

**RESOLUTION NO. 2024-\_\_\_\_\_**  
**A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF**  
**THE CITY OF MERCED, CALIFORNIA,**  
**REPEALING RESOLUTION NO. 2018-78 TO RE-**  
**ADOPT A VALUES STATEMENT, AND UPDATE**  
**THE ETHICS AND CODE OF CONDUCT FOR**  
**CITY MEETINGS, AND ADOPTING RULES OF**  
**ORDER AND PROCEDURE FOR THE CONDUCT**  
**OF CITY MEETINGS**

**THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MERCED DOES HEREBY  
RESOLVE, DETERMINE, FIND, AND ORDER AS FOLLOWS:**

**SECTION 1.** RESCISSION OF RESOLUTION. Resolution No. 2018-78 is hereby repealed.

**SECTION 2.** RE-ADOPTION. The City Council hereby adopts the following Values Statement and Updates to the Ethics and Code of Conduct, and Rules of Order and Procedure for the Conduct of City Meetings.

**VALUES STATEMENT**

**SECTION 3.** VALUES STATEMENT. The City Council of the City of Merced values the creation of an atmosphere at City meetings that encourages and fosters public input and involvement in the decision making process. The City Council believes that diversity in the community is a positive attribute that is reflected in those elected and appointed to represent the citizens of Merced.

It is the City Council's goal to be tolerant of different opinions, to show respect and concern on all issues, to demonstrate leadership by its actions, and to pledge support or disagreement without being disagreeable in our best effort to keep Merced a city where good things happen.

It is the objective of the City Council to establish the uniform procedures prescribed herein for the conduct of public hearings to ensure that all persons appearing before the City Council, Boards, Committees, and Commissions are treated fairly and equally.

All other Boards, Committees, and Commissions of the City shall strive to comply with this Values Statement.

## **ETHICS/CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **SECTION 4. PURPOSE.**

While it is understood that the State of California has numerous sets of laws that guide the ethical behavior of public officials and employees, the City of Merced wishes to establish that this is a community whose ethical values are clearly stated and fully understood not only by its elected officials and appointed leaders, but this Ethics Code is recognized and acknowledged by its employees and its citizen representatives to represent the values this community holds in highest regard.

### **SECTION 5. ETHICS.**

The citizens and businesses of Merced are entitled to have fair, ethical and accountable local government. To this end, the public should have full confidence that their elected and appointed officials:

- Comply with both the letter and spirit of the laws and policies affecting the operations of government;
- Are independent, impartial and fair in their judgment and actions;
- Use their public office for the public good, not for personal gain; and
- Conduct public deliberations and processes openly, unless required by law to be confidential, in an atmosphere of respect and civility.

Therefore, members of the City Council, and of all Boards, Committees and Commissions (“members”) shall conduct themselves in accordance with the following ethical standards:

1. **Act in the 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 Merced and not for any private or personal interest, and they will assure fair and equal treatment of all persons, claims and transactions coming before them.

2. **Comply with both the spirit and the letter of the Law and City Policy.** Members shall comply with the laws of the nation, the State of California and the City of Merced in the performance of their public duties.

3. **Conduct of Members.** The professional and personal conduct of members while exercising their office must be above reproach and avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Members shall refrain from bias, abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of the Council, Boards, Committees and Commissions, the staff or public.

4. **Request for Process.** Members shall perform their duties in accordance with the processes and rules of order established by the City Council.

5. **Conduct at Public Meetings.** Members shall prepare themselves for public meeting; listen courteously and attentively to all staff reports and 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. When making adjudicative decisions (those decisions where the member is called upon to determine and apply facts peculiar to an individual case), members shall maintain an open mind until the conclusion of the hearing on the matter and shall base their decisions on the facts presented at the hearing and the law.

7. **Communication.** For adjudicative matters pending before the body, members shall publicly disclose on the record of the public hearing substantive information that is relevant to a matter under consideration by the body which they may have received from sources outside of the public decision-making process.

8. **Conflict of Interest.** In order to assure their independence and impartiality on behalf of the common good and compliance with conflict of interest laws, members shall use their best efforts to refrain from creating an appearance of impropriety in their actions and decisions. Members shall not make, participating in making, or use their official positions to influence governmental decisions in which they have (a) a material financial interest as defined by applicable law, (b) an organizational role or personal relationship which could give the appearance of a conflict of interest, (c) an unacceptable probability of actual bias for or against an applicant or issue, or (d) a conflict of interest based on their acceptance of a campaign contribution in excess of \$250 in the twelve months prior to a City proceeding from a party or participant with a financial interest in the proceeding, or their agent, as provided in Government Code Section 84308.

A member who has a potential conflict of interest regarding a particular decision shall disclose the matter to the City Attorney as soon as practical after

becoming aware of the issue, in advance if possible and reasonably cooperate with the City Attorney to analyze the potential conflict. If advised by the City Attorney to seek advice from the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) or other appropriate state agency, a member shall not participate in a decision unless and until he or she has requested and received advice allowing the member to participate. A member shall diligently pursue obtaining such advice. The member shall provide the City Attorney a copy of any written request or advice and conform his or her participation to the advice given. In providing assistance to members, the City Attorney represents the City and not individual members.

In accordance with the law, members shall disclose investments, interests in real property, sources of income, and gifts; and if they have a conflict of interest regarding a particular decision, shall not, once the conflict is ascertained, make, participate in making, or use their official position to influence the decision, and shall not discuss or comment on the matter in any way to any person including other members unless otherwise permitted by law. Members who have conflicts of interest in items before their body shall declare the conflict on the record, recuse themselves from making, participating in making, or using their official position to influence the decision, and leave the dais during the proceeding, unless the item appears on a consent calendar in which case the member need not leave the dais.

9. **Gifts and Favors.** Members shall not take any special advantage of services or opportunities for personal gain, by virtue of their public office that is not available to the public in general. They shall refrain from accepting any gifts, favors or promises of future benefits which might compromise their independence of judgment or action or give the appearance of being compromised.

A. The applicable gift limit set forth in the Political Reform Act is reduced to fifty dollars (\$50) per calendar year from a restricted source. The gift limit is effective January 1, 2019.

1. For members, a “restricted source” is the following:

- a. A person who has entered into, performs under, or seeks a contract with the City.
- b. A person who, during the prior 12 months, attempted to influence the member in any City action that would have a material financial effect on the person. This does not include an individual who attempted to influence action

regarding that individual's own compensation, benefits, or retirement as a City employee.

- c. A person who is or in the prior 12 months was a party to a proceeding involving a license, permit, or other entitlement for use that was pending before an elected City officer, the City Council, or a Board, Commissions, Committee, or other similar body of which the intended recipient is a voting member.

- B. Effective January 1, 2020, a member shall declare the receipt of a gift from a restricted source and recuse himself/herself from a proceeding affecting a restricted source if s/he has received a gift that exceeds the applicable gift limit set forth in paragraph 9.A.

10. **Confidential Information.** Members must maintain the confidentiality of all written materials and verbal information provided to members which is confidential or privileged. Members shall neither disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization, nor use such information to advance their personal, financial or other private interests. The attorney/client privilege is held by the City and may only be waived by a majority vote of the City Council. Members who violate this confidentiality provision may be subject to censure or prosecution under applicable law.

11. **Use of Public Resources.** Members shall not use public resources which are not available to the public in general (e.g., City staff time, equipment, supplies or facilities) for private gain or for personal or political purposes not otherwise authorized by law.

12. **Representation of Private Interests.** In keeping with their role as stewards of the public interest, members of the Council shall not appear on behalf of the private interests of third parties before their own bodies, or before the City Council for compensation, on behalf of the private interests of third parties on matters related to the areas of service of their bodies.

13. **Advocacy.** Members shall represent the official policies or positions of the City Council, Board, Committee or Commission to the best of their ability when designated as delegates for this purpose. When presenting their individual opinions and positions, members shall explicitly state they do not represent their body or the City of Merced, nor will they allow the inference that they do.

Councilmembers and Board, Committee and Commission members have the right to endorse candidates for all Council seats or other elected offices. It is inappropriate to mention or display political endorsements during Council meetings, or Board, Committee and Commission meetings, or other official City events.

14. **Policy Role of Members.** Members shall respect and adhere to the council-manager structure of Merced City government as outlined in the Merced Municipal Code. In this structure, the City Council determines the policies of the City with the advice, information and analysis provided by City staff, Boards, Committees and Commissions, and the public. Except as provided by the Municipal Code, 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 staff to implement Council policy decisions. Members shall not give direction to staff, and shall convey any suggestions or requests through the City Manager.

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

16. **Positive Work Place Environment.** Members shall support the maintenance of a positive and constructive work place environment for City employees and for citizens and businesses dealing with the City. Members shall recognize their special role in dealings with City employees, and shall in no way create the perception of inappropriate direction to staff. Members shall convey any suggestions or requests for staff work through the City Manager.

## **RULES OF ORDER AND PROCEDURE**

**SECTION 6.** POSTING OF AGENDAS. All agendas of the City Council meetings, and of the other Boards and Commissions of the City, shall be posted on or near the entrance to City Hall, located at 678 West 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Merced, California, at least seventy-two (72) hours prior to a regular or adjourned meeting, and at least twenty-four (24) hours for a special meeting. The City Clerk or Secretary of the Board or Commission shall prepare a certificate of posting for each such posting.

**SECTION 7.** CONTENTS OF AGENDA. Each agenda shall contain a brief, general description of each item to be transacted or discussed at the meeting.

**SECTION 8.** CITIZEN PARTICIPATION. In accordance with Charter Section 411 and these Rules, each agenda for a regularly scheduled City Council, Board, or Commission meeting shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to personally, or through counsel, address the City Council, Board, or Commission on items of interest to the public that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the City Council, or respective Board or Commission. In accordance with Section 411 of the City Charter, at special or emergency meetings, grievances and comments shall be limited to the topic of the special or emergency meeting, unless waived by the City Council, Board, or Commission.

Unless less restrictive rules are adopted for a particular item or any of these rules are waived by the City Council, Board or Commission, the following rules shall apply:

1. Except as provided below, there shall be two opportunities for public participation during meetings:

(a) All general public comment for items not on an agenda but within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body conducting the meeting shall take place during a general public comment period at each meeting. Each speaker shall be limited to three (3) minutes of comment during the general and consent calendar public comment periods.

(b) All public comment for individual regular business items and duly-noticed public hearing items on an agenda shall be taken immediately prior to the consideration of that item. Speakers shall limit their comments to matters that are germane to the subject of the item. Public hearings shall follow the staff report and public comment shall be taken after presentations by the applicant and/or appellant, if any. Except as provided herein, public comment on regular business and public hearing items shall be limited to three (3) minutes during the public hearing, and speakers shall not speak more than once during any public hearing.

2. In order to speak as provided in item 1 above, a speaker should complete a Request to Speak card and submit it to the City Clerk. The Request to Speak card should be submitted prior to the City Clerk's calling for speakers at general public comment period, and prior to the rebuttal period during public

hearing items. At the time for public comment, the Mayor or Chair shall ask the City Clerk or Secretary of the Board or Commission to read the names from the Request to Speak cards. The City Clerk or Secretary of the Board or Commission shall call three (3) to five (5) speakers at a time and base the order of the speakers on the order in which the Request to Speak cards were submitted. While speakers are encouraged to identify themselves for the record and administrative efficiency, no person shall be denied the right to speak if they decline to identify themselves.

If more than ten (10) speakers desire to speak at a public hearing or on any agenda item then the Mayor or Chairperson may, in their discretion, further limit the time available to each speaker, for all speakers, at the discretion of the Mayor or Chair but subject to the consent of the body.

Speakers shall be timed by the City Clerk or Secretary of the Board or Commission who shall inform speakers when their time has expired. As a courtesy to the City Council, Board, or Commission and other speakers, and those waiting to be heard on agenda items, speakers will not be allowed to continue beyond their allotted time.

3. For those public hearing agenda items where there is an applicant for a permit, license, or other entitlement, or the proposed revocation thereof, a spokesperson for the applicant, or the applicant themselves, shall be entitled to fifteen (15) minutes, including any time for rebuttal, and a spokesperson for any appellant or group opposing the application shall be entitled to fifteen (15) minutes, including any time for rebuttal. All other speakers commenting on the public hearing item shall be limited to three (3) minutes and shall be subject to the Request to Speak card procedure hereinbefore prescribed.

4. For non-public hearing communications, including consent calendar items, each speaker should complete and submit a Request to Speak card prior to consideration of the item, and shall be subject to the procedures and time limits hereinbefore prescribed.

5. No public comment needs to be heard on a subject not within the subject matter jurisdiction of the City Council or respective Board or Commission and the Mayor or Chair shall rule the speaker out of order.

6. Written communications delivered or emailed to the City Clerk prior to 1:00 pm on the day of a meeting will be distributed to the members of the applicable body at the meeting.



7. Any non-agenda item that requires action shall be referred by the Mayor or Chairperson to the City Manager for a report. The City Council, Board, or Commission shall not discuss the item until a report is prepared and heard unless the item meets one of the exceptions contained in Government Code Section 54954.2(b).

8. No person shall willfully disrupt or break up a lawful public meeting and, if such behavior continues to disrupt the meeting following a warning from the Mayor/Chair, the disruptive individual or individuals may be removed from the meeting room and, if applicable cited for violating Penal Code Section 403.

**SECTION 9.** ACTING ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS. No action shall be taken on agenda items not posted in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2 or 54956 unless the item meets one of the exceptions contained in Government Code Section 54954.2(b).

**SECTION 10.** PROCEDURE UPON DEMAND TO CURE ACTION ALLEGED TO VIOLATE THE BROWN ACT. Upon receipt of a demand to cure or correct an alleged violation of the Brown Act the applicable rules of Government Code Section 54950 *et seq.*, or any successor statute, shall apply.

**SECTION 11.** PROCEDURE FOR AGENDA ITEMS.

1. The presiding officer shall be the Mayor for all matters before the City Council and the Chair of the Board or Commission for all matters before the Board or Commission. In the event of the absence or non-participation for any reason of the Mayor or Chair, the presiding officer shall be the member upon whom the chairmanship of a regular meeting of the body devolves in such event.

2. The order of presentation of evidence in each case shall be determined by the presiding officer in their discretion. The presiding officer shall rule out of order the presentation of abusive, profane, or unduly repetitive evidence.

3. Evidence shall not be required to be presented under oath or affirmation nor shall there be a right of cross-examination, except for any revocation hearing held pursuant to subsection 9 of this Section.

4. No proceeding need be conducted according to any technical rules relating to evidence and witnesses. Any relevant evidence shall be admitted if it is

the sort of evidence on which responsible persons are accustomed to rely in the conduct of serious affairs, regardless of the existence of any common law or statutory rule which might make improper the admission of such evidence in a court of law.

5. Rulings on questions of order or procedure shall be made by the Mayor or Chair of the Board or Commission unless a specific rule to the contrary is provided by the Charter of the City of Merced, a statute applicable to charter cities, City Ordinance, or these rules. Such rulings on questions of order or procedure are subject to appeal to the entire City Council or Board or Commission by a Member of the City Council, Board, or Commission in which case a majority vote thereof shall conclusively govern and conclusively determine such question of order or procedure. *Robert's Rules of Order*, if used, shall only be used as a guide and is not conclusive authority on any question of order or procedure, except that the body shall follow *Roberts Rules of Order* with regard to the order of priority and rules for motions, seconds, substitute motions, and motions to amend a motion. Motions for reconsideration shall also be governed by *Roberts Rules of Order*, except that a motion for reconsideration may be made by a member of the prevailing side during the same meeting or the next regularly scheduled meeting of the body.

6. When a matter is contested and a request is filed in writing with the City Clerk at least forty-eight (48) hours before the hour set for the hearing, a record of any hearing or continued hearing subsequently held in the matter shall be made and duly preserved, provided that the City Clerk shall require a deposit in advance from the person making the request. A copy of such record shall be available at cost.

7. Administrative staff reports shall be made public prior to or at the beginning of the hearing and shall be a matter of public record.

8. The action or recommendation of the City Council, Board, or Commission shall appear in the minutes of the respective body prepared for the meeting. Such minutes shall be public records, which shall be open to inspection and available for copying at cost in accordance with rules applicable to public records generally.

9. The following additional rules shall apply to public hearings set for the purpose of determining whether a conditional use permit; variance; or any

other entitlement, license, or permit shall be revoked and shall prevail over any of the foregoing rules inconsistent herewith.

- A. Notice of revocation hearing shall be transmitted by certified mail at least ten (10) days before the hearing to the owner of the affected property at the address shown on the current records of the County Assessor.
- B. The decision of the body before which the public hearing was held shall be sent to the affected property owner by certified mail at the address shown on the current records of the County Assessor within ten (10) days of the making of such decision.

## **SECTION 12.** CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS.

- 1. Effective May 1, 2017, regular sessions of the City Council shall be held on the first and third Mondays of each month, holidays excepted, at the hour of 5:30 p.m., and adjourned and special meetings at such time as the City Council may order. The time between 5:30 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. shall be reserved for closed sessions with the regular agenda commencing at 6:00 p.m.
- 2. The proceedings of special City Council meetings shall be limited to the subjects set forth in the call therefore.

## **SECTION 13.** POWERS AND DUTIES OF MAYOR.

- 1. The Mayor shall take the Chair at the hour appointed for the City Council to meet. The Mayor shall immediately call the members to order, and except in the absence of a quorum, shall proceed to business in the manner prescribed by these rules.
- 2. The Mayor shall preserve order and decorum and shall decide all questions of order and procedure, subject to appeal, which appeal shall be decided without debate, except that the appellant may state the grounds upon which he/she bases his/her appeal.

**SECTION 14.** POWERS AND DUTIES OF MAYOR PRO TEMPORE.  
The Mayor Pro Tempore shall be selected by the City Council to act as presiding officer during the absence of the Mayor and said Mayor Pro Tempore shall serve at the pleasure of the City Council.

**SECTION 15.** ABSENCE OF MAYOR AND MAYOR PRO TEMPORE.  
In the absence of the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore, the Chair shall be occupied by one of the City Council Members present.

**SECTION 16.** ORDER OF BUSINESS.

1. The City Manager shall prepare or cause to be prepared and cause to be printed for each meeting a list in detail of all matters ready for consideration at the City Council, Board or Commission meetings; said list shall be known as the agenda and shall include all communications from other officers and boards, petitions and communications, reports, resolutions, ordinances, and any other matters which have been presented to the City Council, Board, or Commission and which remain undetermined. In case any matters on the agenda of a particular meeting are not acted upon, they shall be continued upon the agenda of the next meeting and of each succeeding meeting in their order of introduction until finally disposed of by the City Council.

2. The business of regular meetings of the City Council, Board or Commission shall be transacted as far as practicable in the following order:

- A. Study Session (if applicable)
- B. Closed Session (if applicable)
- C. Call to Order
- D. Roll Call
- E. Report Out of Closed Session (if applicable)
- F. Ceremonial Matters (if applicable)
- G. Special Presentations (if applicable)
- H. Written Petitions and Communications
- I. General Public Comments for Non-Agenda
- J. General Public Comments Consent Calendar
- K. Consent Calendar
- L. Public Hearings
- M. Action Items
- N. Reports
- O. Business
- P. Adjournment

It is understood that matters set for public hearing shall be taken up at the hour set or as soon thereafter as possible.

3. The first item on the consent calendar shall be a motion that reads as follows:

“To approve the reading by title of all Ordinances and Resolutions which appear on the public agenda. Said Ordinances and Resolutions which appear on the public agenda shall be determined to have been read by title and further reading waived pursuant to Merced City Charter Section 412.”

#### **SECTION 17.** RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF MEMBERS.

1. When a Member is about to speak they shall address the Mayor or Chair, and when two or more Members desire to speak at once, the Mayor or Chair shall name the Member who is to speak, and the Member shall confine himself/herself to the question under debate and avoid personalities.

2. Whenever the Mayor recognizes a Member desiring to speak that Member may initially address the City Council or question staff, an applicant or a witness for a period not to exceed five (5) minutes after which the Mayor shall recognize the next Member desiring to speak or question staff, an applicant, or a witness. Once all Members have had an initial five (5) minutes to speak on a matter, the Mayor shall allow a second and subsequent rounds of speaking and/or questioning by the City Council until the question is called or all Members have completed their speaking and/or questioning.

3. Every Member present when a question is put shall vote by signifying yes, no, or abstain either by voice vote or electronic means as appropriate.

4. No Member shall divulge information on any aspect of a “closed session” called under the provisions of the Ralph M. Brown Act of the State of California, except as required by law, nor shall the Member violate any confidences received as a result of their official office. (Merced Municipal Code Section 2.04.050).

5. Members shall conduct themselves in a proper manner at all times as befitting their official office and in accordance with the responsibility entrusted to them by the citizens of this community.

## **SECTION 18.** DUTIES OF CITY CLERK.

1. The City Clerk, Assistant City Clerk, or Deputy City Clerk shall attend all meetings of the City Council (except closed sessions) and shall maintain a record of the proceedings of the City Council and shall record the ayes and noes upon all questions.

2. It shall be the duty of the City Clerk to keep a complete record of the proceedings of the City Council in the form of minutes.

3. The City Clerk shall keep an index of records convenient for reference of all ordinances, resolutions, petitions, and other matters introduced or presented to the City Council, together with a complete chronological record of all action taken thereon by the City Council.

4. The City Clerk shall notify all Members of the City Council of the time set for any special or adjourned meetings, and shall, at the request of the Mayor, call all meetings of special committees and notify parties interested in the matters pending before said special committee of the time and place of said meeting.

5. The City Clerk shall time all speakers and inform a speaker when the speaker's allotted time has expired.

6. The City Clerk shall collect the Request to Speak cards and read the names therefrom when called to by the Mayor or Chair.

**SECTION 19.** MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS. Except as herein otherwise provided, the proceedings of this City Council shall be governed by the City Charter, City Ordinances, statutes applicable to charter cities, and these rules, and it shall be the duty of the Mayor to adhere to and enforce such rules, as well as the rules herein set forth.

**SECTION 20.** VALIDITY OF ACTIONS. Violations of any of these rules shall not affect the validity of any action, inaction or recommendation regardless of whether taken by ordinance, resolution or motion, except upon specific allegation and proof of the procedural error complained of sufficient to demonstrate that such error was prejudicial and that by reason thereof the party complaining or appealing sustained and suffered substantial injury, and that a different result would have

been probable if such error had not occurred or existed. There shall be no presumption that error is prejudicial or that injury was done if error is shown.

**SECTION 21.** IMPLEMENTATION. These Rules of Order and Procedure shall be implemented at the first meeting of the City Council, Board, or Commission occurring on \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the City Council of the City of Merced at a regular meeting held on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024, by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members:

NOES: Council Members:

ABSENT: Council Members:

ABSTAIN: Council Members:

APPROVED:  
MATTHEW SERRATTO, MAYOR

---

Mayor

ATTEST:  
D. SCOTT MCBRIDE, CITY CLERK

BY: \_\_\_\_\_  
Assistant/Deputy City Clerk

(SEAL)

APPROVED AS TO FORM:  
CRAIG J. CORNWELL, CITY ATTORNEY

BY: Craig Cornwell 6/26/2024 \_\_\_\_\_  
City Attorney Date