

## MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL'S "INTERACTION" POLICY

In an effort to improve their effectiveness as a decision-making body, the Mayor and Ames City Council members have agreed to these points:

### **1. IN REGARDS TO COUNCIL TO COUNCIL INTERACTIONS:**

- Council members will attempt to propose all of the desired changes to a draft ordinance during its first reading. This process will help assure that Council members will minimize making changes to the ordinance during the second and third readings of an ordinance, which only adds to the public's confusion on what the Council is voting.
- Council members will avoid making decisions because of "time pressure". If a Council meeting is running long, it is better to table an item to the next agenda than to force the members to make a decision regarding a controversial issue.
- The Mayor will periodically update the Council regarding conversations held with outside groups (e.g. ISU President, Ames School Board President, Board of Supervisors, Iowa League of Municipalities, etc.).
- The Council members will spend less time "working in the weeds" regarding operations and more time on the most important issues at the policy level.
- The City Council will work to delegate/empower more to staff.
- The Council members will avoid the overuse of motions to reconsider.
- Once a decision on a matter has been voted on, a Council member on the losing side will not attempt to have the Council reconsider the matter. Reconsideration of the previously voted on issues, leaves the public confused regarding when a matter has been finally approved.
- The student ex-officio member of the Council is encouraged to participate in the meetings.
- Council members will work towards achieving consensus (a majority vote) versus a unity (a unanimous vote).

- It is recognized that Council discussions should not be prolonged in an attempt to assure that every member is in support of a particular action.
- The principles contained in 7 Keys to a Respectful Meeting and Tips for a Meeting Moderator, as prepared by The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center shall be followed.
- The Mayor and City Council will establish a goal to end meetings within a certain time limit. A three hour time limit was discussed.
- The Mayor will prepare “informal” time limits for each agenda item to help assure the meetings are completed within the approved time limit.
- The City Council members will endeavor to limit what is pulled from Consent Agenda by asking the City Manager questions prior to the City Council meeting.
- The Mayor will be empowered to limit Council members from making points more than one time on an agenda item.
- All special meetings, including the Council goal setting sessions, will be posted on the City’s web site.



## 7 Keys to a Respectful Meeting

We can all play a part in improving respect and civility in our community.

To help achieve this goal, our expectations are that we will:

- 1. Listen attentively**  
Stay in the moment. Pay attention to what is being said instead of thinking ahead to what you want to say in response.
- 2. Respect the opinions of others**  
You don't have to agree. Respect that others have their own experiences that shape their opinions.
- 3. Keep an open mind**  
Take time to weigh all sides of an issue.
- 4. Give constructive comments, suggestions & feedback**  
Before you speak, ask yourself if what you have to say is helpful, civil, and necessary.
- 5. Avoid personal attacks**  
Getting personal doesn't advance the conversation, and doesn't build a positive reput
- 6. Remember the things we have in common**  
Start with what you agree on. You may have less disagreement than you thought.
- 7. Value people, the process, and the results**  
If others are willing to discuss difficult issues, show appreciation for their participation and the results.

### For You to Consider

- In what other meetings could you use these expectations?
- Are people in leadership positions being good role models of respectful behavior?
- Are there any additional expectations that would be beneficial for your group to add?

Find more resources at [TheRayCenter.org](http://TheRayCenter.org)



The Robert D. and Billie Ray Center



## Tips for a Meeting Moderator

Moderating a meeting with respectful communication

- **Welcome**  
Greet participants as they arrive and introduce yourself. Make everyone feel welcome.
- **Set expectations**  
Consider using the “7 Keys to a Respectful Meeting” to help set up expectations for respectful meeting.
- **Remind participants of the expectations**  
If meeting participants begin to show disrespectful behavior, refer back to the expectations you set at the beginning of the meeting.
- **Set a good example**  
As the meeting moderator, you need to role model respectful behavior.
- **Use eye contact**  
Be sure look at your meeting attendees when they are speaking.
- **Don't allow anonymity**  
Participants will be more likely to follow the meeting expectations when they are asked to introduce themselves before speaking.
- **When in doubt**  
If you're unsure how to react to a situation - try asking yourself these questions to help in your decision making:
  - How would I want to be treated in this situation? (The Golden Rule)
  - Would you want your action/decision put on the front page of the newspaper or social media?
  - What action will produce the best possible outcome for everyone involved?
- **Be gracious**
  - Don't be afraid to admit when you've made a mistake.
  - Genuinely thank everyone for their attendance and participation.

## **2. IN REGARDS TO COUNCIL TO PUBLIC INTERACTIONS:**

- When the Council says “no” to a constituent at a Council meetings, the Mayor will thank the person/group for making the effort to bring the issue to the City Council.
- Technical questions from the public will be passed on to the staff through the City Manager.
- Council members will defend the City staff when attacked during Council meetings or in emails.
- During Council Meetings the Mayor will instruct citizens at the podium to address their comments to Council and not engage with or address the public or City staff members.
- During Council meetings, constituents will be limited to offering public input to one time per person during Public Forum and/or during Public Comment on an agenda item.
- The Council members will receive input and refrain from engaging with a citizen during Public Forum or Public Comments during the Council meetings.
- The City Council (and staff) will solicit public input regarding major issues (e.g. parking meters rate increases; rezoning of Lincoln Way, Rental cap) before final decisions are made.
- Staff members will not be asked to meet outside of a Council meeting with a Council member and citizen(s) to discuss an issue.
- The staff welcomes the opportunity to meet directly with the citizen(s) at separate meetings outside of Council meetings.

### **3. IN REGARDS TO COUNCIL TO STAFF INTERACTIONS:**

- The City Council Members will maintain policies that are applied uniformly to avoid confusion.
- The Council members will avoid establishing policies that are difficult for the staff to enforce.
- City Council members will funnel all communications (citizen complaints/concerns, Council requests for information, etc.) intended for City staff through the City Manager, rather than sending these requests directly to staff. Responses to these communications, may be sent by the City Manager either directly to the constituent or back to the requesting Council member for distribution to the constituent, as so requested by the Council member.
- If a Council member poses a request for information that requires time to prepare a report of analysis, then the request for this information shall come from a vote by all of the Council (during Council Comments), not as a directive from only one member either directly or outside of a Council meeting.
- All Legal questions/issues should go directly to the City Attorney.
- The City Council members will empower staff to work out solutions with residents/customers.
- The City Council members will provide a safe and protective environment for staff to make their profession recommendations.
- If information from another city is desired 1) Council members may seek the information from the other city council members, or 2) the Mayor may seek the information for their counterpart, or 3) the City Manager may contact their counterpart and/or staff members of the other city.