




Code of Ethics & Conduct for Elected & Appointed Officials


Adopted August 2025

**City of Springfield
Springfield, SD 57062**

	POLICY CE1.1 Policy Purpose	
Issue Date:	Updated:	Section: Code of Ethics

Purpose

The Springfield Common Council adopts this Code of Ethics and Conduct to assure that each elected and appointed official conducts himself or herself in a manner that will instill public confidence and trust in the fair operation and integrity of Springfield's City government.

	POLICY CE1.2 Ethics	
Issue Date:	Updated:	Section: Code of Ethics

Ethics

The citizens and businesses of Springfield are entitled to fair, ethical and accountable local government.

Accordingly, members of the Common Council and all Boards and Commissions shall adhere to the following ethical standards:

1. Act in public interest.

Recognizing that stewardship of the public interest must be their primary concern, members will work for the common good of the people of Springfield and not for any private or personal interest, and they will ensure fair and equal treatment of all persons, claims and transactions coming before them.

2. Conduct their actions in accordance with law and policy.

Members shall comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws and City of Springfield policies in the performance of their public duties.

3. Conduct of members.

The professional and personal conduct of members while exercising the duties of their office must be above reproach and avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Members shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges of verbal attacks upon the character or motive of other members of the Common Council, Board and Commissions, the staff or public.

4. Respect for process. Members shall perform their duties in accordance with the processes and rules of order established by the Common Council.

5. Conduct at public meetings.

Members shall prepare themselves for public issues; listen courteously and attentively to all public discussions before the body; and focus on the business at hand.

6. Decisions based on merit.

Members shall base their decisions on the merits and substance of the matter at hand, rather than on unrelated considerations.

7. Conflict of interest.

All members shall identify and avoid conflicts of interest in accordance with the law.

8. Confidential information.

Members shall maintain the confidentiality of all written materials and verbal information provided to members which is confidential or privileged. Members shall neither disclose confidential or privileged information without proper legal

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authorization, nor use such information to advance their personal, financial or other private interests.

9. Use of public resources.

Members shall not use public resources which are not available to the public in general (ie -City staff time, equipment, supplies or facilities) for private gain or for personal purposes not otherwise authorized by law.

10. Representation of private interests.

In keeping with their role as stewards of the public interest, members of the Common Council shall not appear on behalf of third parties before the Council or any Board, Commission or proceeding of the City, nor shall members of Boards and Commissions appear before their own bodies or before the Council on behalf of the private interests of third parties on matters related to the areas of service of their bodies.

11. Advocacy.

Members shall represent the official policies or positions of the Common Council, Board or Commission to the best of their ability when designated as delegates for this purpose. When expressing personal opinions or positions, members shall clearly state that they do not represent their respective board, commission or the City of Springfield, nor shall they allow any inference to the contrary. Council members and Board and Commission members have the right to endorse candidates for all Council seats or elected offices. It is inappropriate to mention or display endorsements during Council meetings, Board and Commission meetings or other official City meetings.

12. Policy role of members.


Members shall respect and adhere to the structure of Springfield City government as outlined in the Springfield Municipal Code of Ordinances, organizational charts and job descriptions. In this structure, the Common Council determines the policies of the City with the advice, information and analysis provided by City staff, Boards and Commissions and the public. Except as provided by the Code of Ordinances, members shall not interfere with the administrative functions of the City or the professional duties of City staff; nor shall they impair the ability of the staff to implement Council policy decisions.

13. Independence of Boards and Commissions.

Because of the value of the independent advice of Boards and Commissions to the public decision-making process, members of Common Council shall refrain from using their position to unduly influence the deliberations or outcomes of Board and Commission proceedings.

14. Positive workplace environment.

Members shall support the maintenance of a positive and constructive workplace environment for City employees and for citizens and businesses dealing with the City. Members shall recognize their special role in dealing with City employees to in no way create the perception of inappropriate direction to staff.

	POLICY CE1.3 Conduct	
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Conduct

The conduct policies are designed to describe the way elected and appointed officials should treat one another, City staff, constituents and others they come into contact with while representing the City of Springfield. **These policies safeguard the interest of the public, which elected and appointed officials must serve without political bias and without regard to political opinions or affiliations.**

1. Elected and Appointed Officials' Conduct with Each Other in Public Meetings.

Elected and appointed officials are individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, 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, this common goal should be acknowledged 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 keep the comments of members on track 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 procedures outlined in parliamentary procedure.

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, however, public officials to make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments.

C. *Avoid personal comments that could offend other members.*

If a member is personally offended by the remarks of another member, the offended member should make notes 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 will maintain control of this discussion.

D. *Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches.*

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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 community.

E. Adding items to an agenda.

Items will be placed on the Common Council agenda for consideration upon the recommendation of the Legal, Finance, and Public Safety Committee or Public Works Committee. Notwithstanding the failure of either Committee to recommend an item for the agenda, an item may be placed on the agenda at the direction of the Mayor, Finance Officer, or the concurrence of three Council members.

2. Elected and Appointed Officials' 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 official'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.

It is disconcerting to speakers to have members not look at them when they are speaking. It is fine to look down at documents or to make notes but reading for a long period of time or gazing around the room gives the appearance of disinterest. Members should try to be conscious of facial expressions and avoid those that could be interpreted as "smirking," disbelief, anger or boredom.

D. Maintain an open mind.

Members of the public deserve an opportunity 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. However, a member can ask the chair for a point of order if the speaker is off the topic or exhibiting behavior or language the member finds disturbing.

F. Conduct of meetings.

The chair shall preside over the meeting and keep order under the following guidelines:

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1. Members of the public addressing the Council shall do so from the podium with the permission of the chair.
2. Members of the public addressing the Council shall begin their remarks with their name and mailing address.
3. Belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments will not be tolerated.
4. No one in the Council Chambers shall be permitted to boo, cheer, clap, or otherwise make an audible response to any person's comments during a public meeting.
5. The chair will determine and announce limits on speakers at the start of the public hearing process.

3. Elected and Appointed Officials' Conduct with City Staff.

Governance of a 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, every effort should be made to be cooperative and show mutual respect for the contributions made by everyone for the good of the community.

A. Treat all staff as professionals.

Clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of everyone is expected. Poor behavior towards staff is not acceptable.

B. Do not disrupt City staff from their jobs.

Elected and appointed officials should not disrupt City staff while they are in meetings, on the phone, or engrossed in performing their job functions in order to have their individual needs met. Do not attend City staff meetings unless requested by staff - even if the elected or appointed official does not say anything, his or her presence may imply support, show partiality, intimidate staff, or hampers staff's ability to do their job objectively.

C. Never publicly criticize an individual employee.

Elected and appointed officials should never express concerns about the performance of a City employee in public, to the employee directly, or to the employee's manager. Comments about staff performance should only be made to the Finance Officer through private correspondence or conversation. Appointed officials should make their comments regarding staff to the Finance Officer or the Mayor.

D. Do not get involved in administrative functions.

Elected and appointed officials acting in their individual capacity must not attempt to influence City staff on the making of appointments, awarding of

contracts, selecting of consultants, processing of development applications, or granting of City licenses and permits.

E. Do not solicit political support from staff.

Elected and appointed officials should not solicit any type of political support (financial contributions, display of posters or lawn signs, name on support list, etc.) from City staff. City staff may, as private citizens with constitutional rights, support political candidates but all such activities must be done away from the workplace.

F. No attorney-client relationship.

Members shall not seek to establish an attorney-client relationship with the City Attorney, including his or her staff and attorneys contracted to work on behalf of the City. The City Attorney represents the City and not individual members. Members who consult with the City Attorney cannot enjoy or establish an attorney-client relationship with the attorney.

4. Council Conduct with Boards and Commissions.

The City has established several Boards and Commissions as a means of gathering more community input. Citizens who serve on Boards and Commissions become more involved in government and serve as advisors to the Common Council. They are a valuable resource to the City's leadership and should be treated with appreciation and respect.

A. If you attend a Board or Commission meeting, be careful to only express personal opinions.

Council members may attend any Board or Commission meeting, which are always open to any member of the public. However, they should be sensitive to the way their participation- could be viewed as unfairly affecting the process. Any public comments by a Council member at a Board or Commission meeting should be clearly made as individual opinion and not a representation of the feelings of the entire City Council.

B. Limit contact with Board and Commission members to questions of clarification.

It is inappropriate for a Council member to contact a Board or Commission member to advocate for or against an issue before that Board or Commission. It is acceptable for Council members to contact Board or Commission members in order to clarify a position taken by the Board or Commission.

C. Respect that Boards and Commissions serve the community, not individual Council members.

The Mayor and City Council appoint individuals to serve on Boards and Commissions, and it is the responsibility of Boards and Commissions to follow policy established by the Council.

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But Board and Commission members do not report to individual Council members, nor should Council members feel they have the power or right to threaten Board and Commission members with removal if they disagree about an issue. Appointment and re-appointment to a Board or Commission should be based on such criteria as expertise, ability to work with staff and the public, and commitment to fulfilling official duties. A Board or Commission appointment should not be used as a political "reward."

D. Be respectful of diverse opinions.

The primary role of Boards and Commissions is to represent many points of view in the community and to provide the Council with advice based on a full spectrum of concerns and perspectives. Council members may have a closer working relationship with some individuals serving on Boards and Commissions but must be fair and respectful of all citizens serving on Boards and Commissions.

E. Keep political support away from public forums.

Board and Commission members may offer political support to a Council member, but not in a public forum while conducting official duties. Conversely, Council members may support Board and Commission members who are running for office, but not in an official forum in their capacity as a Council member.

	POLICY CE1.4 Sanctions	
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Sanctions

1. **Acknowledgement of Code of Ethics and Conduct.**

Council members who do not sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understand the Code of Ethics and Conduct may be subject to discipline and shall be ineligible for intergovernmental assignments or Council subcommittees.

Board and Commission members who do not sign an acknowledgement that they have read and understand the Code of Ethics and Conduct are not eligible to hold office.

2. **Behavior and Conduct.**

The Springfield Code of Ethics and Conduct expresses standards of ethical conduct expected for members of the Springfield Common Council, Boards and Commissions. Members themselves have the primary responsibility to ensure that ethical standards are understood and met, and that the public can continue to have full confidence in the integrity of government. The chairs of Boards and Commissions and the Mayor and Council have the additional responsibility to intervene when actions of members that appear to be in violation of the Code of Ethics and Conduct are brought to their attention.

a. Council members.

Council members who do not follow proper conduct may be reprimanded or formally censured by the Council, lose committee assignments (both within the City of Springfield and with intergovernmental agencies) or other privileges afforded by the Council. Serious infractions of the Code of Ethics or Code of Conduct could lead to other sanctions as deemed appropriate by the Council, including removal from office.

Individual Council members should point out the offending Council member perceived infractions of the Code of Ethics and Conduct. If the offenses continue, then the matter should be referred to the Mayor in private. If the Mayor is the individual whose actions are being questioned, then the matter should be referred to the Council President. It is the responsibility of the Mayor (or Council President) to initiate action if a Council member's behavior may warrant sanction. If no action is taken by

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the Mayor (or Council President), then the alleged violation(s) may be brought up with the full Council.


b. *Board and Commission Members.*

Counseling, verbal reprimands and written warnings may be administered by the Mayor to Board and Commission members failing to comply with City policy. These lower levels of sanctions shall be kept private to the degree allowed by law. Copies of all written reprimands administered by the Mayor shall be distributed in memo format to the chair of the respective Board or Commission, City Attorney, Finance Officer, and Common Council.

The Mayor and Common Council may impose sanctions on Board and Commission members whose conduct does not comply with the City's policies, up to and including removal from office. Any form of discipline imposed by Common Council shall be determined by a majority vote of at least a quorum of the Council at a noticed public meeting and such action shall be preceded by a report to Common Council with supporting documentation.

When deemed warranted, the Mayor or majority of Council may call for an investigation of Board or Commission member conduct. Also, should the Finance Officer or City Attorney believe an investigation is warranted, they shall confer with the Mayor or Council. The Mayor or Council shall ask the Finance Officer or the City Attorney to investigate the allegation and report the findings.

These sanctions are alternatives to any other remedy that might otherwise be available to remedy conduct that violates this code or state or federal law. In order to protect and preserve good government, any individual including the Finance Officer and the City Attorney, who knows or reasonably believes a member acts or intends or refuses to act in a manner that is or may be a violation of law reasonably imputable to the organization, or in a manner which is likely to result in substantial injury to the organization, may report the violation to the appropriate governmental authorities.

	POLICY CE1.5 Implementation	
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Implementation

The Code of Ethics and 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 shall be included in the regular orientations for candidates for Common Council, Finance Officer, City Attorney, applicants to Board and Commissions, and newly elected and appointed officials. Members entering office shall sign a statement acknowledging they have read and understand the Code of Ethics and Conduct. In addition, the Code of Ethics and Conduct shall be periodically reviewed by the Common Council, Boards and Commissions, and updated as necessary.



**Acknowledgment of Code of Ethics and Conduct for
Elected and Appointed Officials**

I, _____, acknowledge that I have read
the *Springfield Code of Ethics and Conduct*
adopted on September 4, 2025 and understand the same.

Signature

Date