

# City of Hewitt, Texas Council Relations Policy and Code of Ethics

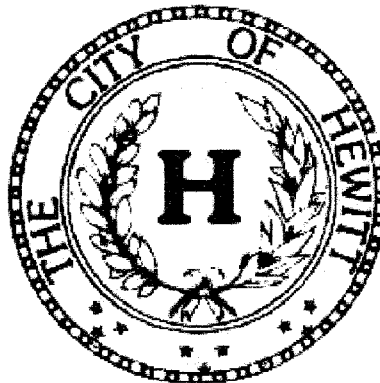


*To always be part of the solution and not  
a part of the problem is our creed.*

*City of Hewitt,  
Texas  
Council Relations Policy  
and  
Code of Ethics*

6-7-2004

Hewitt City Council  
Hewitt, Texas



*To always be part of the solution and not a part of the  
problem is our creed.*

***\* WE WILL NEVER bring disgrace to this, our City, by any act of dishonesty or cowardice; we will fight for our ideals and sacred things of the City, both alone and with many; we will revere and obey the City’s laws and do our best to incite a like respect and reverence in those about us; we will strive unceasingly to quicken the public’s sense of civic duty; and thus in all the ways we will strive to transmit this City not less, but greater, better, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us.***

\* This Ephebic Oath was that taken by the young men of the ancient city of Athens when they became of age to assume the responsibility of citizenship.

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*Acknowledgments: Contributions from the College Station, Texas City Council in the preparation of this policy document are hereby acknowledged and gratefully appreciated.*

The Hewitt City Council is the governing body for the City of Hewitt, Texas; therefore, it must bear the initial responsibility for the integrity of governance. The council is responsible for its own development (both as a body and as individuals), its responsibilities to 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 council relations, council and staff relations, and council and media relations. By adopting these guidelines for elected officials, we acknowledge our responsibility to each other, to our professional staff, and to the public. The city council will govern the city in a manner associated with a commitment to the preservation of the values and integrity of representative local government and democracy, 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 council has as 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 council will endeavor to keep the community informed on municipal affairs; encourage communication between the citizens and the city council; strive for strong, working relationships among Hewitt, McLennan County, MCC, Baylor University and Midway Independent School District elected officials.
3. In its governance role, the council will continue to be dedicated to friendly and courteous relationships with staff, other council members, and the public, and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.
4. The council will also strive to recognize its responsibility to future generations by addressing the interrelatedness of the social, cultural, and physical characteristics of the community when making policies.
5. And finally, each council member will make a commitment to improve the quality of life for the individual and the community, 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 democratic local government, Hewitt city council members should display behavior that demonstrates independent, impartial review of all matters addressed by them, and be duly responsible to the citizens of Hewitt and each other in their relationships.

**Section I:**  
**Mayor-City Council Relations**

***A. Mayoral Responsibilities:***

1. The mayor shall be the presiding officer at all meetings. The mayor pro-tem shall preside in his/her absence.
2. The mayor shall have a voice in all matters before the council and may vote on all agenda items requiring council action.
3. The mayor shall preserve order and decorum and shall require council members engaged in debate to limit discussion to the question under consideration.
4. The mayor is the spokesperson for the council on all matters unless absent, at which time his/her designee will assume the role.
5. The mayor will encourage all council members to participate in the council discussion and give each member an opportunity to speak before any members can speak again on the same subject. The mayor may limit each speaker to five minutes to ensure effective use of time.
6. 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.
7. Should conflict arise among council members, the mayor serves as mediator or he/she may designate the council relations committee to mediate.
8. The mayor, or at his/her direction, the council relations committee, is responsible for the orientation of all new council members after an election. The orientation shall include council procedures, staff and media relations, current agenda items and municipal leadership training programs.

***B. Council Responsibilities:***

1. Any council member may request the mayor or city manager to place an item on the agenda for discussion. Should staff time be required to address this item, the mayor will canvas all council members to determine the support for commitment of staff time and resources. The same action should be taken when council concerns require staff time and budget.

2. Each council 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 in order to stay informed on issues facing municipalities.
3. It is the responsibility of council members to be informed about previous action taken by the council in their absence. In the case of absence from a workshop session where information is given, the individual council member is responsible for obtaining this information prior to the council meeting when said item is to be voted upon.
4. When addressing an agenda item, the council member shall first be recognized by the mayor, confine himself/herself to the question under debate, avoid reference to personalities, and refrain from impugning the integrity or motives of any other council member or staff member in his/her argument or vote.
5. In the absence of a ruling by the mayor on any procedural matter, a council 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 council members present and voting shall be necessary to approve the motion.
6. Any council member may appeal to the council 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 council.
7. Any council member may ask the mayor to enforce the rules established by the council. Should the mayor fail to do so, a majority vote of the council members present shall require him/her to do so.
8. When a council member is appointed to serve as liaison to a board, the council member is responsible for keeping all council members informed of significant board activities.
9. Any council member requesting information concerning city business will first contact the city manager. Should any council member request or seek information from any other source, that council member shall inform the mayor and/or the city manager of such contact. The mayor or city manager will provide such information to all the council members.

### *C. Code of Conduct for Mayor and Council Members:*

During the council meetings, council members shall preserve order and decorum, shall not interrupt or delay proceedings, and shall not refuse to obey the orders of the mayor or rules of the council. Council members shall demonstrate respect and courtesy to each

other, to city staff members, and to 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 council.

Members of the council will not condone any unethical or illegal activity. All members of the council agree to work as a team, uphold the intent of this policy, and to govern their actions accordingly.

## *Section II:* *Council and Staff Relations*

*No single relationship is as important as that of the council and their city manager in effectively governing the City of Hewitt. It is for this reason that the council and the city manager must understand their respective roles in that process. The city manager is the primary link between the council and the professional staff. The council's relationship with the staff shall be through the city manager.*

1. In order to ensure proper presentation of agenda items by staff, questions arising from council members after receiving their information packet should be, whenever possible, presented to the city manager for staff consideration prior to the council meeting. This allows staff time to address the council member's concern and provide all council members with additional information.
2. 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 council on the issues which require council 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 council action is required or present the staff recommendation, or present the specific options for council consideration.
3. The city manager is directly responsible for providing information to all the council concerning any inquiries by a specific council member. If the city manager or his/her staff's time is being dominated or misdirected by a council member, it is his/her responsibility to inform the mayor or the council relations committee of the concern.
4. The city manager will be held responsible for the professional and ethical behavior of himself/herself and the discipline of his/her staff. The city manager is also responsible for seeing that his/her staff receives the education and information necessary to address the issues facing municipal government.

5. Any conflicts arising between the city staff and the council will be addressed by the mayor or the council relations committee and the city manager.
6. All staff members shall show each other, each council 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.
7. The city manager, after an election, will make sure that the staff has prepared information needed for the orientation of new council members and inform them of any Texas Municipal League conferences and seminars available. The city manager will also be responsible for meeting personally with the new members and informing them about city facilities and procedures.

### *Section III:* *Council 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 council-manager-media relations. It is through an informed public that progress in insured and good government remains sensitive to its constituents. These guidelines are designed to help insure fair relationships with print, radio, and television reporters. The council and the city manager recognize that the news media provide an important link between the council and the public. It is the council's desire to establish a professional working relationship to help maintain a well informed and educated citizenry.*

1. During the conduct of official business, the news media shall occupy the places designated for them or the general public.
2. All reporters will receive an agenda in advance and will be furnished support material needed for clarification if requested.
3. In order to preserve the decorum and professionalism of council 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 council chambers while council is in session.
4. Since each government body conducts business differently, it is requested that all reporters new to city council 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 insure a professional working relationship between the media reporter and the city.

5. 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.

6. The mayor, or his/her designee, will be the primary spokesperson for the city on matters regarding policy decisions or any council information pertaining to issues on the agenda. In order to ensure fair treatment of an issue, any clarifications 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 democratic process.

7. The Hewitt city council is made up of six council members and a mayor, each elected by the citizens of Hewitt. In respect to each council member and his/her constituents, his/her views as presented on an issue before the council should be noted and interviews by the media should provide equitable representation from all seven members. Even though council members may express differing ideas, equitable representation helps promote unity of purpose by allowing the public to be informed of each member's position during his/her term of office and not only during an election campaign.

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

*Passed and adopted by the Hewitt City Council, June 7, 2004.*

*Shirley M. Blanton*

*Pat H*

*Bob Tur*

*Bill Fuller*

*Jo Copeland*

*James E. Yates*

*Charles D. Turner*

## *Hewitt, Texas City Council Code of Ethics*

*The office of elected official is one of trust and service to the citizens of Hewitt. This position creates a special responsibility for the Hewitt city council member. In response to this, the Hewitt city council is expected to govern this city in a manner associated with a commitment to the preservation of the values and integrity of representative local government and local democracy and a dedication to the promotion of efficient and effective governing. To further these objectives, certain ethical principles shall govern the conduct of every council member, who shall:*

1. 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 Hewitt.
2. Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all the people.
3. Be dedicated to public service by being cooperative and constructive, and by making the best and efficient use of available resources.
4. Refrain from any activity or action that may hinder one's ability to be objective and impartial on any matter coming before the council. 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.
5. Recognize that public and political policy decisions, based on established values, are ultimately the responsibility of the city council, and;
6. Conduct business in open, well-publicized meetings in order to be directly accountable to the citizens of Hewitt. It is recognized that certain exceptions are made by the State of Texas for executive sessions; however, any action as a result of that type of meeting will be handled later in open session.