

# **City of San Diego Code of Conduct Boards and Commissions**

## **A. CONDUCT GUIDELINES**

These Conduct Guidelines shall apply to individuals appointed to a City board or commission under San Diego Charter sections 41, 41.2, and 43 (members). These Conduct Guidelines are designed to describe the manner in which appointed members should treat one another, elected officials, City staff, constituents, and others they come into contact with while representing the City.

### **1. Members' Conduct with Each Other in Public Meetings**

Members represent a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, expertise, opinions, and goals. Despite this diversity, all have chosen to serve in public office to preserve and protect the present and the future of the community. In all cases, members should acknowledge this common goal even though individuals may not agree on every issue.

- a. *Honor the role of the chair in maintaining order*  
It is the responsibility of the chair to run the meeting and keep the comments of members on topic during public meetings. Members should honor efforts by the chair to focus discussion on current agenda items. If there is disagreement about the agenda or the chair's actions, those objections should be voiced politely and with reason, following parliamentary procedure outlined in the applicable bylaws, if any, or Robert's Rules of Order.
- b. *Practice civility and decorum in discussions and debate*  
Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of debate by a free democracy in action. Free debate does not require nor justify public officials to make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments.
- c. *Avoid personal attacks or comments that could offend other members*  
If a member is personally offended by the remarks of another member, the offended member should make note of the actual words used and call for a "point of personal privilege" that challenges the other member to justify or apologize for the language used. The chair shall maintain control of this discussion.
- d. *Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches*  
Members have a public stage and have the responsibility to show how individuals with disparate points of view can find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the entire community.

## **2. Members' Conduct with the Public in Public Meetings**

Making the public feel welcome is an important part of the democratic process. No signs of partiality, prejudice, or disrespect should be evident on the part of individual members toward an individual participating in a public forum. Every effort should be made to be fair and impartial in listening to public testimony.

- a. *Be welcoming to speakers and treat them with care and gentleness.*  
While questions of clarification may be asked, the member's primary role during public testimony is to listen.
- b. *Be fair and equitable in allocating public hearing time to individual speakers.*  
The chair will determine and announce limits on speakers at the start of the public hearing process.
- c. *Practice active listening*  
While active listening can be exercised differently by every individual, it can be disconcerting to speakers to have members not look at them when they are speaking. It may be fine to look down at documents or to make notes, but reading for a long period of time or gazing around the room can give the appearance of disinterest. Members should be conscious of facial expressions and avoid those that could be interpreted as "smirking," disbelief, anger, or boredom.
- d. *Maintain an open mind*  
The public deserves an opportunity to address the members and to influence the thinking of elected and appointed officials.
- e. *Ask for clarification, but avoid debate and argument with the public*  
Only the chair – not individual members – can interrupt a speaker during a presentation, including when a speaker is perceived to be disruptive. However, a member can ask the chair for a point of order if the speaker is off the topic.

## **3. Member's Conduct with the Public Outside of Public Meetings**

- a. Members may represent themselves to the public as a member of a board or commission when performing official business as a member, or when authorized by the board or commission, or the City. When not performing official business or otherwise authorized, members should make clear they are not speaking on behalf of the board or commission, or the City.
- b. The City seal or logo may be used in compliance with the City of San Diego Visual Style Guide when conducting City business as a board or commission after securing (1) the approval by the board or commission at a public meeting to submit a request to the Mayor, and (2) the approval of the Mayor, or designee, of the request from the board or commission.

- c. Official positions and opinions of a board or commission must be established by approval of the board or commission at a public meeting, not by an individual member of a board or commission, and must be regarding the subject matter within the purview of the board or commission.
- d. Except for the Commission on Police Practices and Ethics Commission, press releases or other official communications with the media on behalf of the board or commission must be first provided to the Office of Boards and Commissions. Press releases and other official communications must be regarding the subject matter within the purview of the board or commission. The Commission on Police Practices must manage their press releases and other official communications with the media consistent with their authority under San Diego Charter section 41.2, Council-approved ordinances and procedures, and applicable federal and state law. The Ethics Commission must manage their press releases and other official communications with the media consistent with their authority under the San Diego Charter, Council-approved ordinances and procedures, and applicable federal and state law.

#### **4. Members' Conduct with City Staff**

Governance of the City relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials, who set policy, appointed officials who advise the elected, and City staff who implement and administer the Council's policies. Therefore, members should make every effort to be cooperative and show mutual respect for the contributions made by each individual for the good of the community.

- a. *Treat all City staff as professionals*  
Clear and honest communication that respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual is expected. Poor behavior and personal attacks towards City staff are not acceptable. Any member who has concerns about the employment performance of an individual City staff should contact the City staff's manager or supervisor. The members of the Commission on Police Practices are expected to act in a manner consistent with their authority under San Diego Charter section 41.2, Council-approved ordinances and procedures, and applicable federal and state law.
- b. *Do not disrupt City staff from their jobs*  
Members should not disrupt City staff while they are in meetings, on the phone, or engrossed in performing their job functions to have their individual needs met. Do not attend City staff meetings unless requested by staff – even if the member does not say anything, their presence implies support, shows partiality, may intimidate staff, and hampers staff's ability to do their job objectively.
- c. *Requests of City staff*  
Except for members of the Commission on Police Practices and Ethics Commission, members of boards and commissions must request assistance from City staff through the chair to the assigned liaison and not the City staff directly. The assigned liaison will be responsible for coordinating with the Office of Boards and Commissions as appropriate. The Commission on Police Practices must request assistance from City staff consistent

with their authority under San Diego Charter section 41.2, Council-approved ordinances and procedures, and applicable federal and state law. The Ethics Commission must request assistance from City staff consistent with their authority under the San Diego Charter, Council-approved ordinances and procedures, and applicable federal and state law.

d. *Expenditure of Funds*

Except for the Commission on Police Practices, members must receive prior approval from the Office of Boards and Commissions for any expenditure of funds, personal or otherwise, for any board or commission business. Members of the Commission on Police Practices must expend funds, personal or otherwise, for any Commission on Police Practices business consistent with their authority under San Diego Charter section 41.2, Council-approved ordinances and procedures, and applicable federal and state laws. Members of the Ethics Commission must expend funds, personal or otherwise, for any Ethics Commission business consistent with their authority under the San Diego Charter, Council-approved ordinances and procedures, and applicable federal and state law.

## **B. ETHICS**

Members of boards and commissions who are required to file economic interest disclosure forms, Statements of Economic Interests Form 700 (SEIs), under a conflict of interest code must comply with the City of San Diego's Ethics Ordinance, San Diego Municipal Code sections 27.3501 – 27.3595. The City of San Diego Ethics Commission enforces the Ethics Ordinance and provides training to members of boards and commissions who are subject to SEI filing. The Ethics Commission's Fact Sheets and Frequently Asked Questions are located on its website [Ethics Commission | City of San Diego Official Website](#), and you may contact the Ethics Commission at [ethicscommission@sandiego.gov](mailto:ethicscommission@sandiego.gov) or (619) 533-3476 with questions regarding your compliance with the Ethics Ordinance. Please note that the Ethics Commission gives advice about future conduct only, not about actions already taken.

## **C. ATTENDANCE**

Members shall attend all open and public meetings of the group unless excused in accordance with applicable bylaws, if any. Except for the Commission on Police Practices and Ethics Commission, members should communicate to the chair or the assigned liaison in advance, if possible, if they will miss a meeting. Meetings that are cancelled at the last minute due to a lack of quorum compromises the credibility of the board or commission and inconveniences members, City staff, and the public. The Executive Director of the Commission on Police Practices will record and track absences of members of the Commission on Police Practices. The Executive Director of the Ethics Commission will record and track absences of members of the Ethics Commission.

## **D. IMPLEMENTATION**

This Code of Conduct is intended to be self-enforcing and is an expression of the standards of conduct for members expected by the City. It therefore becomes most effective when members are thoroughly familiar with it and embrace its provisions.

For this reason, this document will be included in the regular orientations for applicants to boards and commissions. Members entering office shall sign a statement acknowledging they have read and understand this Code of Conduct. In addition, this Code of Conduct shall be periodically reviewed by the Office of Boards and Commissions and updated as necessary.

### **1. Acknowledgement of Code of Conduct**

Members must sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understand this Code of Conduct.

### **2. Behavior and Conduct**

This Code of Conduct expresses standards of conduct expected for members of City Boards and Commissions. Members themselves have the primary responsibility to ensure that such standards are understood and met.

### **3. Ethics Training for Local Officials**

Upon appointment, members who are required to file SEIs must file an Assuming Office SEI online within 30 days of appointment. The filing of an Assuming Office SEI should alert the Ethics Commission to add you to the list to attend the Ethics Commission's training on the Ethics Ordinance. Members should contact their board or commission liaison and may contact the Ethics Commission at [ethicscommission@sandiego.gov](mailto:ethicscommission@sandiego.gov) to ensure they are signed up for required training at the first available opportunity. Members who are subject to the Ethics Ordinance are required by Council Policy 000-04 to take their first training course within 90 days of their appointment and to attend the course every two years thereafter. Members subject to the Ethics Ordinance are required to comply with its laws and to attend all required trainings. Members will receive notices regarding future training requirements.

## **E. ALLEGED VIOLATIONS**

Except for the Commission on Police Practices and Ethics Commission, an alleged violation of this Code of Conduct may be reported to the Office of Boards and Commissions. An alleged violation of this Code of Conduct by a member of the Commission on Police Practices may be reported to the Executive Director of the Commission of Police Practices. An alleged violation of this Code of Conduct by a member of the Ethics Commission may be reported to the Executive Director of the Ethics Commission. For those members subject to the Ethics Ordinance, an alleged violation of the Ethics Ordinance may be reported to the Ethics Commission.

**City of San Diego  
Code of Conduct  
Boards and Commissions  
Acknowledgment**

I have read the City of San Diego Code of Conduct Boards and Commissions, attached to this Acknowledgment, and understand its expectations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# 2026 HRC Strategic Planning Retreat

to be held on Saturday, March 14<sup>th</sup>, from 9:00a.m. – 1:30p.m. at SD Downtown Library

## Retreat Goals & Outcomes

Developed at the Strategic Planning Retreat Taskforce Meeting held from 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. on Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>

(Taskforce consists of: Vice-Chair Rickie Brown, Commissioner Sara Brown, Commissioner Daneyel Walker, & Chair Steven Jones)

	Goals	Descriptions
1.	<b>Establish shared vision and strategic priorities</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Define what the HRC stands for and where we focus our collective energy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Create alignment among all Commissioners on the HRC's history, mandate, and highest-impact opportunities for the next year. Ensure every Commissioner can articulate our shared vision and how their district work connects to commission-wide priorities.
2.	<b>Build operational excellence, communication, and Commissioner effectiveness</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Clarify how we work together and what's expected of each Commissioner</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Establish clear roles, responsibilities, processes, and best practices that enable Commissioners to be effective in their districts, productive in committees, and impactful in advancing HRC recommendations to Mayor and Council. Create structures that support proactive, strategic work—not just reactive responses.
3.	<b>Strengthen community engagement and HRC visibility</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Increase the HRC's presence, influence, and accountability across all San Diego Communities</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Develop concrete strategies for engaging residents in all nine districts, communicating HRC's work transparently, and demonstrating measurable impact on reducing discrimination and increasing inclusion throughout the city.
	Outcomes	What does success look like:
1.	<b>2-3 commission-wide strategic priorities identified and adopted visibility</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Commissioners vote to adopt 2-3 specific strategic priorities for the next 24 months (e.g., "Proactive community bridge-building," "Policy recommendations to advance economic inclusion," "Youth engagement and education") <input type="checkbox"/> Each priority has clear rationale, scope, and alignment with HRC mandate <input type="checkbox"/> Priorities guide committee structure and workplan development
2.	<b>Clear commissioner roles, expectations, and processes documented</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Written guidelines adopted for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Commissioner responsibilities in their district (town halls, newsletters, relationship with District Office)</li> <li>○ Process for making recommendations to Mayor &amp; Council</li> <li>○ Committee structure and expectations for participation</li> <li>○ Best practices for civil discourse, accountability, and respect among Commissioners</li> <li>○ Every Commissioner knows what's expected of them and how to fulfill their role effectively</li> <li>○ HRC has agreed-upon processes that reduce confusion and increase productivity</li> </ul>

## City of San Diego Human Relation Commission Identified Priorities

### Historical priorities ranked by frequency (2012-2018)

Priority Topic	Priority	Years Active
<b>1. Immigrant &amp; Refugee Rights</b>	6 times	2012, 2013, 2014, 2017, 2018
<b>2. Access to Basic Needs / Food Access</b>	5 times	2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018
<b>3. Civil Rights &amp; Equal Protection</b>	4 times	2014 (Racial Profiling/Hate Crimes), 2016 (Equity & Diversity), 2017, 2018
<b>4. Education</b>	3 times	2012, 2013, 2014 (Restorative Justice/Trauma-Informed Schools)
<b>5. Communications / Media &amp; Outreach</b>	3 times	2012 (Media & Communications + Advocacy & Outreach), 2016
<b>6. Global Perspective</b>	2 times	2015, 2016
<b>7. Human Trafficking</b>	2 times	2013, 2014
<b>8. Hate Crimes / Hate Motivated Behavior</b>	2 times	2012, 2014 (Racial Profiling/Hate Crimes)
<b>9. Commission Awards / Award Ceremony</b>	2 times	2016, 2017 (Ad Hoc Committee)
<b>10. Equity</b>	1 time	2015
<b>11. Safe and Just Communities</b>	1 time	2015
<b>12. Campus-based Gender Violence</b>	1 time	2014
<b>13. Restorative Justice / Trauma-Informed Schools</b>	1 time	2014
<b>14. Special Projects</b>	1 time	2012
<b>15. Civility</b>	1 time	2013



# **HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION BYLAWS**

## **ARTICLE 1**

### **PURPOSE AND INTENT**

The Human Relations Commission was established by City Council on 03/18/1991 by O-17614 N.S. and added to the Municipal Code as M.C Chapter 2, Article 6, Division 9, Sections 26.0901 through 26.0911. It was amended on 09/30/96 by O-18344 N.S., and on 03/27/2013 by O-20244 N.S., effective 04/26/2013.

The stated purpose and intent of the San Diego City Council was to establish the Human Relations Commission to consult with and advise the Mayor, City Council and City Manager on methods of assuring and protecting the rights of all residents of the City of San Diego to equal economic, political, and educational opportunity, to equal accommodations in all business establishments in the City, and to equal service and protection by public agencies. The Human Relations Commission was also created for the purposes of investigating and attempting to resolve discrimination complaints through the use of conciliation and/or mediation; and preparing and distributing educational and informational materials relating to prejudice and discrimination and recommended ways of eliminating such prejudice and discrimination.

## **ARTICLE 2**

### **DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS**

The Human Relations Commission shall conduct and promote activities that foster mutual understanding, respect and inclusion; protect basic human and civil rights; and create an atmosphere that promotes amicable relations among all members of the San Diego Community.

# **HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION BYLAWS**

## **ARTICLE 3**

### **ORGANIZATION AND MEETINGS**

#### **3.1 Officers**

Officers shall be elected at the first Commission meeting of the calendar year for a term of one year. The officers of the Commission shall consist of a Chairperson (Chair) and a Vice Chairperson (Vice Chair). The Vice Chair will serve as Chair in the event of the absence or unavailability of the Chair. The Commission may also deem necessary to have a secretary as a third officer. Each officer is elected from among the members of the Commission and by a majority vote of the Commission. These positions are elected each year for a one year term and can be re-elected for an additional one-year term. An officer may serve no more than two consecutive terms.

The Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary, along with the Executive Director, comprise the Executive Committee of the Commission. The Executive Committee sets the agenda for each meeting.

#### **3.2 Officer Election Procedures**

Any Commissioner interested in running for a Commission officer position shall notify the Executive Director or the Vice Chair sixty (60) days prior to officers' term limits. Notice of the slate of officers shall be presented to the Commission at its January meeting. Nominations will also be open to the floor at the January meeting and will be closed by voice vote. The elections shall be conducted utilizing the open ballot procedure. Newly elected officers will assume their office at the February meeting.

Should a vacancy occur in the position of Chair or Vice Chair before the term is completed, the Commission shall solicit nominations for the vacant position within thirty (30) days following the meeting at which the vacancy occurs. The office shall be filled by a majority vote of Commissioners within sixty (60) days after the vacancy occurs. The position shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term and until regularly scheduled elections are held.

## **HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION BYLAWS**

### **3.3 Expense Reimbursement**

Members of the Commission shall be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their official duties, if submitted and as approved by the City Manager and only if authorized and in accordance with City policies and regulations.

### **3.4 Rules**

The Commission by two thirds vote of its members may adopt bylaws governing the conduct of its meetings and activities, the establishment of subcommittees, and such other rules as may be necessary for the performance of its functions consistent with the City Charter, San Diego Municipal Code and any other applicable City regulation or policy. Any amendments to the bylaws or any other rules shall require an affirmative vote by two-thirds of its authorized membership. A quorum shall at all times consist of a majority of its authorized membership.

### **3.5 Meetings and Attendance**

The Commission shall meet monthly in compliance with the Ralph M. Brown Act. It is the responsibility of each Commissioner to attend all meetings. All meetings of the Commission shall be open to the public in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act. The Commission may, at the discretion of the Chair, adjourn the meeting in advance due to lack of action items or a quorum. A commissioner who misses, without excuse, three consecutive meetings or 1/3 of all of the regularly scheduled meetings within the city's fiscal year, shall be removed. Any absence should be communicated to the Executive Director as soon as practical. If the absence is sought to be excused, it will be placed on a future agenda of the Commission.

## **HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION BYLAWS**

### **3.6 Agenda Items**

Agenda items may be suggested by the members of the Commission, public, or City Staff by notifying the Executive Director or Commission Chair in writing prior to the first Wednesday of each month.

### **3.7 Notice of Agenda, Time, and Place of Meetings**

Agendas containing information as to time, place, and business of the Commission shall be posted by Commission Staff, at least seventy-two (72) hours prior to each meeting. The agenda for each meeting will normally be emailed to all Commissioners one week prior to a regularly scheduled meeting.

### **3.8 Special and Annual Meetings.**

Special meetings, if warranted, may be called by the Chair or Vice Chair (when serving as Chair in the event of the absence or unavailability of the Chair).

Commissioners shall be given at least seventy-two (72) hours' notice prior to any special meeting.

On an annual basis, the Commission may hold a special open meeting for the purpose of evaluating the previous year's activities and planning to implement the Commission's goals and objectives for the coming year. The product of this meeting shall be a written report that summarizes the content of the meeting.

# **HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION BYLAWS**

## **ARTICLE 4 SUBCOMMITTEES**

The Chair may from time to time establish subcommittees, define their powers and duties, appoint a subcommittee chair, and appoint subcommittee members.

The Chair of the Commission is an ex-officio member of every subcommittee.

Generally, subcommittees will not have more than five (5) members.

## **ARTICLE 5 COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

The Commission Chair or designee shall be the official spokesperson for the Commission. The Chair or designee may represent to the public any positions or views within the Commission's jurisdiction which have been voted upon by the Commission. In those instances where the Commission has an established position or view on an issue within its jurisdiction, and the Chair is unavailable, the Chair may designate a Commission member or Executive Director to represent the Commission's position or view on that issue within its jurisdiction.

## **ARTICLE 6 ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chair conducts the meeting. The Vice Chair conducts the meeting in the absence of the Chair. Normally, the order of business for regular Commission meetings shall be as follows:

1. Call to order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of Minutes
4. Non-Agenda Public Comment

This is an opportunity for members of the public to address the Commission on items NOT on the agenda but within the jurisdiction of the Commission. Commissioners may ask questions about any such items for purposes of clarification, but may not express thoughts or opinions on such items. Such items may be referred to appropriate staff or to a future agenda. The Chair may allow comment on the agenda items following any non-agenda comment by a member of the public or at the Chair's discretion, may allow the public to comment immediately after an agenda item is presented. All comments are subject to any

## **HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION BYLAWS**

reasonable time limit stated by the Chair.

5. Chair Report
6. Information Items
7. Action Items
8. General Business Items and Committee Reports
9. Commissioner Comments/Announcements
10. Executive Director/Staff Report
11. Proposed Agenda for Next Meeting
12. Adjournment