



CITY OF CLAREMONT

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March 17, 1999

The Honorable Katherine Triantafillou
City Councillor
City of Cambridge
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge MA 02139

Dear Councillor Triantafillou:

It was a pleasure meeting you at the National League of cities meeting in Washington, D.C.

Per your request, enclosed is a copy of the norms for the Claremont City Council. I hope you find this information helpful.

I wish you the best of luck.

Sincerely,

Karen M. Rosenthal
Mayor

P:/Tgates/Council/Ltrs/

Encl.

CITY OF CLAREMONT

COUNCIL NORMS AND PROCEDURES

General

- To take courageous action when necessary to keep Claremont on the growing edge of well run, well managed innovative cities.
- Council provides leadership and participates in regional, state and national programs and meetings.
- Council looks to commissions and committees for independent advice and some legislative actions.
- Other community leaders are included in the City government system.
- There is extensive citizen participation and work on City programs and documents.
- There are numerous meetings, other than regular council meetings.
- We stress training for staff, council, and commission members.
- Council members will inform the city manager's secretary when they will be out of town as early as possible and it will be put on the Council Calendar.
- Council members get the same information as much as possible: citizen complaints, letters, background, etc. (everyone gets a copy of everything.)
- Council members will determine for themselves, which commission packets they want to receive.
- Use technology to reduce amount of paper.
- Return unwanted reports and documents to staff for distributing to the public or for recycling.
- Fiscal health.

Council Values

- The council and city manager are a participatory team.
- High energy, open minded, achievement oriented.
- To care and have respect for each other as a person.
- Be straightforward; no hidden agendas.
- There is humor.
- Traditions are respected, but not binding.

COUNCIL NORMS AND PROCEDURES

Page 2

Council Interaction and Communication

- Council members will take seriously the responsibility of reporting to council on sub-committees and other regional, state, and national board/agency/group activities they are involved in.
- Individual responsibility is to initiate resolution of problems A.S.A.P.
- When giving information to each other outside of meetings, use "phone mates," E-mail, or voice mail as much as possible.
- No cheap shots at each other during public meetings, in the press, or any other time.
- Relationships are informal, but not casual in public--be aware of impact on, and perception of, public.
- Council members will be flexible in covering for each other.
- Substantive council/manager retreat items are to receive public discussion. One-on-one communications will remain private.
- Council committees:
 - Committee areas belong to the whole council; they are not seen as territorial.
 - Committees are responsible to keep rest of council informed, and other members are responsible for letting committee know if they want more information or to give input.
 - Before committees start moving in new direction, they will get direction from the rest of council.
 - Committee reports will be made under Council Reports, when appropriate.
 - Committee memos will be sent on interim basis to update other council members on:
 - Issues being discussed.
 - Options being considered.
 - Progress.

Council Interaction and Communication With Staff

- City Manager
 - Council members should always feel free to go to the city manager.
 - When a council member is unhappy about a department, he/she should always talk it over with the city manager and/or the assistant city manager, not the department head (city manager surfaces to council any serious violations of this norm).
 - Concerns about the department head must be taken to the city manager only.

COUNCIL NORMS AND PROCEDURES

Page 3

- In passing along critical information, the city manager will call the mayor and they will decide who should call the rest of the council; in some cases, department heads will call mayor directly.
- The council will provide ongoing feedback, information, and perceptions to the city manager, including some response to written communications requesting feedback.
- The council ombudsman is the assistant city manager (when a council member is uncertain as to whom to call or where to go if an issue crosses department boundaries).
- Staff in General
 - Council can talk with department heads if asking for information.
 - An informal system of direct communication with staff is used, but not abused, by council.
 - Council will always be informed by staff when an unusual event occurs that the public would be concerned about, i.e., anyone wounded by gunfire, area cordoned off by police or fire, etc.
 - The council and staff will not blind side each other in public; if there is an issue or a question a council member has on an agenda item, that member will contact staff prior to the meeting.

Council Options for Keeping Informed

- Read commission minutes in order to find out what is being worked on.
- Read documents on planning items.
- City manager will publish "coming attractions" list for council.
- Council members do their homework.
- There is extensive use of staff and commission reports, and commission minutes and staff reports will be on computer.

Mayor Selection

- Whoever wants a role, or does not want a role, has the responsibility to tell all other members.
- So far as possible, and until decided otherwise, council members will take turns as mayor.
- To be two years of service, and roles will be decided at the end of the second year.
- This council will not have a lock-step rotation system for selecting the mayor.
- Mayor pro tem is not a natural ascendancy to mayor.
 - Count to four, not to two, when discussing this issue.
- The mayor and mayor pro tem serve at the pleasure of the other council members.

COUNCIL NORMS AND PROCEDURES

Page 4

- Each council member has the obligation to keep other council members informed of things they are working on.

Mayor's Role

- Each mayor operates somewhat uniquely from past mayors; the role is defined by the person, based on that person's style.
- The mayor will inform the council of any informal correspondence sent out to anyone in relation to City business - use E-mail whenever possible.

Citizen Complaints

- Staff will attach their response to the copy of the letter received when sending to council.
- Council will be informed of telephone complaints, as well as those in writing.
- Staff will draft a copy of responses for council to use; letters over council signatures checked out with signatory.
- Council should not go on a hands-on mode when something happens; it will be referred to staff (give staff time to respond.)
- Responses to citizens are customized.
- Copies of responses to be included in individual packets.
- If a council member wants action based on citizen complaint, they should go through the city manager's office to ensure it gets into the tracking system.
- Written responses will be selective.

Public Meetings

- Agendas
 - Formulation
 - Mayor and city manager set the agenda.
 - Public hearings are held on almost everything, regardless of whether they are required.
 - The mayor will meet with the city manager to finalize the agenda and help decide what should go on the consent calendar, etc.
 - Any council member can request an item be placed on the agenda.
 - Council may move to table any agenda item for future study.

COUNCIL NORMS AND PROCEDURES

Page 5

- Council members will feel free to ask for continuance if enough time has not been available for that council member to prepare.
- If a member is ill or away for any big or "personal" agenda item, item can be tabled at the member's request.
- Consent Calendar
 - There is judicious use of the Consent Calendar, such as minutes, routine City business, some appeals, things already approved in the budget.
 - Mayor will ask, "Is there anyone who wishes to speak to anything on the Consent Calendar?" (to be in bold type on the agenda)-if so, the item is pulled off.
 - If a council member has a question on a Consent Calendar item for their information only, they are to ask staff ahead of time, rather than having it pulled off for discussion during the meeting.
 - If there is time before the meeting, council members will inform each other of items they wish to pull from the Consent Calendar.
 - If something is to be pulled, back-up material will be made available.
 - Staff is prepared to report on every agenda item.
 - Mayor works with city manager to decide how much information needs to be disseminated at the meeting, based on council, audience, and specific item.
 - No packing of audience by individual council members for specific agenda items.
 - There is no smoking at meetings.
 - Corrections to minutes are passed to the city clerk before the meeting.
- Public comment:
 - Required by law.
 - Four minute limit; enforced at mayor's discretion.
 - All done early in meeting.
 - Council members may ask staff to respond when appropriate.
 - Options to be considered by mayor during times of high controversy:
 - Have a designated block of time early in the meeting (20 minutes) and any comments beyond this limit will be held until end of meeting.

COUNCIL NORMS AND PROCEDURES

Page 6

- Mayor to poll audience for indication of number of people wishing to speak, then he/she can call on individuals to speak; this will facilitate the flow of the comment section.

- Public hearings:

- Script will include: staff report, questions from council, commission report, questions from council, applicant report, questions from council, public comment, close public hearing and bring item back to council for discussion.
- Once public comment is closed, further discussion will not be entertained.
- Applicant shall limit comments to 10 minutes.
- Public comments shall be limited to 4 minutes per speaker.
- It is acceptable to ask questions of a speaker for clarification.
- Each speaker will be thanked.
- Council will not respond until all public comment has been received.
- Mayor can survey the audience at any time, to then move agenda items up or back, to meet the audience concerns.
- Treat everyone with courtesy - inappropriate behavior is derogatory, snappy, sarcastic comments to the public.
- Treat public equally; refer to citizens by surnames, etc.; there is familiarity with citizens (small town) which may interfere with process.
- In council meetings when citizens are agitated, there will be a short recess for the council members to go into the audience and talk with individuals.
- The first 30 minutes of the council meetings, in addition to present items, to include council reports and city manager reports; action items are discussed first and reports second; council will ask staff for a summary, if appropriate.
- Mayor allows other members to speak first and then gives his/her views and summarizes.
- Voting:
 - Everyone speaks before a motion.
 - Attempts are always made to get consensus on each large issue.
 - On split votes, each member shares his/her views about the issue and the reasons for his/her vote.

COUNCIL NORMS AND PROCEDURES

Page 7

- Once a vote is taken, council members will support the action taken; if a council member wants it to be reconsidered, he/she will inform the council.
- There will be roll call votes on large, monetary issues, and when a divided council is obvious.
- On more routine items, the mayor shall ask for objections and then so order.
- When any council member believes something would be helpful during a meeting, he/she is free to suggest change in the procedure.
- Department heads will generally attend every meeting; other staff attendance at council meetings is at the city manager's discretion.
- Council member discussions will not be redundant if they concur with what has already been said.

Closed Sessions

- Council will get written reports for closed session items as much as possible; these reports are to be turned in at the end of the meeting.
- City manager will ask for pre-meeting closed sessions if it will save the City money (due to consultant fees, etc.); to be held no earlier than 5:30 p.m.
- No violation of Closed Session confidentiality; council members will not talk to effected/opposing parties or anyone else (press, etc.) regarding Closed Session items without council direction and concurrence.
- Confidentiality relates to any non-public discussion items.

Special Meetings

- One member or more can request the mayor to call a special meeting and the mayor will call it unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Election Year

- Council members will not be a member of any candidate's political campaign committee or be visibly involved in a campaign.
- Council members will not give public endorsement to any candidate (except if their term is up and they have announced they are retiring.)
- People will be treated as candidates only after they have filed papers.
- Acknowledge candidates when they are in the audience.

Commissions

- If any council member disagrees with, or has questions about, a commission's direction or believes an applicant is being unnecessarily mired, it can be brought up at council meetings during approval of minutes, for discussion of full council; if summary of action of commissions also points out an issue, such issue will be discussed at "Council Reports."
- Problem solving issues with commissions will be done as much as possible with chairs and vice chairs.
- Commission needs:
 - To know council vision.
 - Understanding of their roles/authority/no-no's.
 - To know annual priorities.
 - Process/parameters within which to work, i.e., citizen involvement.
 - What to do when commission/council disagree.
 - To be open minded and loyal to the community regardless of view – civility.
 - Chairs to receive annual training, usually in September.
 - To receive an annual training session with council and staff for which chairs have assisted in the development of the agenda.
- Criteria for commissions (for re-appointment and in extreme cases, removal):
 - Conflicts of interest.
 - Attendance (missing two meetings without excuse).
 - Participation.
 - Preparation.
 - Support of community vision/values.
 - Respect for staff/public.
 - Working for community versus personal purposes.
 - Team player.

Comms. and Rpts from City 2245
Officers #2

A communication was received from
Karen M. Rosenthal, Mayor, City
of Claremont, California, trans-
mitting a copy of the norms for the
Claremont City Council.

In City Council March 29, 1999

Referred to
Joint Task Force on Council
Deliberations + Effectiveness

Referred to
Rules Committee on motion

of C. Triantafyllou
3/30 sent to C. Davis