



Department Responsible: Management Services  
Date Created: 08/6/2019  
Approved By: City Council

SUBJECT: Manhattan Beach Rules of Decorum at Public Meetings

PURPOSE: To provide safeguard participatory democracy in the City of Manhattan Beach

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## **MANHATTAN BEACH RULES OF DECORUM AT PUBLIC MEETINGS**

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 and decorum at public meetings;

WHEREAS, in keeping with this national trend many cities have approved policies to promote civility and maintain decorum 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 Manhattan Beach 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; and

WHEREAS, adopting rules of decorum applicable to all public meetings will help ensure that civic engagement and local democracy continue to flourish in Manhattan Beach.

### **PROVISIONS:**

#### **A. General Guidelines**

The City has numerous public meetings such as City Council meetings, Commission meetings, Board meetings, etc. (hereinafter "Public Meetings"). In order to safeguard participatory democracy in Manhattan Beach, all persons attending Public Meetings in Manhattan Beach should strive to:

- Treat everyone courteously
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- Listen to others respectfully
- Exercise self-control
- Give open-minded consideration to all viewpoints
- Focus on the issues and avoid personalizing debate
- Embrace respectful disagreement and dissent as democratic rights that are inherent components of an inclusive public process and tools for forging sound decisions.

#### B. Rules of Decorum

1. No person attending a Public Meetings shall engage in disorderly or boisterous conduct—including but not limited to applause, whistling, stamping of feet, booing, or making any loud, threatening, profane, abusive, personal, impertinent, or slanderous utterance—that disturbs, disrupts, or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of the meeting.
2. All remarks by members of the public shall be addressed to the Mayor or the Chair (hereinafter “Presiding Officer”) and not to any other member of the public or to any single Council, Board or Commission Member unless in response to a question from that Member.
3. Signs, placards, banners, or other similar items shall not be permitted in the audience during a Public Meeting if the presence of such item disturbs, disrupts or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of the meeting.
4. All persons attending a Public Meeting shall remain seated in the seats provided, unless addressing the body at the podium or entering or leaving the meeting.
5. All persons attending a Public Meeting shall obey any lawful order of the Presiding Officer to enforce the Rules of Decorum.

#### C. Enforcement of the Rules of Decorum

1. The Presiding Officer shall be responsible for maintaining the decorum at the Public Meeting and uniformly enforcing the Rules of Decorum.
2. In the event that any person breaches the Rules of Decorum in a manner that disturbs, disrupts, or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of the meeting, the Presiding Officer shall order that person to cease the offending conduct.
3. If any person continues to breach the Rules of Decorum in a manner that disturbs, disrupts, or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of the meeting following an order from the Presiding Officer to cease the offending conduct, the Presiding Officer may order that person to leave the Public Meeting.
4. If any person refuses to leave the Public Meeting following an order from the Presiding Officer to do so, the Presiding Officer may order any law enforcement officer on duty to remove that person from the Public Meeting.

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.

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