mankato carries personal liability insurance policies on elected officials, appointed officials, employees and officers. The City defends a person who is performing job duties and is not guilty of malfeasance in office, willfully neglecting their duties or acting in bad faith.

Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is vital to the functioning of the City and to maintain the public's trust and confidence in the City and democratic process.

Key Traits of Ethical Leaders

- ◆ *Recognize that ethical questions may be complex.* As a result, they are willing to seek and accept the advice of knowledgeable officials such as the City Manager, City attorney or City staff.
- ◆ *Understand that ethical conflicts are inevitable and should be dealt with forthrightly.* Elected officials are human and community members of their community. On occasion, it is expected that they will have needs or roles in their private lives that conflict with public office obligations. Ethical officials are open about potential conflicts of interest and follow applicable rules for disclosing and dealing with the conflict (such as refraining from voting on a particular issue) to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.
- ◆ *Driven by fairness.* The most ethical Council Members recognize that many City decisions will have an adverse, as well as positive outcomes and they, therefore, strive to make the best decision as defined by its ultimate fairness to all concerned. This often means making impartial decisions on the merits of the issues alone, while disregarding personal allegiances. It can also mean taking into account interests of community members who are not present or who have not otherwise commented, but who are nonetheless affected by a decision. Ethical officials try to make decisions in the best interest of all in the community, not just those who show up at a meeting or protest the loudest.
- ◆ *Know the importance of conscientious and ethical government as a value in itself.* Ethical Council Members do not use their office or authority for revenge, prestige, or personal gain. Ethical Council Members recognize that government is a human institution. As a result, the human motivations of those in government will determine if the government itself is effective or ineffective, good or bad, ethical or unethical. Ethical Council Members care enough to make a positive difference and then act accordingly.

Recall of Elected Officers

The City of Mankato Charter does not permit the City Council to remove or recall an officer from office. The holder of any elective office may be removed at any time by registered voters under [Mankato City Charter section 5.01](#), available online.



Chapter 14: Rules to Govern By

Land Use Laws

The municipal planning act grants cities the authority to regulate land use and provides the framework and road map all cities must follow. Cities regulate land use through three basic tools:

- ◆ comprehensive plan;
- ◆ zoning ordinance (including the zoning map);
- ◆ subdivision ordinance.

Although cities are not required to adopt all three tools when engaged in municipal planning, each tool serves a separate and essential purpose. These tools harmonize and interact in important ways to protect and promote sound City development.

First, the comprehensive plan helps the City look to the future and guides current development in administering its zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance. The subdivision ordinance regulates land division into smaller lots and the creation of blocks and neighborhoods with safe streets, appropriate environmental features, and character. Finally, the zoning ordinance regulates the use and density of City zones such as commercial, residential, and industrial purposes, both segregating and combining uses where appropriate to prevent congestion, environmental contamination, and other negative human health hazards.

A **zoning map** divides the community into different land uses to assist the City in planning and permitting future growth. There are 15 different categories for zoning, and each has specific standards. Two ways to vary from zoning standards include a “variance” or a conditional use permit.

A **variance** allows the individual property owner to “vary” from permitted use of the land or from required rules for the property.

Conditional use permits are granted based on certain standards being maintained or established at the time issued. The permit is granted with a set of conditions that must be followed, or the permit can be revoked.

Due Process: People who own land in areas that can be impacted will be informed and given an opportunity to provide input before any plan/work moves forward.

Public Improvements

Two types of improvements are petitioned, and City initiated. A petitioned project occurs when a property owner who owns 35 percent or more of the affected property signs a petition asking the City to make improvements. A City initiated project is an improvement identified in the community investment plan. A City initiated project requires a 4/5 vote of the Council, whereas, in most circumstances, a petitioned project only requires a simple majority.

Process for Improvements

- ◆ The City notifies all affected property owners.
- ◆ A meeting is held prior to the first formal Council meeting to provide information to the property owners.
- ◆ The first Council meeting is the project feasibility hearing where community members present their opinions about the project.
- ◆ The second Council hearing is the assessment hearing that establishes the property owners cost for the project.
- ◆ If the cost of the completed project is less than the assessment, property owners are notified, and the correct amount is assessed. No assessment is made until the project is completed. This is in accordance with [Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 429](#), which explains the complete process in detail.

Actions Requiring Ordinances

Ordinances are another legal avenue in which Council can direct policy. Actions of the City Council that must be done by ordinance can be found in the [Mankato City Charter, Section 2.13](#).

An ordinance can pertain only to one subject and can be introduced by any Council Member at a special or regular Council meeting. The Council can reject, adopt or amend the ordinance. Any amendment that changes an ordinance's substance requires the process to be repeated. Most ordinances (unless otherwise stated differently) become effective 30 days after adoption or publication.

Licenses and Permits

The City has the authority to license and require permits for activities within its jurisdiction. Licensing and permitting regulates activities and provides oversight for inspection in the public interest. The City exercises its police power to protect and promote the public's welfare and safety through the licensing process. More information about [licenses and the licensing process](#) can be found in Chapter 6 of Mankato's City Code, available online.



Chapter 15: Financial Aspects

The City of Mankato Charter is specific about responsibilities and procedures for the City’s financial administration. The Charter establishes the calendar year as the fiscal year. The Council either appoints a committee for budget oversight or delegates the responsibility for the budget to an administrative officer. The City Council has delegated fiscal responsibility to the City Manager, who is assisted in that responsibility by the Administrative Services Director.

Strategic Plan, Budget for Services and Performance Measurements

Mankato’s budget is a financial plan and policy document that reflects the strategic goals and policies adopted by the City Council. The plan is a fiscally sound and balanced budget that maintains the integrity of the City’s financial health while meeting quality service level demands that citizens have come to expect. The plan is balanced financially, including how resources are distributed among operating, capital, debt service and adequate reserves.

The Budget Process

The budget process follows a cycle that begins with the City’s Strategic Plan, a road map that helps guide the City through the next few years, and details where the City is going and how it plans to get there, while determining measurable results. Mankato’s current [Strategic Plan](#) is available online.

The Strategic Plan, coupled with service levels, serves as the foundation to build the City’s budget. The City reviews and revises the strategic plan on a biannual basis and reports progress to the City Council through monthly operational reports and to the community through the City’s website.

Typical Budget Schedule

Early spring	Council reviews strategic initiatives and service levels.
Late-June	City Manager presents anticipated projects and inquires of City Council additional projects to be considered.
Mid-August	Council examines proposed budget and reviews each department budget for the following year. The Council may make changes in the preliminary budget during this review process.
August/September	City Manager presents next year’s budget message and the preliminary budget along with a preliminary property tax levy. The Council adopts the preliminary tax levy and sets the maximum property tax levy available to the City for the following year. The budget should explain proposed revenues and expenditures, proposed capital expenditures and debt payment schedule. City Manager schedules a work session to discuss the overall budget and proposed tax levy.



October/November	Special work sessions held.
December	City holds its public budget hearing to present the final budget and property tax levy to community members for comment. Once hearing is held, additional time is allowed for public to provide input.
December 15	Final budget and levy for new fiscal year must be adopted and certified to the county.

Community Input and Measurements

Prior to budget preparation, opportunities are provided to the community to provide input on service levels. The City of Mankato continues to enhance community input opportunities on service levels, budget, and performance measurements.

In addition to using these established measurements, the City has developed its own measurements. Each department reports on performance measurements. Results are reported back to the Council as needed and are also an integral part of budget preparation and discussions.

Service Definitions

The budget serves as the allocation of resources and communicates service levels and service level outcomes based on those resources. City services are categorized by core, secondary or livability services.

Core Services are essential based on the City's vision: Legislative activities and general government: activities (general services) as required by City Charter, City Code, statute and other binding legislation and internal service activities that support and execute general service operations of the City.

- ◆ Public safety: services that protect citizens, visitors and property and prevent criminal activity/behavior to the organizational standard.
- ◆ Urban infrastructure: services that plan, build, and maintain utilities (water/wastewater), parks, roads, sidewalk, trails and other multi-modal transportation infrastructure and buildings.
- ◆ Development and planning: services for planning and managing physical growth and expansion with an emphasis on orderly growth.
- ◆ Civic center: services that maximize the use of the multi-purpose asset through conventions/meetings, concerts, trade shows, hockey, etc. resulting in a positive regional economic impact.

Secondary Services enhance the level of core services provided. These services align with the City's vision and values and strategic plan, and other adopted City, community, and regional planning efforts.

Livability Services enhance the level of core or secondary services provided and/or aid in fulfilling an adopted City, community, and/or regional plan. They are typically carried out by an organization other than the City of Mankato.

Capital Budget

The City's capital budget combines the Community Investment Plan (CIP) for major construction and acquisition projects and information needed to implement the projects. Projects are prioritized and consistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan. Community investment projects are frequently financed through bonds. Funding requirements for bond funded projects include principal and interest payment for those bonds.

Chapter 16: Standards of Appearance

Business casual dress is encouraged when Council Members are conducting City business and a tie, suit, dress, jacket, and blazer are recommended when representing the City at formal functions. Business attire generally includes:

- ◆ dress slacks, full length slacks are encouraged
- ◆ docker-style pants
- ◆ traditional and banded collared shirts
- ◆ business footwear (dress shoes, dress boots, dress sandals, black or dark brown colored orthopedic shoes, or other business casual shoes in good condition)
- ◆ blouses
- ◆ turtlenecks
- ◆ dresses
- ◆ skirts
- ◆ suits
- ◆ blazers and jackets
- ◆ City-issued logo wear

For more information about City logo wear, please contact the City Manager's Office at 507-387-8690.



Chapter 17: Leaving Office and Vacancies

Leaving Office

Return of Materials and Equipment

Upon completion of service to the community, return equipment acquired during the term. Examples include computers, copies of Mankato's City Code, key card, etc.

Vacancies

There are several reasons a vacancy may occur on the City Council. These include an election deemed to be invalid, a death, resignation, removal from office or a Council Member may move outside the City or the Ward in which they were elected, or a. continuous absence from the City for more than three months or by reason of the failure of a Council member, without good cause, to perform any of the duties of members of the Council.

The process for filling a vacant seat is established in the [Mankato City Charter, Section 2.07](#), available online.

Appendix I

Meeting Procedures

- A. Meetings of the City Council are where the business of the City is conducted and vital decisions for the City's future are made. The main objective of the City Council in the proper conduct of its meetings is to ensure the public's business is conducted in an efficient manner with full opportunity for members of the City Council to communicate their thoughts and have discussions on the agenda items before a decision is made. The Open Meeting Law requires that City Council meetings be open to the public but does not require the City to offer opportunities for public comment other than required public hearings. The City of Mankato recognizes that meetings represent a forum where public can address Council as a whole. As a result, Council allows public the opportunity to share comments on subjects relevant to city government, its policies, operations or service and for the limited purposes provided in the publicly noticed meeting agenda outlined in the Meeting Procedures below.

Order of Business

The Mayor presides over Council meetings. The at-large Council Member (also known as the president) performs leadership duties if the Mayor is absent. Council meetings begin promptly and are held in the following order:

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of Agenda
4. Approval of Minutes
5. Appearances, Recognition, and Proclamations
6. Public Open Forum
7. Consent Calendar
8. Public Hearings/Ordinances/Variances
9. Planning Commission
10. Licenses
11. Council Business
12. Reports and Miscellaneous Business
13. Adjournment

Call to order—presiding officer

The Mayor (or at-large Council Member) calls the meeting to order. If the Mayor arrives after the meeting has begun, the Mayor resumes duties once business on a particular topic has been concluded. At any meeting where the Mayor and the at-large Council Member are not present; the Council appoints the most senior Council Member to preside at the meeting.

Roll Call

Council Members' names (present and absent) are called before a meeting starts. After roll call, those in attendance recite the "Pledge of Allegiance."

Approval of the Agenda

All official Council meetings are open to the public and the media in accordance with Minnesota's open meeting law. Agenda approval makes it official.

Approval of the Minutes

Minutes approval makes it the official meeting record. It's recommended to read the minutes for accuracy prior to the meeting and make any changes before Council approval.

Appearances, Recognition, and Proclamations

The public may make requests in advance to appear before the Council. These requests are typically up to 10 minutes long and held after roll call. Topics vary based on what the person or group wants to present. Examples include the recognition of photo contest winners, or discussion about a City item, such as a park statue. In addition, this section awards, recognizes, and honors via a formal proclamation that outlines achievement, and designates a day in honor of the individual or groups and the related achievement or activity. If honoree is present the proclamation will be read and presented, if the honoree is not present the proclamation will be acted on during the consent calendar only, unless the Council wishes to highlight the proclamation by pulling it from the agenda.

Public Comment

The City Council has allocated 15 minutes for the Public Forum. People wishing to speak may take one opportunity to address the City Council for three (3) minutes (not including interpreter's time) on any topic, even if on the agenda, with the condition that they may not speak on the same item later in the meeting. No prior notification is required; however, speakers are encouraged to notify the City Clerk of the desire to speak prior to the meeting.

The Mayor will call up individuals to speak with preregistered speakers first, then if time allows the floor will be opened for other speakers.

Members of the public wishing to speak are encouraged to adhere to the following guidelines:

- Speak only once for no more than three (3) minutes (not including interpreter's time) on the topic unless the speaker is addressed by the City Council;
- Consider having a spokesperson or two for your group to present comments;
- People wanting a response to a question are encouraged to submit the question in writing to the City Clerk, including contact information, such as name and best way for City to contact them.
- Questions will not be responded to during the comment period.
- People cannot gift their speaking time to other members of the public.

NOTE:

The Public Forum is not intended for the following:

- Introduction or discussion of topics or subjects not relevant to city government, its policies, operations or service
- Introduction or endorsement of candidates for public office.

Making defamatory or threatening comments directed at or concerning a person, business, or organization.

Consent Calendar

Routine and non-controversial items are placed on the City Council's consent agenda. These items may be approved by one motion upon unanimous consent. A City Council or audience Member may request an item be withdrawn for separate consideration. A Council Member may abstain from voting on, or voting against, any consent agenda item without requesting its removal. Abstentions will be recorded in the respective City Council meeting minutes.

Public Hearings

Public hearings ensure due process by protecting an individual's rights prior to governmental action. Due process encourages objective decision making by providing those who have an interest in the City's decision with an opportunity to be heard.

Generally, there is no dialogue between Council Members, staff, or the public during the hearing. Council Members may ask questions of those addressing the Council to clarify a fact, but any statement by a Council Member for anything other than to pose a question on the matter being considered may be ruled out of order by the Mayor (or presiding officer).

After new facts and information have been presented to the City Council, the hearing may be closed. Once the public hearing is complete, Council Members make a motion and debate the matter under consideration.

Ordinances

Ordinances are changes to Mankato City Code and require a public hearing. Other acts may be done by ordinance or resolution.

Variances

The Council may discuss variances, which are an exception to rules laid out in a zoning ordinance. Variances allow a respective landowner to deviate from rules that would otherwise apply (i.e., enforcement causes the owner undue hardship). Variances are generally related to physical standards (such as setbacks or height limits) and may not be used to allow a use prohibited in a particular zoning district. More information about variances is available in the [City Code, see 10.05](#).

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission usually provides an advisory report and/or recommendations for Council action.

Licenses

Routine license approvals may be in the consent calendar portion of the agenda, or the Council may review applications and take formal action on City licenses. Licenses may also be reviewed for possible suspension or revocation.

Council Business

Requests for actions, for City Council consideration.

Reports and Miscellaneous Business

Staff and City Council Members provide reports on projects, committees, or other information related to the Council or community. Also included are reminders about upcoming meetings or announcements.

Adjournment

If there is no further business, adjournment formally concludes the meeting.

B. Voting

Council actions pass or fail by majority vote of the Council. Majority is determined by the number of Council Members present at a meeting. Certain actions such as an unpetitioned street project require an extraordinary majority or 4/5 of the whole Council. Council Members may abstain from voting on a particular agenda item.

C. Principal rules governing motions

The following information is from the League of Minnesota Cities about governing motions. Information is available [online](#). This list includes the more common motions.

Motions: formal method of bringing business before the Council and for stating propositions on which the Council will have to make a decision. Motions can be made only by Council Members or Mayor.

Requires a second: motions which have a “yes” must be seconded by a Council Member before they can be considered. The motion maker may not second his/her own motion. By seconding a motion, a person does not necessarily indicate favor of the motion.

Can interrupt a speaker: motions which have a “yes” can be made at any time during a Council meeting. They may be made even while another has the floor and is speaking.

Debatable: a “yes” means the Council can discuss the motion’s merits. A “no” means no discussion is allowed and the motion must be voted on as soon as it is made and seconded.

Amendable: motions can be changed by amendment. Motions with a “no” must be voted on in the same form the motion was originally made.

Vote required to pass: tells whether the motion requires a simple two-thirds majority for passage.

Can be reconsidered: indicates whether or not a motion that was once passed or defeated by the Council can be considered again later in the meeting.

Parliamentarian

The Mayor (or in the Mayor’s absence the Mayor, the Mayor pro tem) serves as City Council parliamentarian and decides all questions of parliamentary procedure in accordance with basic parliamentary rules. Before deciding any question of parliamentary procedure, the Mayor may request advice from the City attorney or City Manager. In cases where serious errors in procedure are being used or contemplated, the City attorney or City Manager typically gives advice.

Other protocol

Other guidelines ensure Council meetings emphasize the importance of business being conducted in a professional manner. Council Members and staff:

- ◆ work to preserve appropriate order and decorum during all meetings;
- ◆ address Council Members as *Council Member*, followed by last name, such as “Council Member Jones,” and staff by their title last names, such as “City Manager Jones;”
- ◆ discourage side conversations, disruptions, interruptions or delaying efforts;
- ◆ inform presiding officer when leaving a meeting;
- ◆ limit disruptive behavior;
- ◆ recognize that on the City Council, staff, advisory body chairs or designated representatives and those authorized by the presiding officer shall be permitted to sit at Council or staff stations.

Appendix II

Rules of Decorum for City Council and Commission Meetings:

The City Council has also adopted the following rules of decorum for City Council Meetings which will be incorporated by reference on the Agenda, including notice that more than one member to remotely if a disruption occurs and order cannot be restored . The rules of decorum apply to all persons attending and/or participating in a meeting unless expressly noted. When persons, attendees and/or participants violate the adopted rules of order and decorum, the presiding officer is authorized to:

Meeting Where Order is Restored by Reiterating Meeting Procedures	Meeting Where Determination Made of Interference of Transaction of Public Business, Interference with Use of Public Property or Threat of Other Criminal Act, with Order Restored by Removal	Meeting Where Order Cannot Be Restored
Not recognize a violating or breaching person's, attendee's or participant's request to speak, as applicable, until decorum is observed.	Not recognize a violating or breaching person's, attendee's or participant's request to speak, as applicable, until decorum is observed.	Not recognize a violating or breaching person's, attendee's or participant's request to speak, as applicable, until decorum is observed.
Declare the person's, attendee's, or participant's actions out of order.	Declare the person's, attendee's or participant's actions out of order.	Declare the person's, attendee's or participant's actions out of order.
Meeting resumes.	Temporarily recess the meeting until order is restored. Members of the Elected body will depart the room but will not gather in a quorum or more outside of the room.	Temporarily recess the meeting and declare that the meeting will be resumed at a time certain on that same date, with some members joining remotely.
	Issue the person, attendee or participant a verbal warning and/or directive that the person, attendee or participant is out of order and shall follow the rules of order and decorum, be silent unless recognized to speak and/or immediately cease such conduct.	Move members to their designated locations, with less than a quorum at any one designated location, and connect their devices to Zoom meeting. One member of the body will remain in Council Chambers.

	If after issuance of a verbal warning as provided above, the person, attendee or participant continues to engage in prohibited conduct or otherwise fails to comply with the presiding officer's warning, the presiding officer may further direct or order the person, attendee or participant to immediately leave the meeting.	Meeting resumes with some members remote and one member of the body in the Council Chambers. Meeting is broadcast on screens in Council Chambers.
	If the person, attendee or participant so ordered as provided above does not immediately abide by the presiding officer's order or directive by leaving the meeting, and/or the person, attendee or participant continues such prohibited conduct, the City will find the person to be trespassing and/or in violation of Minn. Stat. §624.72.	
	The presiding officer may direct any law enforcement officer to remove the person from the meeting.	
	Meeting resumes.	

The City records, broadcasts, and posts video of City Council Meetings online. The use of cameras, video, and other recording devices is permitted during City Council meetings. However, these devices must be used in an unobtrusive manner that does not disrupt or delay the meeting. Cell phones and other devices must be silenced during meetings.

Appendix III

Tips for Successful Public Service

- ◆ Speak the majority vote (rather than personal vote) of the City Council to avoid confusing the public.
- ◆ Learn about the City, its history, operations, finances, City ordinances, Charter and policies.
- ◆ Devote sufficient time to the office and to studying the present and future problems of the community.
- ◆ Save energy and time by setting priorities. Governing a City requires a team effort. Be a team player.
- ◆ Use caution when making public decisions because they represent the community. Be careful to not allow personal experiences to influence decisions and focus on what the community needs as a whole. Take budget preparation seriously because it influences the next year as well as future years.
- ◆ Make decisions on the basis of public policy and be consistent. Treat similar situations similarly, and avoid favoritism.
- ◆ Be proactive. Focus on ways to prevent problems. Find the long-term public interest of the community as a whole rather than focusing on the demands of special interest groups.
- ◆ Be thoughtful when making decisions and be careful to not rush to judgment.
- ◆ Embrace change. Look for ways to be responsible through new ideas from the community, staff, the public and other Council Members.
- ◆ If not sure of an answer to a question, it's okay to say, "I don't know the answer." Then find the answer to that question within a reasonable time limit. Providing correct information is important. The City Manager can generally be very helpful.
- ◆ Remember that most decisions and actions require approval of the governing body, and this takes a majority vote.
- ◆ Keep in mind that Council Members have legal authority as a governing body.
- ◆ Keep other Council Members and the City Manager in the communication loop about topics because this puts everyone on the same page, using the City Manager as the voice to communicate to a quorum or more of fellow Council Members.
- ◆ Participate in official meetings with the dignity and decorum fitting those who hold public trust.
- ◆ Personal dress and courteous behavior at meetings help create an environment for making sound public decisions.
- ◆ Conduct official public meetings with some formality and follow rules of procedure. Formal meetings expedite the process and tend to promote better decision making.
- ◆ Ask questions. Be curious. Don't make assumptions.
- ◆ Be active. Vote yes or no on motions. Respect an official position and share it as the voice of one City Council.
- ◆ Respect the letter and intent of the open meetings law. Be trusted by not repeating information under any circumstances unless there is a professional reason to do so.
- ◆ Retain competent, key employees, pay them well, trust their professional judgment and recognize their authority and responsibilities.
- ◆ Focus on policy-making and allow the City Manager to work with the City's day-to-day operations. Work within the system by directing businesses and people to City staff as

appropriate (such as suppliers and vendors). Direct contact with governing body Members should be with the governing body as a whole.

- ◆ Be accountable for policies and decisions made.
- ◆ Be positive and ask the right questions. "How can we do this?"
- ◆ Learn to evaluate recommendations and alternative courses of action. Request options and encourage imaginative solutions.
- ◆ Focus on the long-term future of the City to avoid taking short-term gains at the expense of long-term losses.
- ◆ In determining the public interest, balance personal rights and property interests, recognize that in decisions must be made with the best interest of those involved in mind.
- ◆ Focus on the total development—physical, economic and social—of the community.
- ◆ Keep in contact and cooperate with federal, state, county and school officials. Cities must work within the intergovernmental system to be effective.
- ◆ Get to know officials of neighboring and similar size cities. Visit other cities, particularly those with a reputation of being well run.
- ◆ Listen to fellow Council Members and the public to better understand what they are trying to say.
- ◆ Keep constituents informed and encourage citizen participation.
- ◆ Remember what's said privately and publicly can often be seen as news. Be friendly and deal effectively with the news media and represent the City Council as one voice. Consult with the City Manager if there are any questions or help needed. Be careful about rumors. Check them out and help clarify any false information.
- ◆ Take care in those appointed to boards and commissions to ensure they are capable and representative of the whole community.
- ◆ Use manuals, guides and other technical assistance and information. Attend workshops and conferences to grow.
- ◆ Focus on the future and try to leave the City better than when first becoming a Council Member.
- ◆ At least once a year, schedule a governing body discussion to review processes and procedures. Ask "How are we doing? How can we do things better?"
- ◆ Be enthusiastic and positive about public service and the privilege to serve and make it a fun and rewarding experience.
- ◆ Be a leader, as well as part of the team of elected and appointed officials who were selected to make the City an even better place to live.
- ◆ Celebrate! Good things do happen. Let the public share those successes.

Source: [*Adapted from the League of Kansas Municipalities*](#)