

# **TOWN OF SOUTH PADRE ISLAND**

## **CODE OF ETHICS & MAYOR-TOWN-BOARD**

### **Policy**

The Town of South Padre Island is the governing body for the Town of South Padre Island; therefore, it must bear the initial responsibility for the integrity of governance. The board is responsible for its own development (both as a body and as individuals), its responsibilities, its own discipline, and its own performance. The development of this policy is designed to ensure effective and efficient governance.

This policy will address mayor and board relations, board and staff relations, and board and media guidelines for elected officials. We acknowledge our responsibility to each other, to our staff and citizens and will govern the town in a manner associated with a commitment to the preservation of the values and integrity of representative local government and a dedication to the promotion of efficient and effective governing.

The following statements will serve as a guide and acknowledge the commitment being made in this service to the community:

1. The Board has high priorities: the continual improvement of the member's professional ability and the promotion of an atmosphere conducive to the fair exchange of ideas and policies among members.
2. The Board will endeavor to keep the community informed on municipal affairs; encourage communication between the residents and board of aldermen; strive for strong, working relationships among elected officials.
3. In its governance role, the Board will continue to be dedicated to friendly and courteous relationships with staff, other board members, and the public, and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.
4. The Board will also strive to recognize its responsibility to future generations by addressing the interrelatedness on the social, cultural, and physical characteristics of the community when making policies.
5. And finally, each board member will make a commitment to improve the quality of life for the individual citizen and the community as a whole, and to be dedicated to the faithful stewardship of the public trust.

### **STATEMENT OF MISSION:**

In order to ensure proper discharge of duties for the improvement of a representative local government, the South Padre Island Board of Aldermen members should display behavior that demonstrates independent, impartial review of all matters addressed by them, and be duly responsible to the citizens of South Padre Island, and each other in their relationships:

**Section I:**  
Mayor-Board of Aldermen Relations

A. MAYORAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- The Mayor shall be the presiding officer at all meetings. The Mayor Pro-Tem shall preside in his/her absence.
- The Mayor shall have a voice in all matters before the Board and may vote on all agenda items requiring board action when there is a tie.
- The Mayor shall preserve order and decorum and shall require board members engaged in debate to limit discussion to the question under consideration.
- The Mayor or City Manager is the spokesperson for the Town on all matters unless absent, at which time his/her designee will assume the role.
- The Mayor will encourage all board members to participate in board discussion and give each member an opportunity to speak before any member can speak again on the same subject. The Mayor may limit each speaker to three minutes to ensure efficient use of time.
- The Mayor is responsible for keeping the meetings orderly by recognizing each member for discussion, limiting speaking time, encouraging debate among members, and keeping discussion on the agenda item being considered.
- Should a conflict arise among board members, the Mayor serves as mediator.
- The Mayor and the City Manager are responsible for the orientation of all new board members after an election.
- The Mayor shall review the agenda of each meeting with the City Manager prior to the final preparation of the official agenda.

B. BOARD OF ALDERMEN RESPONSIBILITIES

- Any board member may request the City Manager to place an item on the agenda for discussion. Should staff time be required to address this item, the City Manager will canvass all board members to determine the support for commitment of staff time and resources. When any board member requests items for the agenda, the board member must provide sufficient specificity, so that supporting documentation can be provided for the agenda.
- Each Board member is responsible for being prepared to come and discuss the agenda and is encouraged to attend at least one Texas Municipal League sponsored conference each year.
- It is the responsibility of board members to be informed about previous actions taken by the Board in their absence. In the case of absence from workshop session where

information is given, the individual board member is responsible for obtaining this information prior to the board meeting when said item is to be voted upon.

- When addressing an agenda item, the board member shall first be recognized by the Mayor, confine himself/herself to the questions under debate, avoid reference to personalities, and refrain from impugning the integrity of motives of any other board member or staff member in his/her argument or vote.
- In the absence of a ruling by the Mayor on any procedural matter, a board member may move to change the order of business or make any other procedural decision deemed appropriate. The affirmative vote of a majority of the board members present and voting shall be necessary to approve the motion.
- Any board member may appeal to the board as a whole from a ruling by the Mayor. If the appeal is seconded, the person making the appeal may make a brief statement and the Mayor may explain his/her position, but no other member may speak on the motion. The Mayor will then put the ruling to a vote of the board.
- Any board member may ask the Mayor to enforce the rules established by the Board. Should the Mayor fail to do so, a majority vote of the board members present shall require him/her to do so.
- When the board member is appointed to serve as liaison to a board or committee, the board member is responsible for keeping all board members informed of significant Board activities.

#### C. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN MEMBERS:

During the board meetings, board members shall preserve order and decorum, shall not interrupt or delay proceedings, and shall not refuse to obey the orders of the Mayor or the rules of the Board. Board members all demonstrate respect and courtesy to each other, to town staff members, and to members of the public appearing before the board.

Board members shall refrain from rude and derogatory remarks and shall not belittle staff members, other board members, or members of the public. They should not use their position to secure special privileges and should avoid situations that could cause any person to believe that they may have brought bias or partiality to a question before the board.

Members of the Board will not condone any unethical or illegal activity. All members of the Board agree to uphold the intent of this policy and to govern their actions accordingly.

#### **Section II:**

#### **Board of Aldermen and Staff Relations**

No single relationship is as important as that of the Board and their City Manager in effectively governing the Town of South Padre Island. It is for this reason that the Board and the City Manager must understand their respective roles in that process. The City Manager is the primary link between the Board and the professional staff. The Board's relationship with the staff shall be through the City Manager.

- In order to ensure proper presentation of agenda items by staff, questions arising from board members after receiving their information packet should be whenever possible, presented to the City Manager for staff consideration prior to the board meeting. This allows staff time to address the board member's concern and provide the board members with the additional information.
- The City Manager shall designate the appropriate staff member to address each agenda item and shall see that each presentation is prepared and presented in order to inform and educate the Board on the issues which require board action. The presentation should be professional, timely and allow for discussion of options for resolving the issue. The staff member making the presentation shall either make it clear that no board action is required, present the staff recommendation, or present the specific options for Board consideration.
- The City Manager is directly responsible for providing information to all the Board concerning any inquiries by a specific board member. If the City Manager or his/her staff's time is being dominated or misdirected by a board member, it is his/her responsibility to inform the Mayor of the concern.
- Any conflicts arising between the Town staff and the Board will be addressed by the Mayor and the City Manager.
- All staff members shall show each other, each board member, and the public respect and courtesy at all times. They are also responsible for making objective, professional presentations to ensure public confidence in the process.
- The City Manager, after an election, will make sure that the staff has prepared information needed for the orientation of new board members and inform them of the Texas Municipal League conferences and seminars available. The City Manager will also be responsible for meeting personally with new members and informing them about city facilities and procedures.

## BOARD AND MEDIA RELATIONS

Since the democratic form of government is only successful when the citizens are kept informed and educated about the issues facing their municipality, it is imperative that the media play an important role in the Board-Manager-Media relations. It is through an informed public that progress is insured and good government remains sensitive to its constituents. These guidelines are designed to help ensure fair relationships with print, radio, and television reporters. The Board and the City Manager recognize that the news media provide an important link between the Board and the Public. It is the Board's desire to establish a professional working relationship to help maintain a well-informed and educated citizenry.

- All reporters will receive an agenda in advance.
- In order to preserve the decorum and professionalism of board meetings, the media are requested to refrain from conversing privately with other people in the audience and to conduct any interviews with the public outside the board chambers while Board is in session.
- Since each government body conducts business differently, it is requested that all reporters new to City Board meetings meet with the City Manager, Mayor, or the media

relations representative prior to covering their first meeting to be informed of policies and procedures to help ensure a professional working relationship between the media reporter and the City.

- On administrative matters the City Manager is the spokesperson, unless he/she has appointed a media relations person, to present staff information on the agenda.
- The Mayor or his/her designee is the primary spokesperson for the City on matters regarding policy decisions or any Board information pertaining to issues on the agenda. In order to ensure fair treatment of an issue, any clarification requested by the media on the issue should be addressed after the meeting. When opposing positions have been debated, regardless of the outcome, the public is better informed when all sides have adequate coverage by the media. This lets the public know that the item was seriously debated and options discussed before a vote was taken, and helps build confidence in the process.
- The South Padre Island Town Board of Aldermen is made up of five (5) board members and a Mayor, each elected by the citizens of South Padre Island. In respect to each board member and his/her constituents, his/her views should be presented on each issue.

We all have a responsibility to protect the integrity of our governing process and therefore, have read and agreed to the above guidelines.

#### SOUTH PADRE ISLAND BOARD OF ALDERMEN CODE OF ETHICS

The office of elected officials is one of trust and service to the citizens of South Padre Island. Board of Aldermen is expected to govern this town in a manner associated with a commitment and integrity of representative local government and a dedication to the promotion of efficient and effective governing. To further these objectives, certain ethical principles shall govern the conduct of every board member, who shall:

- Be dedicated to the highest ideals of honor and integrity in all public and personal relationships in order that the member may merit the respect and confidence of the citizens of South Padre Island.
- Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all of the people.
- Be dedicated to public service by being cooperative and constructive, and by making the best and most efficient use of available resources.
- Refrain from any activity or action that may hinder one's ability to be objective and impartial on any matter coming before the Board. Do not seek nor accept gifts or special favors; believe that personal gain by use of confidential information or by misuse of public funds or time is dishonest.
- Recognize that public and political policy decisions, based on established values, are ultimately the responsibility of the city board, and

- Conduct business in open, well-publicized meetings in order to be directly accountable to the citizens of South Padre Island. It is recognized that certain exceptions are made by the State for executive sessions; however, any action as a result of that type of meeting will be handled later in open session.