

Montecito Fire Protection District



Board of Directors Policy Manual

October 29, 2018

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Mission Statement

The Montecito Fire Protection District is a progressive organization committed to the protection of the people, property and the environment. We exist to provide a professional and timely response to the needs of the community in preparation for, during and in recovery from emergencies.

Organizational Values

We value our citizens' rights and quality of life.

We value our young and old alike.

We value our obligation and responsibility.

We value your support, input and participation.

Being a member of the Montecito Fire Protection District requires constant attention to the way we treat other members and the people we serve. It also means that we continuously strive to improve the services we offer.

The cornerstone of our beliefs begin with respecting each person's contributions to our organization or community, regardless of his or her political strength, personal appearance, economic status, ethnicity, cultural heritage or religious beliefs.

Because each of our fire stations is an "open house" that is ready to welcome our citizens, we work to demonstrate appreciation, support and tolerance in everything that we do.

Conflict within the organization is investigated thoroughly and viewed as an organizational "injury" that needs healing. We then take preventive measures to ensure it doesn't happen again. We look at mistakes not as failures, but as opportunities to improve.

As members we are responsible for ourselves. We celebrate the success of others. When we see an opportunity to assist someone, we offer before we are asked. Helping one another is the norm, not the exception.

Working together as a cohesive unit brings forth accomplishments that make our job fulfilling. The organizations "win-win" philosophy is the common denominator for tackling problems and creating solutions.

We pride ourselves on our professional demeanor and response to any incident, minor injury or major disaster.

Organizational Chart

Community

Board of Directors

Fire Chief

General Rules

The purpose of this policy manual is to provide guidelines for the conduct of the Board of Directors (“Board” or “Directors”) of the Montecito Fire Protection District (“MFPD” or “District”). Any of these policies not required by law may be suspended by a majority of the Board. Any policy may be altered, amended or repealed at a duly noticed meeting by a majority vote of the Board.

Board Member Roles and Responsibilities

The Board represents the community and decides policy issues and sets priorities for the District. This is accomplished through thoughtful deliberation of each policy issue in a transparent, public environment. Staff shall make available all information and alternatives so that the Board can make informed decisions. All requests from a Board member for information and/or agenda items shall be funneled through the Fire Chief and distributed to all Board members.

Fire Chief Roles and Responsibilities

The Fire Chief is the Chief Executive of the Fire District. He/she shall be responsible for the implementation of Board action at the organizational level. The Fire Chief shall have general supervision over the administration of the affairs, employees, and business of the District. The Fire Chief shall be charged with the hiring and discharging of employees and the management of District interests and properties.

Basis of Authority

The Board of Directors is the governing authority of this District. Apart from his/her normal function as a part of this unit, or as directed by the Board, no Director may commit the District to any policy, act, or expenditure. All powers, privileges, and duties vested in or imposed upon the District shall be exercised and performed through the Board. The Board may delegate to officers, employees, and agents of the District any or all administrative and ministerial powers. The Board of Directors is responsible for oversight of the District while the Fire Chief is responsible for administration of the affairs of the District.

Position Description

A Director is usually elected by the constituents of the jurisdictional boundary of the Montecito Fire Protection District. Elected Directors serve a four-year term in office and appointed Directors may serve a shorter term dependent upon the vacancy they are filling. The Board of Directors define the strategic and fiscal direction for the District, oversee the establishment of the support structure necessary to achieve the District mission, hold the District accountable to the community, oversee the public funds collected on behalf of the District, and serve as community leaders.

Code of Conduct and Ethics

The proper operation of democratic government requires that public officials and employees be independent, impartial, and responsible to the people; that governmental decisions and policy be made publicly; that public offices not be used for personal gain; and that the public maintain confidence in the integrity of its government.

All Directors shall be subject to this Code of Conduct and Ethics Policy.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all such officials by setting forth acts or actions that are compatible with the best interests of the District.

Standards of Conduct

All Directors shall be subject to and abide by the following standards of conduct.

- (a) Decision Making Guidelines: Every decision or policy established by the Board of Directors should uphold and support the District's mission and values statement.
- (b) Use Civility and Decorum in Discussions and Debate: No Director shall make impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive or personally disparaging comments in public meetings directed at staff, public or other Directors.
- (c) Uphold the Integrity and Independence of the Office: Directors shall demonstrate the highest standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, honesty and fortitude in all their public activities in order to inspire public confidence and trust in local government. Directors shall participate in establishing, maintaining, and enforcing District policies and shall, themselves, observe high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of their office may be preserved.

- (d) Conduct the Affairs of the Board in an Open and Public Manner: Directors shall know the letter and intent of the state's Open Meetings Law (The Brown Act; Government Code Sections 11120-11132), and conduct the affairs of the Board of Directors consistent with the letter and spirit of that law.
- (e) Maintain Discretion in Deliberations: Discretion may be necessary when issues pose a threat to the resources of the District, to the reputation of current or potential District employees, to orderly and responsible decision making, to the integrity of other governmental processes or to other legitimate interests of the District.
- (f) Regulate Extra-Governmental Activities: Directors shall minimize the risk of conflict with his or her official duties.
1. Directors shall manage their personal financial interests to minimize the number of cases in which they must ask to be excused from voting on matters coming before the Board.
 2. Information acquired by Directors in an official capacity shall not be used or disclosed in financial dealings or for any other purpose not related to official duties.
- (g) Use of Official Position: The provisions of this paragraph are not intended to prohibit a Director from speaking before neighborhood groups and other nonprofit organizations.
1. No Director shall use his/her official position or the District's facilities for his/her private gain, or for the benefit of any individual, if the benefit would not be available to any other member of the public in the same or similar circumstance.
 2. No Director shall represent any private person, group or interest before the District Board of Directors except in matters of purely civil or public concern.
 3. Directors shall avoid pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office.
 4. No Director shall grant any special consideration, treatment, or advantage to any citizen beyond that which is available to every other citizen.
- (h) Disclosure of Confidential Information: No Director shall use or disclose confidential information gained in the course of or by reason of his/her official position with the District for purposes of advancing:
1. His/her financial or personal interest.
 2. The interest of a business entity of which the Director or an immediate family member has an interest.
 3. The financial or personal interest of a member of his/her immediate family.
 4. The financial or personal interest of any citizen beyond that which is available to every other citizen.

- (i) **Gifts:** No Director shall directly or indirectly solicit any gift, or accept or receive any gift, whether in the form of money, services, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, thing or promise, or any other form, in which the value exceeds Fair Political Practices requirements, or under circumstances in which a reasonable person would believe that the gift was intended to influence him/her in the performance of his/her official duties, or was intended as a reward for any official action on his/her part. Legitimate political contributions to Directors shall not be considered as gifts under the provisions of this paragraph.
1. Exempted from the prohibition are reasonable advertising items or souvenirs of nominal value or meals furnished at banquets. Also exempted are customary gifts or favors between Directors or officers and their friends or relatives. Directors must report in writing to the President of the Board, all gifts and favors from friends and relatives if made by a covered contractor, subcontractor, or supplier. Such gifts must also be disclosed in accordance with the requirements of the California Political Reform Act.
 2. It shall not be a violation of this policy for any Director to solicit donations, contributions or support for any charitable activity which does not result in direct economic benefit to the Director, a member of his immediate family, or business entity with which he/she is associated.

General Disclosure

Directors shall file a California Fair Political Practices Commission Statement of Economic Interests – Form 700 as required by the Political Reform Act of 1974.

Conflicts of Interest: Any Director who has an interest in any business shall publicly disclose to the Board the nature and extent of such interest, and shall not participate in said matter if a conflict exists. The Director shall then be excused from the room during the discussion, deliberation or decision.

1. It shall be a violation of this policy for a Director who has an interest in some business before the Board of Directors to advocate, whether publicly or privately, that interest to other Directors.
2. **Maintain the Integrity of the Actions of the Board:** When any Director sits in a quasi-judicial capacity and circumstances are presented in which the appearance of possible conflict of interest can exist, this shall be sufficient to require the Director to withdraw from the discussion, deliberation or decision of the Board, and the Director shall excuse him/herself from the room during the discussion, deliberation or decision.

Interaction with District Employees

- (a) Contact with District Employees: Requests for information or directions to employees shall be coordinated by the Fire Chief. Materials supplied to any Director in response to a request will be made available to all other Directors so that all have equal access to information.
- (b) Requests for Reports, Studies or Projects: All requests for information such as reports, studies or projects that may result in an increased work load to District Staff must be at the direction of the Board by a majority vote.

Interactions with the Media and the Public

The provisions of this section are not intended to prohibit a Director from speaking to the media or the public but as guidelines to respect and preserve the democratic process of decisions made by the Board. All Directors represent one voice of five, and until a vote on any issue is taken, Directors' positions are merely their own. Directors should support decisions that are made by the Board once a vote has been taken, so as not to undermine the democratic process.

- (a) When communicating with the media, Directors should clearly differentiate between personal opinions and the official position of the District.
- (b) After a decision has been rendered by the Board, the Board President and/or Fire Chief shall be the designated point of contact for the media relative to the decision.
- (c) Directors should not discuss personnel issues or other matters regarding individual staff members with the media or the public. Issues pertaining to staff should be addressed directly to the Fire Chief.

Sanctions and Violations

The Board of Directors, minus the accused Director, will serve as the committee for the purposes of reviewing any code violations and sanction consideration.

The hearing to be held as provided for herein shall be conducted by the Board of Directors in open session. Any determination resulting from said hearing shall be determined in open session of the Board.

If the Board of Directors, by majority vote of the remaining Directors, finds that a violation by a Director has occurred, they may adopt a resolution of censure which shall be placed as a matter of record in the official minutes of the Board meeting.

If the Board of Directors, by majority vote of the remaining Directors, finds that a violation by a Director has occurred, they may also remove the Director from any committee on which that Director serves.

Ethics Training

All Directors shall receive two hours of training in general ethics principles and ethics laws relevant to public service within one year of election or appointment to the Board of Directors and at least once and every two years thereafter, pursuant to Government Code Sections 53234 through 53235.2.

This training shall also apply to all staff members that the Board of Directors designates and to members of all commissions, committees and other bodies that are subject to the Brown Act.

All ethics training shall be provided by entities whose curricula have been approved by the California Attorney General and the Fair Political Practices Commission. Directors shall obtain proof of participation after completing the ethics training.

District staff shall maintain records indicating both the dates that Directors completed the ethics training and the name of the entity that provided the training. These records shall be maintained for at least five years after directors receive the training, and are public records subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

District staff shall provide the Board of Directors with information on available training that meets this requirement.

Any Director that serves on the board of another agency is only required to take the training once every two years.

Board President

The President of the Board of Directors shall serve as chairperson at all Board meetings. He/she has the same rights as the other members of the Board in voting, introducing motions, resolutions and ordinances, and any discussion of questions that follow said actions. The Board President or designee shall serve as the designated spokesperson for the Board after a decision has been rendered.

In the absence of the President, the Vice President of the Board of Directors shall serve as chairperson of all meetings of the Board. If the President and Vice President of the Board are both absent the Secretary of the Board shall preside and act as chairperson of the meeting.

Members of the Board of Directors

Directors shall thoroughly prepare themselves to discuss agenda items at meetings of the Board of Directors. Information may be requested from staff before meetings.

Information exchanged before meetings shall be distributed through the Fire Chief, and all Directors will receive all information being distributed.

Copies of information exchanged before meetings shall be available at the meeting for members of the public in attendance, and shall also be provided to anyone not present upon their request.

Directors shall at all times conduct themselves with courtesy to each other, to staff, and to members of the audience present at board meetings.

Directors shall defer to the chairperson for conduct during meetings of the Board, and shall be free to question and discuss items on the agenda. All comments should be brief and confined to the matter being discussed by the Board.

Directors may request for inclusion into the meeting minutes, comments pertinent to an agenda item only at the meeting that said item is discussed including, if desired, a position on abstention or dissenting vote.

Directors shall recuse themselves from participating in consideration on any item involving a personal or financial conflict of interest.

Requests by individual Directors for substantive information and/or research from District Staff will be channeled through the Fire Chief.

Committees of the Board of Directors

Ad-Hoc Committees

The Board of Directors shall appoint such ad hoc committees as may be deemed necessary. The duties of the ad hoc committees shall be outlined at the time of appointment, and the committee shall be considered dissolved when its final report has been made.

Standing Committees

The Board of Directors shall appoint two members of the Board of Directors to serve on each standing committee. This appointment shall occur at the District's first regular board meeting in December of each year or as soon thereafter as practical.

Standing committees shall be staffed by the District's Fire Chief and employees designated by the Fire Chief shall serve as staff to the standing committee.

Standing committees may request consultants and other experts to provide input to the committee on particular topics. The District's payment of any expenses associated with the consultants or experts must be preapproved by the District's Board of Directors.

Standing committees shall comply with the requirements of the Ralph M. Brown Act, which is codified in Government Code Section 54950 et seq.

Finance Committee

The purpose of the Finance Committee shall be to review the financial operations of the District, including all anticipated financial plans and to report the committee's findings and recommendations to the Board of Directors.

Personnel Committee

The purpose of the Personnel Committee shall be to function as the designated members of the Board to review any employee grievances pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding with the Montecito Firefighter's Association and the Memorandum of Understanding with Members of Staff. In accordance with the grievance procedures specified in the MOU's, the reply of the Personnel Committee shall be final and not subject to review or approval by the Board of Directors.

Strategic Planning Committee

The purpose of the Strategic Planning Committee shall be to oversee the regular assessment of fire hazards and risk factors to the community; to collect standardized response data and analyze that data in terms of the District's standards of response coverage; to provide reports to the Board of Directors regarding the status of the District's emergency response system; and to develop recommendations for the Board of Directors regarding the strategic use of resources to improve the District's emergency response capability and performance.