

## RESOLUTION NUMBER 15-0065

### A RESOLUTION OF THE MANHATTAN BEACH CITY COUNCIL ENDORSING STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR THAT PROMOTE CIVILITY AT ALL PUBLIC MEETINGS AND IN INTERACTIONS WITH THE PUBLIC

WHEREAS, a majority of Americans believe that our society is increasingly uncivil and that this problem is particularly acute and particularly detrimental in national state and local political arenas where it threatens government's ability to function democratically and effectively;

WHEREAS, across the nation many groups have adopted policies and rules to enhance civility at public meetings including the United States Conference of Mayors which adopted a Civility Accord, and in interactions with the public;

WHEREAS, in keeping with this national trend many cities have approved policies to promote civility at local public meetings;

WHEREAS, the defining characteristics of the City of Manhattan Beach include its commitment to the democratic process, individual rights of expression, robust debate and tolerance for disparate views;

WHEREAS, the City Council, the City's boards and commissions, other public bodies and various community groups all convene public meetings to address controversial issues that engender passionate and often conflicting opinions;

WHEREAS, an atmosphere of incivility and disrespect at these meetings can stifle participation and debate, threaten the quality of decisions and undermine the local democratic process;

WHEREAS, adopting principles of civility applicable to all public meetings will help ensure that civic engagement and local democracy continue to flourish in Manhattan Beach; and

WHEREAS, THE City Council has previously demonstrated its commitment to treating members of the public, City staff and elected officials with respect and dignity by previously adopting a "Civility Policy" and wants to memorialize that policy in this Resolution.

NOW THEREFORE THE MANHATTAN BEACH CITY COUNCIL DOES RESOLVE AS FOLLOWS

Section 1. In order to safeguard participatory democracy in Manhattan Beach, all persons attending public meetings in Manhattan Beach should strive to:

1. Treat everyone courteously
2. Listen to others respectfully

3. Exercise self control
4. Give open minded consideration to all viewpoints
5. Focus on the issues and avoid personalizing debate
6. Embrace respectful disagreement and dissent as democratic rights inherent components of an inclusive public process and tools for forging sound decisions.

Section 2. The City Council, all City Boards and Commissions and City staff shall promote the use of and adherence to these guidelines for behavior at all public meetings within the City.

Section 3. Previously in 2015, the City Council adopted the following Civility Policy:

#### **A. Civility Policy**

Manhattan Beach elected officials and employees will treat members of the public with respect and expect the same in return. The City is committed to maintaining orderly administrative processes in keeping City Council meetings and City administrative offices free from disruptions.

This policy promotes mutual respect, civility and orderly conduct among City employees, elected officials, and the public. This policy is not intended to deprive any person of his/her right to freedom of expression, but only to maintain, to the extent possible and reasonable, a safe, harassment-free workplace for our staff. The City encourages positive communication and discourages volatile, hostile or aggressive actions. The City seeks public cooperation with this endeavor.

- (1) All interactions between City staff, City elected officials and members of the public will be conducted in a respectful manner.
- (2) Threats of violence will not be tolerated.
- (3) Loud, insulting, demeaning, or offensive communications will not be tolerated.
- (4) The City will not tolerate any individual who disrupts or threatens to disrupt City government operations, threatens the health and safety of staff or councilmembers, willfully causes property damage, uses loud and/or offensive written or oral language which could provoke a violent reaction; or who has otherwise established a continued pattern of uncivil behavior.

#### **B. Safety and Security Steps.**

The City will take the following steps to promote compliance with the Civility Code. Internally, the City will provide a safety and/or crisis intervention techniques

program in order to raise awareness on how to deal with these situations if and when they occur, and how to document each incident.

**1. Official Warning**

If a member of the public begins to act abusively towards a City employee, staff will issue an oral warning before taking further action in response to the abuse, and provide that person with this policy. This warning – which should clearly identify both the offending behavior and the potential consequences that will arise if such behavior persists – will provide the abusive member of the public with an opportunity to improve his or her behavior before the City takes more serious action, such as removal from the premises. A warning from City staff will often be sufficient to halt any abusive treatment.

**2. Suspension from the Government Building for a Short Period**

If an abusive member of the public does not improve his or her behavior in response to an official warning, the City will request the abusive individual leave the premises for a short period of time (e.g., the remainder of the day). This temporary suspension from City property provides the abusive member of the public with an opportunity to “cool down” and reflect on his or her treatment of City staff.

**3. Cease and Desist Letter**

If an abusive member of the public does not improve his or her behavior in response to an official warning or brief suspension, the City will respond by sending a “cease-and-desist” letter. The letter will identify both the prohibited conduct and the City’s potential remedies. A “cease-and-desist” letter will put the abusive member of the public on notice of the potentially serious consequences of his or her conduct.

**4. Further Measures**

Nothing in this policy precludes additional action if the above measures are not effective.

The City Clerk shall certify to the adoption of this Resolution.

PASSED, APPROVED and ADOPTED this 17<sup>th</sup> Day of November, 2015.

Ayes:

Noes:

Absent:

Abstain:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mark Burton, Mayor

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Liza Tamura, City Clerk

STATE OF CALIFORNIA            )  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES       ) ss.  
CITY OF MANHATTAN BEACH    )

I, Liza Tamura, City Clerk of the City of Manhattan Beach, California, hereby certify that Resolution No. XX-XX was adopted by the City Council of the City of Manhattan Beach, California, at a regular meeting held on the \_\_day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2015, and that the same was adopted by the following vote:

AYES:  
NOES:  
ABSENT:  
ABSTAIN

\_\_\_\_\_  
Liza Tamura, City Clerk