

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD - City Council Meeting January 20

Agenda Item 5 a. City Council Governance, Agreements, Roles & Responsibilities and Communication

Good Evening Councilmembers, Ken Dickinson, San Rafael Meadows.

I attended the November 12 Retreat regarding the Governance Document along with Greg Andrew who is here tonight and Amy Likover from the Federation of San Rafael Neighborhoods.

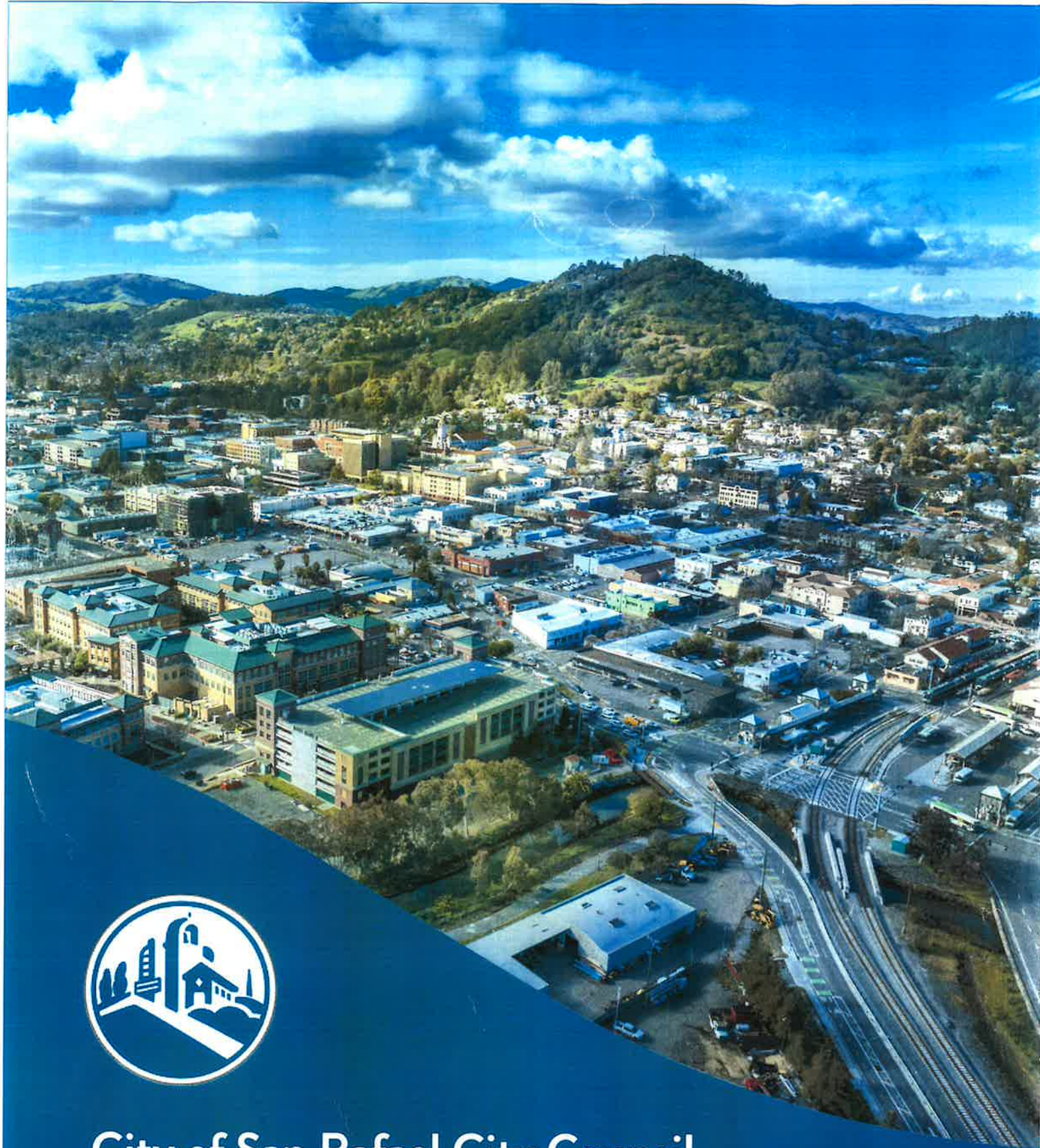
I have to say that the document you are considering tonight is nowhere near ready for approval and I would urge you to remove this item from the agenda. At the retreat it was suggested that you may need another public meeting before the final copy, I believe by Councilmember Maika Llorens Gulati and I would agree.

The document contains numerous factual errors, inconsistent and confusing formatting, and punctuation, awkward and unclear language and phrasing that is at times confusing. It is clearly still very much a draft copy and in need of further proofreading and editing and needs a second or third set of eyes on it to have a public facing document that the city could stand behind.

Of greater concern is that the document has seen significant revisions since we last met. And important sections of the original have been taken out despite assurance via email after the retreat that certain sections were not being removed. Why for example was Team Work (page 14 on the 2025 version) removed from The Mayor's Key Responsibilities in the 2026 version? (page 8). That does not make sense.

So again, I urge you not to approve this document as is. This is such an important document and so critical for the public's understanding of how our City Council is supposed to work that it deserves another public meeting.

Thank you for listening



City of San Rafael City Council

Governance, Agreements, Roles & Responsibilities,
and Communication Protocols

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City of San Rafael City Council – Governance, Agreements, Roles & Responsibilities, and Communication Protocols – January 2026

The City Council Governance, Agreements, Roles & Responsibilities, and Communication Protocols document provides a clear and shared framework for how the San Rafael City Council, Mayor, City Manager, and staff work together under the council–manager form of government. This document is intended to strengthen effective governance by establishing agreements, clarifying roles and communication expectations, and standards of professional conduct.

This document consolidates best practices related to governance, councilmember agreements, interactions with staff, coordination with the public, and appropriate parameters for official City advocacy. It also serves as a practical reference to support consistency, accountability, and transparency in Council operations, including onboarding of future councilmembers. Collectively, these protocols are designed to support a cohesive, high-functioning City Council, reinforce ethical and legal compliance, and preserve the appropriate distinction between policy leadership and operational oversight while fostering mutual respect and trust.

This document has ^{four} ~~three~~ sections, and two attachments, as listed as follows:

1. Governance and Councilmember Agreements
2. Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Manager Roles & Responsibilities
3. Interactions with Staff and Communication Protocols
4. Coordination and Communication with the Public
5. Attachments

Attachments:

- A. Guidelines for Elected Officials: Charitable Solicitations and “Behested Payments”
- B. Guidelines on Board Participation on Non-City Boards

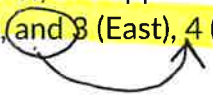
SECTION 1 – GOVERNANCE & COUNCILMEMBER AGREEMENTS

1.1 Governance

The City of San Rafael is a city council-city manager form of government; a structure in which an elected city council serves as the legislative body, setting policies and making decisions on behalf of the community. The council appoints a professional city manager, who serves as the chief executive officer and oversees the day-to-day operations of the city.

The city manager is responsible for implementing the council’s policies, managing city staff, preparing the budget, and ensuring efficient delivery of public services. This system combines political leadership from the elected council with professional expertise from the manager, emphasizing accountability, efficiency, and nonpartisan administration. The city manager fosters an organizational culture that values transparency, responsiveness, and professional judgment by department directors and managers, encouraging proactive and responsive communication with the mayor and councilmembers, while maintaining the city manager’s operational oversight role.

In 2018, the San Rafael city council adopted an ordinance approving the move from at-large voting to “by-district” voting for city council elections, in which each of the four (4) members of the council, other than the mayor must reside in a district and is elected only by the voters within that district, and approving the district map. The city council seats are in District 1 (South), 2 (West), and 3 (East), 4 (North). The mayor is separately elected by a citywide vote.



One of the hallmarks of at-large voting is that all councilmembers “think citywide” and not just about their neighborhood or area. This approach is the preferred practice even though the council members are elected by district.

City resources are allocated to address priorities on a citywide basis using a strategic planning process to set council goals, objectives and annual workplans, adopted by the city council as a governing body in a dually noticed public meeting. Funding decisions are strategic, based on current citywide needs and capacity, and not an equal distribution by district.

The city council functions as a high-performing team and engages professionally and respectfully. The agreements below are intended to memorialize practices that are already working and that the mayor and city council would like to reinforce. The council follows the Brown Act and seeks clarity with the City Attorney’s Office whenever needed.

1.2 Mayor & Councilmember Agreements on How to Maximize City Council Effectiveness

The mayor and city council agree on the following practices to guide their work.

1.2.A. Considers District Interests with Citywide Perspective

Each councilmember considers their district’s interests but always maintains a citywide perspective. They remain united in service to the community. And never “exchange votes” (e.g., support an issue in a different district and expect support for an issue in your district), and instead always cast votes with an at-large perspective of what is best for San Rafael overall, considering the needs and interests of the entire community.

Councilmembers are the primary point of contact within their district and communicate with the residents regularly. When doing so, they speak as the district councilmember. Councilmembers may only communicate “city positions” that the full city council has voted on in open publicly noticed meeting. Councilmembers shall not speak on behalf of or act in a role similar to a councilmember of another district, unless explicitly requested by that district councilmember.

1.2.B. Interactions Outside Your District

Councilmembers go to events and activities in all city council districts, not just their own. If a councilmember is attending a community meeting or ceremonial event in a district outside of their own, the following agreements apply:

- Prior to the meeting/event/activity, send a courtesy communication to the mayor and that district councilmember, for awareness, and in case they want to attend as well.
- During the meeting/event/activity, do not speak on behalf of that district's councilmember, but instead offer to pass along issues or concerns to the district councilmember.
- Remain mindful not to inadvertently commit the city to any particular action or position.
- When sharing perspectives publicly, clarify that you are not speaking on behalf of the entire council or city.
- Educate the community on the council-manager form of government and the roles of the mayor, district councilmembers, city manager and staff.
- Demonstrate support for fellow councilmembers.
- Inform the district's councilmember and city manager about anything substantive heard from the community regarding city business.

1.2.C. Emerging Issues or Initiatives

When an emerging issue and/or initiative arises outside of the annual strategic planning and budgeting cycle, councilmembers should reach out to the mayor, to the extent allowed under the Brown Act, to determine if the new initiative rises to the level of potential re-prioritization of a council goal as identified in the annual workplan. If so, the mayor will confer with the city manager to determine next steps.

1.2.D. Council Appointment Assignments

Every year, at the council's annual retreat, the mayor facilitates a discussion about the annual appointment process to various bodies and subcommittees. Councilmember assignments rotate periodically, including the role of vice mayor, such that each councilmember has the opportunity to broaden their expertise in all areas of city policy. The rotation will be based on whatever will best serve the city and the highest functioning of the Council and not based on seniority. The city council will approve the annual appointment assignments in an open, publicly noticed council meeting.

Councilmembers may be invited to events on subjects that other councilmembers are assigned to through the formal, annual appointment process. In that case, the invited councilmember should either defer to the assigned councilmember (the preferred option) or, the invited councilmember should follow up with the district councilmember and inform them about anything substantiative that arose at the event.

1.2.E. Communications with other Elected Officials

When contacted by other elected officials, such as the Board of Supervisors members, or state/federal legislators:

- Be mindful not to inadvertently represent your position as that of the full city council.

- To the extent allowable in the Brown Act, send a courtesy communication to the mayor regarding the discussed topics, recognizing the mayor's role as the top regional political contact.

1.2.F. Council Teamwork

Council members

- Ask for what they need from fellow council members and how they can support them.
- Healthy dissent is practiced as part of good governance.

1.2.G. Political Advocacy by Councilmembers

This section establishes clear, consistent governance standards for when the San Rafael City Council will issue official statements, adopts proclamations, sign onto advocacy efforts, or otherwise take public positions beyond routine legislative and administrative actions. It clarifies that advocacy effort should be considered in context of maintaining focus on matters within the City's authority and responsibility

On January 20, 2015, the city council adopted [Resolution No. 13870](#), which established a formal legislative platform and a streamlined procedure for the city to support or oppose pending state and federal legislation, which established a formal legislative platform and a streamlined procedure for the city to support or oppose pending state and federal legislation.

By establishing that advocacy efforts delivered by an individual councilmember remain within the personal role (not official staff action), the integrity, neutrality, and professional credibility of the city's administrative operations are protected.

Official city council advocacy includes, but is not limited to:

- Resolutions or proclamations adopted by the City Council.
- Letters, statements, or sign-on communications issued in the name of the City Council.
- Formal participation in advocacy coalitions or collective statements.

Nothing in this section limits the ability of individual councilmembers to express personal views or advocate in their individual capacity. When doing so, they shall:

- Clearly distinguish their personal stance from city policy, and
- Not give the impression that their perspective is the official position of the city council or city staff, and
- Expressly acknowledge that they are not speaking on behalf of the City of San Rafael.

Guiding Principles

Official city council advocacy should:

1. Be grounded in the city's municipal purpose, legal authority, and service responsibilities.
2. Reflect the collective judgment of the city council acting as a body.
3. Avoid diluting the city's effectiveness by engaging in matters outside its jurisdiction without a clear local nexus.
4. Be applied consistently across issues, communities, and requests.

A councilmember should not use city letterhead, or city staff time, or resources to endorse or campaign for candidates for public office (local, state, federal) or to imply that city staff are participating in a campaign or advocacy on behalf of a candidate.

Councilmembers should not direct or appear to direct city staff, department directors, or the city manager's office to carry out advocacy efforts, promotional campaigns, or external lobbying on their behalf.

General Eligibility Criteria

The city council may consider official advocacy only when all of the following criteria are met.

1. The issue has a direct local municipal nexus and has a demonstrable connection to San Rafael residents, city services, municipal operations, legal authority, or fiscal responsibilities.
2. The city has legal authority to act, or a clear and reasonable opportunity to influence outcomes through established local, regional, or intergovernmental channels.
3. The proposed action aligns with adopted city council goals and the city's strategic plan.
4. The issue demonstrably affects a substantial portion of San Rafael residents, city facilities, or city services, or has a clear and foreseeable impact on community-wide public safety, access to services, or civic participation.

National and International Issues

The city council will not take official positions on national or international matters, including wars, foreign policy, or international conflicts, unless:

1. The council determines that the matter has a direct and substantial impact on the city, such as effects on local public safety, economic stability, critical infrastructure, or legally protected populations; and
2. The action is approved by a two thirds (2/3) supermajority vote of the full city council in a publicly noticed meeting.

Absent these findings, statements regarding such matters are understood to represent the personal views of individual councilmembers, not the position of the city council as a governing body.

Proclamations and Symbolic Actions

Proclamations and symbolic recognitions may be issued when they:

- Serve a clear civic, educational, or community-building purpose;
- Reflect inclusive community values; and
- Do not require the city to take sides in political, ideological, or foreign policy disputes outside the city's authority.

1.2.H. City Council Professional Development, Conferences, and Travel

- To ensure equitable and transparent use of city funds for councilmember professional development, conferences, and travel that directly support effective local governance

and alignment with the City's strategic plan goals and objectives, The city council will establish a budget for professional development, conferences, and travel during the annual fiscal year budget process.

- Activities must be directly related to local government, municipal policymaking, and/or initiatives that advance the city council's goals and strategic plan.
- Allowable expenses include:
 - Conference, workshop, or training registration fees.
 - Travel, lodging, and meal expenses consistent with city policy.
 - Memberships in professional organizations relevant to municipal governance.
- The city manager or their designee will review and approve requests based on relevance to role as a local government official and budget availability.
- Under the Fair Political Practices Commission Requirement Form 700, travel reimbursements for city-related conferences are not reportable expenses, and therefore not required to be disclosed.

2 SECTION 2: MAYOR, VICE MAYOR, COUNCILMEMBERS & CITY MANAGER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Role Summary – Mayor

The City of San Rafael is unique in Marin County in that it is the only city with a directly elected mayor, as all the other cities and towns rotate the mayor position. Additionally, the San Rafael mayor position historically has taken on additional responsibilities that may be unique to San Rafael.

The mayor is the elected citywide leader of San Rafael, who is elected by all residents of San Rafael to provide leadership for the city. This role includes facilitating city policy discussions, representing San Rafael at the regional and state levels, and leading major civic initiatives in collaboration with the city manager, city council, and other stakeholders. As the official voice of the city, the mayor sets the tone for public communications and works with the city manager to review the agenda for city council meetings. The mayor ensures that city council actions reflect the long-term interests and priorities of the community and address its diverse needs.

Key Responsibilities - Mayor

Citywide Leadership

The mayor represents the entire community and promotes a cohesive vision for San Rafael's future. Elected at-large, the mayor works with the city council and city manager to advocate for policies that foster the collective well-being of all residents and ensure the city's long-term success. The mayor maintains awareness of key policy issues facing the City at large and works with the city council and city manager to help shape the framework for citywide priorities. The actual setting of priorities and goals, objectives is a collaborative strategic planning effort that involves the entire city council, city manager, city staff and the community. The mayor facilitates councilmember appointments to various bodies or committees through the annual appointment process.

The mayor speaks on behalf of the city council ^{and is} when authorized to author letters of support for public policy decisions made by the city council. The mayor is also authorized to author letters representing the city as a whole, that are in alignment with City's established policies and regulations, adopted by the entire city council. ^{like}

Ceremonial Figurehead for San Rafael

- Represents the city at ceremonial functions or public events, acting as the "face" of the city, especially in interactions with the public or external stakeholders.

Council Meetings

- Runs city council meetings and facilitates the order in which council members participate.

Team Work P (P 14)

Community Engagement

- Actively engages with residents, organizations, stakeholders, and businesses across all neighborhoods to stay connected to the broader community's needs and interests.

Representation and Advocacy

- Serves as San Rafael's primary elected representative in intergovernmental matters, advocating for the city's interests at the County of Marin, regional, state, and national levels.

Strategic Vision

- Spearhead's citywide strategic planning efforts, facilitating a unified approach to addressing the city's major challenges and opportunities. While the mayor plays a key role in fostering collaboration and vision, the city manager leads the implementation of strategic plans and objectives.

2.2 Role Summary – Vice Mayor

- The vice mayor's role rotates on an annual basis.
- Serves as a backup for the mayor for ceremonial responsibilities when the mayor isn't available.
- Serve as mayor pro tempore ("pro-tem") of council meetings in the mayor's absence.

2.3 Role Summary – Councilmember

Councilmembers are elected by districts within the City of San Rafael, ensuring localized perspectives and input are considered in setting policy. Although councilmembers bring forward the unique concerns of their district, they are primarily responsible for serving the interests of the entire city, communicating with the mayor and other councilmembers to support a cohesive, well-balanced approach to policymaking and resource allocation.

Key Responsibilities – Councilmember

District Representation

- Ensures district issues are heard and considered by the full council on subcommittees and at council meetings.
- Following the Brown Act, reach out to the mayor and city manager to ask for support and ideas about how to address district-related issues.
- Attends ceremonial events, such as groundbreakings or ribbon cuttings, regardless of district. If only one councilmember receives an invitation, they will proactively inform the others of the event.

Citywide Policy

- Communicated with the mayor and city manager on policy initiatives that affect the entire city, working to balance district interests with citywide goals.
- Serves on council subcommittees and develops expertise on specific issues (i.e., finance, homelessness) and shares knowledge with colleagues, following the Brown Act.

Representation and Advocacy

- Communicates directly with the mayor on intergovernmental matters, when advocating for the city's interests at the County of Marin, regional, state, and national levels. Provide courtesy notification to the mayor when issues and/or discussions involve external elected officials and executive-level staff in other agencies.
- When serving on an external agency board, the authority to speak/vote on behalf of the city is delegated to the councilmember when in alignment with city policies and goals; otherwise, the item is to be brought back to the full council for discussion in a publicly noticed meeting.

Community Outreach

- Maintains strong connections within the district to keep a pulse on resident concerns, while engaging with citywide initiatives to ensure all voices contribute to policy making.

Legislative Role

- Considers both district-specific and broader community interests when voting in a public city council meeting.
- Reviews all materials (council packet, etc.) prior to the city council meeting and asks questions of the city manager prior to the meeting if needed for clarification or additional information.
- Serves on city council standing and ad hoc subcommittees.

Responsive Representation

- Serves as a liaison between their district and the city manager, responding to local concerns and working with the city manager to address issues that impact both their district and the broader community of San Rafael.

Media

- Upon receipt of a media inquiry, coordinates response with the city manager and/or PIO designee to ensure accuracy and timeliness of response. May directly respond to a media inquiry for a quote, when appropriate.

2.4 Role Summary - City Manager

The city manager serves as the chief executive officer of the City of San Rafael, overseeing the daily operations of the city government under the policy direction of the mayor and city council. As described in the City Charter, the city manager is responsible to the city council for the efficient administration of all city business and operations. Acting as the primary liaison between the city council and city staff, the city manager ensures that council priorities and policies are implemented effectively while providing professional expertise and recommendations to inform decision-making. The city manager is responsible for fostering a high-performing organizational culture, managing municipal operations, maintaining fiscal health, and promoting transparency and equity in service delivery to meet the needs of the community.

Key Responsibilities – City Manager

Executive Leadership

- Implements city council policies and priorities by managing the administration of all city departments and operations, including budget and fiscal management.
- Provides strategic guidance and professional expertise to the mayor, city council, and vice mayor, offering recommendations based on expertise, research, best practices, and community needs.
- Ensures alignment of city operations with council-adopted strategic plans, goals, long-term plans, and the broader vision for San Rafael.

Policy Implementation and Advisement

- Prepares and presents policy recommendations, reports, and analyses to the city council to aid in decision-making.
- Collaborates with the mayor and city council to set strategic goals and priorities while ensuring transparent communication with the community.
- Serves as the primary contact for implementing legislative actions and ensuring compliance with state and federal regulations.

Organizational & Operational Oversight

- Leads the recruitment, development, and retention of a diverse and talented city workforce, fostering a culture of professionalism, innovation, and collaboration.
- Ensures the organization is responsive to community needs and is responsible for implementing the city council's adopted strategic plan.
- Oversees the preparation and administration of the city's budget, ensuring fiscal responsibility and efficient allocation of resources.

Public
info
officer

Community Engagement

- Represents the city in interactions with residents, stakeholders, and community organizations, fostering trust and collaboration through open and transparent communication.
- Promotes civic engagement by attending community meetings and events, gathering input to inform city initiatives.
- Acts as a key point of contact between the city and appointed top executives of external partners, including regional, state, and federal agencies, as well as community-based organization partners.

Collaboration with Elected Officials

- Works closely with the mayor to prepare agendas, review citywide priorities, and coordinate responses to district-specific and citywide issues.
- Supports councilmembers in addressing district-specific concerns while balancing broader citywide objectives.
- Maintains regular communication with the mayor and councilmembers to stay informed on emerging issues and ensure consistent representation of city goals.

Emergency Management

- Serves as the city's director of emergency services and oversee the city's emergency organization in all phases of emergency management, including mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery in support of the community's safety and resilience during crises.
- Represents the city in all dealings with public or private agencies on matters pertaining to emergencies.

Strategic Planning and Innovation

- Leads long-term strategic planning efforts to address community challenges and priorities.
- Drives initiatives that modernize city operations, reduce unnecessary bureaucracy, and enhance service delivery.

Performance and Accountability

- Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of city programs and city staff; ensuring accountability, continuous improvement, and alignment with council and community priorities.
- Reports regularly to the city council and community on progress toward achieving city goals and addressing emerging issues.

3 SECTION 3 – INTERACTION WITH STAFF & COMMUNICATION PROTOCOLS

Section 2 clarifies communication and interaction expectations between the mayor and councilmembers and city staff. It states that council members can communicate directly with

senior leaders for information-gathering and community coordination and defines the city manager's role as the sole authority for directing staff, assigning work, and managing the operations of the city. Additionally, this section covers coordination of communication between the council and the community.

It provides additional guidance on interactions with labor groups and maintaining professional boundaries organizational effectiveness. } ? not clear

In the council-city manager form of government, the city manager is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the city and for directing staff. To maintain clarity of roles while supporting open communication and collaboration, the following guidelines apply:

Councilmember Conduct Toward Staff - Guiding Principles

Staff serves the community under the direction of the city manager by carrying out the city council's policies and providing professional, objective recommendations. Council members must maintain respectful, professional relationships with staff at all times, recognizing that a culture of trust and mutual respect supports effective governance and effective service delivery.

3.1 Professionalism & Respect

- Treats all staff with courtesy, civility, and professionalism, in public and private.
- Recognizes staff's role to provide information and recommendations, not engage in political advocacy.
- Does not publicly criticize, reprimand, or question individual staff performance in meetings or media settings.

3.2 Providing Feedback

- Routes all concerns, performance issues, or complaints about staff to the city manager, who is responsible for supervision and performance management.
- Avoids giving direction to staff or appearing to evaluate or discipline them individually.

3.3 In Meetings & Public Settings

- Maintains a respectful tone during discussions and allow staff to complete presentations before questioning.
- Directs questions to staff in a way that is respectful and professional.
- Avoids using public meetings or statements to single out staff for blame or criticism.

3.4 Public Statements

- When speaking publicly or to the media, do not attribute motives or opinions to staff or imply they acted improperly.
- Reinforce that staff implement the city council's direction through the city manager and serve the community impartially.



3.5 Communication with Staff

The mayor and councilmembers may communicate directly with department directors, assistant city managers, and senior leaders for the purpose of obtaining information, discussing community concerns, and coordinating events. When doing so, councilmembers shall copy the city manager and/or an assistant city manager (based on the functions they oversee) on all substantive communications to ensure situational awareness, role clarity, alignment on priorities, and timely coordination of follow-up. If communication between a councilmember and staff is a conversation, the councilmember shall inform the city manager about the content of any substantive discussion.

- When emailing to obtain general or publicly available information (e.g., items posted on the City's website or previously released to the public), there is no need to copy the city manager or assistant city manager.
- To maintain clear and consistent communication, department directors, assistant city managers, and other key managers will copy the city manager on their communications with the mayor and councilmembers and promptly inform the city manager of interactions where substantive discussion occurred.
- Substantive communications include any conversations, emails, text messages, or meetings between a councilmember and staff that involve policy matters, operational issues, staffing or resource needs, or questions that may influence city priorities, emerging issues, resource allocation, operational decisions, and/or workload.

For purposes of this protocol, "substantive communications" include:

- Asking staff for analysis, work products, recommendations, or opinions on pending policy and/or operational matters.
- Discussing project scope, timelines, or priorities for city initiatives.
- Suggesting or requesting that staff take particular action.
- Raising concerns about staff performance, departmental operations, and/or resource allocation.

Examples of communications that are not substantive include:



- Acknowledging receipt of an email.
- Providing or linking to publicly available information.
- Offering factual explanations to clarify existing city policies, procedures, programs, or decisions.
- Responding to community complaints with general information or directing residents to the appropriate resource; for example, referring residents to the City's website or the Public Works Community Resource Management (CRM) tool (i.e., SeeClickFix), which is the current constituent resource management system for reporting potholes, graffiti, etc. For generic emails inboxes (i.e., endhomeless@cityofsanrafael.org) councilmembers will use these as tools to acknowledge a community member's email and refer them to the appropriate team and/or staff for a resolution.

3.6 Requests for Staff Attendance at Events

- Councilmembers shall not directly ask or direct staff to attend community events, meetings, or functions. Any such requests should be routed through the city manager or assistant city manager, who will determine staff availability and appropriateness of participation.

3.7 Direction and Work Assignments & Priorities

- Direction to staff, initiation of new work assignments, or reprioritization of existing work shall occur only through the city manager or assistant city managers, depending on their direct areas of supervision. This preserves the integrity of the council-manager form of government and ensures that staff receive clear direction.
- Councilmembers should be careful not to inadvertently direct staff or create the impression that staff are being directed, which can sometimes occur when council members make suggestions about what and how they would like the work to be completed.
- While it is appropriate to ask questions or seek factual information, councilmembers should avoid engaging in substantive conversations with staff about city operations, policy development, or project priorities, as these discussions can be interpreted as providing direction or influencing operational decisions and priorities. Any conversation that involves how work should be performed, what actions should be taken, or the timing or prioritization of work should occur only with the city manager or assistant city manager present.

3.8 Working Hours and Communication Channels

- To promote work-life balance and consistency, councilmembers will reach out to staff during regular working hours (typically Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m. - except when public or community meetings occur outside of typical hours). Contact outside these hours should be reserved for emergencies or urgent, time-sensitive matters. Councilmembers are encouraged to send emails at any time, understanding that staff will respond in a timely manner during regular business hours.

3.9 Interaction with Labor Groups

- Councilmembers may meet with any city labor groups 1:1 after first checking in with the city manager. For substantive issues that require additional city staff and/or outside elected officials, it will be the mayor, and, as appropriate, the city manager will serve as the city's representative for these meetings. During periods of active labor negotiations, councilmembers agree to refrain from meeting with labor groups to maintain the integrity of the negotiation process and ensure consistency in communication.

4 SECTION 4 - COORDINATION OF COMMUNICATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC

4.1 Communication with the Public

- To ensure transparency, coordination, and consistent follow-up, the city manager and/or an assistant city manager (based on the functions they oversee) should be copied ("cc'd") on all substantive written communications between the mayor or councilmembers and community members that relate to city business, particularly matters that may impact municipal services, programs, policies, priorities, resources, and/or staff workload.
- Including the city manager in substantive communications is essential under the council-manager form of government, in which the city manager is responsible for the administration of city operations and for directing staff. The city manager is ultimately accountable for all work performed by the organization and must therefore have full situational awareness of issues raised. This ensures that the wishes and policy direction of the city council are effectively implemented by providing the necessary resources, guidance, and follow-up for staff to be successful.

For purposes of this protocol, "substantive communications" includes:

- Policy and/or operational issues, community requests that require staff work, or matters that could influence City priorities, resources, or workload.
- Emails that go beyond routine acknowledgments, referrals to specific contacts, or factual responses.
- Replies to community members that commits the city to exploring or addressing an issue, in a particular way, or in a particular time frame.
- Communications that highlight potential changes in city operations, programs, or services.

Examples of communications that are not substantive include:

- Acknowledging receipt of an email.
- Thanking a community member for their input.
- Providing or linking to publicly available information.
- Offering factual explanations to clarify existing city policies, procedures, programs, or decisions.
- Responding to community complaints with general information or directing residents to the appropriate resource; for example, referring residents to the City's website or SeeClickFix, which is the current constituent resource management system for reporting potholes, graffiti, etc. For generic emails inboxes (i.e., endhomelesses) councilmembers will use these as tools to make acknowledge the residents' email and refer them to the appropriate staff for a resolution.

4.2 Constituent Management

- The mayor and council members use the city council constituent resource management (CRM) system, managed by the city managers' office, when community

member issues are brought to them that are operational in nature (i.e., requests for crosswalk flashing beacons, neighbor-to-neighbor disputes, questions about capital projects, code enforcement inquiries). For policy-level issues, communicate those directly via email to the city manager and/or assistant city manager for resolution.

4.3 Community Written Inquiries

- When an inquiry comes in addressed to the full city council, staff will respond on behalf of the city council and will forward their response to the council on all occasions that are not addressed directly by the mayor or councilmembers. To avoid situations where different staff are being asked to respond by different councilmembers, these inquiries should be forwarded to the city council CRM system.
- Individual councilmembers are not prohibited from directly responding to written community inquiries, such as email, but must follow the Brown Act and should take care not to speak on behalf of the city (on issues that do not have clear city positions, voted on in an open session) or over-commit a particular response.
- If the city receives communication addressed to the mayor or one councilmember which clearly should be shared with the full city council, staff will share the communication with the full city council.

5 ATTACHMENTS

The following items are included as attachments to provide clear reference materials that support councilmembers in complying with applicable ethics, disclosure, and conflict-of-interest requirements.

- Attachment A: Guideline for Elected Officials: Charitable Solicitations and “Behested Payments”
- Attachment B: Guidelines on Board Participation on Non-City Boards

5.1 Attachment A

Guideline for Elected Officials: Charitable Solicitations and “Behested Payments”

What This Is About

Under California’s *Political Reform Act* and *Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC)* rules, when an elected official asks, requests, or otherwise influences someone to make a charitable, governmental, or legislative donation, that donation is considered a “behested payment.”

This rule applies even if:

- The payment is for a legitimate nonprofit or public cause; and
- The official does not personally receive any money.

The Threshold

Reporting is required when the total amount donated by a single source at the official’s request is \$5,000 or more in a calendar year.

Once that threshold is met, any additional donations from that same source must also be reported — regardless of size.

The Timing

The official must file a Form 803 (Behested Payment Report) within 30 days of the date the payment is made.

Where to File

Local elected officials file the Form 803 with their agency’s filing officer (typically the City Clerk). State officials file with their state agency, which forwards it to the FPPC.

What the Report Must Include

The Form 803 discloses:

- The donor’s name and address;
 - The recipient charity’s name and address;
 - The amount and date of the payment; and
 - A brief description of the charitable purpose.
- Form 803 is a public record — it must be posted on the agency’s website within 30 days of filing.

When the Rule Applies

The rule applies when an official:

- Personally, asks a person, business, or organization to contribute;
- Is featured or named in a fundraising solicitation (flyer, website, social media, etc.); or
- Acts through an agent or intermediary to request or encourage a donation.

What Doesn’t Trigger Reporting

Reporting is not required if: