

# **OWASSO CITY COUNCIL**

## **CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT**

The citizens of the City of Owasso expect and are entitled to a local government that reflects uncompromising integrity and serves the public interest. The City of Owasso Code of Ethics and Conduct was implemented to clearly establish standards of conduct to govern the professional and relevant personal conduct of City Council members.

### **Compliance with all Laws**

City Council members shall comply with the laws of the United States, the State of Oklahoma and the City of Owasso in the performance of their public duties. Such laws include but are not limited to: the United States and State of Oklahoma Constitutions, the City of Owasso Charter, laws pertaining to conflicts of interest, election campaigns, financial disclosures, open meeting law, open records law, the City of Owasso Code of Ordinances and all policies adopted by the City Council.

### **Integrity and Accuracy**

City Council members are expected to perform their duties with absolute integrity. No member of the City Council shall under any circumstances make a statement for any purpose that is known by the member to be inaccurate or intended to be misleading.

### **Conduct of Members**

It is acceptable and expected that City Council members may disagree about issues brought before the Council. However, it is not acceptable for any City Council member to make derogatory comments about other Council members, their opinions or their actions. City Council members shall refrain from exhibiting abusive conduct, personal allegations or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of the City Council, members of City boards or commissions, the staff and the public.

The professional and personal conduct of City Council members should be above reproach and shall avoid even the appearance of impropriety. City Council members should conduct their official and personal affairs in such a manner that does not in any way suggest that they may be improperly influenced in the performance of their official duties. City Council members shall, to the best of their ability, serve the citizens of the City of Owasso conscientiously and with honesty and impartiality. City Council members shall seek to perform their duties with diligence, efficiency and courtesy. Members of the City Council shall each make impartial decisions based upon consideration and analysis of the facts, circumstances, merits and laws of each case without taking into account their personal considerations or opinions.

## **Electronic Devices During Meetings**

In the spirit of the Open Meeting Act, and in furtherance of the City Council's commitment to conducting government business with as much transparency as possible, electronic devices belonging to a Councilor should be turned off or set on airplane mode during City Council meetings. Use of electronic devices by City Council members for talking, texting, email or otherwise during City Council meetings is, except for emergency communications, prohibited. It is the City Council's intent to prohibit electronic communications between members of the Council and other persons during City Council meetings. Prohibiting communications of this type enables the Council to operate with maximum transparency and allows Council members to avoid any appearance or perception of engaging in discussions or deliberations not open to the public during City Council meetings.

## **Respect for Process**

City Council members shall perform their duties with the processes and rules of order established by the City Council. Upon a "Call to Order" of the City Council meeting, Councilors will respect that a meeting is in progress and recognize that it is inappropriate to temporarily exit the meeting unless a recess or adjournment has been called by the mayor.

## **Public Meetings**

City Council members have the right to endorse candidates for all City Council seats and other elected offices. However, it is inappropriate to mention endorsements during City Council meetings or other official City meetings or hearings. Members of the City Council shall not provide testimonials or endorsements that identify themselves as City Council members. Such remarks should make clear that they in no way reflect the official position of the City Council or the City of Owasso.

City Council members shall prepare themselves for discussions of public issues brought before the City Council. City Council members shall listen courteously and attentively to all discussion and comment on the issue by the public, City staff and other City Council members. City Council members shall refrain from interrupting other speakers unless compelled to do so to ensure compliance with City Council policies or processes for public meetings and shall additionally refrain from interfering with the orderly conduct of City Council meetings.

## **Impartiality**

All City Council meetings and hearings shall be conducted fairly and impartially. City Council members shall not show favoritism in carrying out the City's business. The receipt of campaign contributions should not in any circumstance constitute a basis for preferential treatment.

### **Acting in the Public Interest**

Stewardship of the public interest is the primary goal and concern of each member of the City Council. Therefore, City Council members will work together for the common good of the citizens of Owasso and not for any private or personal interest, and City Council members will strive to assure fair and equal treatment of all persons, claims, issues or transactions brought before the Owasso City Council.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Any member of the City Council who has a conflict of interest, financial or otherwise, in any matter brought before the City Council for consideration or action shall declare and disclose the conflict of interest to the City Council and shall not participate in discussion or voting on the matter. A conflict of interest shall be defined as a statutory conflict of interest or any situation, circumstance or financial interest that has the potential, in the City Councilor's opinion and judgment, to interfere with the proper exercise of public duty.

The minutes of a meeting wherein a declaration of a conflict was made shall not record a vote on behalf of a City Council member who leaves the room during discussion and voting upon the issue. The minutes of such meeting shall, however, record a "no" vote if the City Council member remains in the room and abstains from voting, such recordation being in accordance with Oklahoma State Law and the Owasso Code of Ordinances.

### **Gifts and Favors**

City Council members shall not directly or indirectly solicit, receive or accept any gift if 1) a reasonable inference could be drawn that the gift was intended to influence them in the performance of their official duties, or, 2) the gift is intended to serve as a reward or in appreciation of any official action taken by the City Council member. City Council members shall not solicit or accept any gifts, favors or promises of future benefits which might compromise the independent judgment and action or which might give the appearance of being compromised. City Council members shall not take special advantage of services or opportunities for personal gain, by virtue of their public offices, that are not available to the public in general.

### **Political Advocacy**

City Council members shall not utilize the City's name or seal for purposes of endorsing any political candidate, business, program or other entity or activity unless brought to a vote before the City Council and approved by a majority of the seated Council members.

## **Political Fundraising Activities**

No City Council member shall use his or her position, authority or influence, whether actually possessed or anticipated, to interfere with or affect the results of an election or to obtain a political or other type contribution. City Council members shall not use or attempt to use any political endorsement in connection with any appointment to any City board or commission.

These rules are not intended to preclude City Council members from political fundraising activities, but to ensure that these activities are undertaken only at private initiative and expenses in their role as private citizens and thus do not reflect upon the official activities of the City.

## **Communication**

City Council members shall publicly share substantive information that is relevant to a matter under consideration by the City Council which was received by the Council member from sources external to the public decision-making process.

## **Confidential Information**

City Council members shall respect and preserve the confidentiality of information concerning affairs of the City. City Council members shall neither disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization nor use such information in any way to advance or further their personal, financial or private matters.

## **Advocacy**

City Council members shall represent the official policies or positions of the City Council to the best of their ability when designated as delegates or representatives of the City. If a City Council member acting as a delegate or representative of the City presents their personal opinions or positions on such an issue the member shall explicitly state that their comments do not represent the City of Owasso or the City Council.

## **Policy Role of City Council Members**

City Council members shall respect and adhere to the Council–Manager form of municipal government implemented in the City of Owasso through its charter and as outlined in Title 11 of the Oklahoma Statutes. The Council–Manager form of government requires the City Council to determine all matters of policy for the City of Owasso with the advice, information and analysis provided by City staff, the public and other City boards and commissions. Additionally, the Council–Manager form of municipal government establishes that the City Manager shall be responsible for all administrative functions of the City. Accordingly, City Council members shall not interfere with or impair the ability of the City Manager and other City staff to determine and implement administrative matters.

## **Implementation of Code of Ethics and Conduct**

This Code of Ethics and Conduct is intended to be self-enforcing by members of the City Council. City Council members shall be thoroughly familiar with this Code and shall make every effort to embrace its provisions. The Code of Ethics and Conduct shall be included in the orientation training for newly elected City Council members. All City Council members shall sign a statement affirming they have read and understand the City of Owasso Code of Ethics and Conduct.