

Columbia River Gorge Commission Code of Commissioner Conduct

This code of conduct is a guide for Gorge Commissioners to manage their own conduct when handling Commission business. This code of conduct applies at Commission events and when handling Commission business outside of formal Commission events. This code does not supersede or authorize violation of the Commission's or states' statutes and regulations governing conduct of public officials.

The code will be communicated to all of the Commission's appointing authorities after it is approved, and on a regular basis thereafter.

Statement of Commission Conduct

The Columbia River Gorge Commission commits to conducting all of its business in a manner that is professional, courteous, civil, and respectful of all persons. The Commission shall strive to conduct its business in an objective and transparent manner.

Code of Conduct

1. Commissioners shall treat all persons conducting business with the Commission with respect and dignity. This includes but is not limited to acting in a manner that demonstrates a neutral tone, and is not hostile, argumentative, confrontational, threatening, or revealing predetermined attitudes or positions. Commissioners shall refrain from behaving in ways that discourage public comments of individuals.
2. At Commission meetings, Commissioners shall:
 - a. listen to staff presentations and the testimony of interested persons;
 - b. voice their own opinion only after listening to staff presentations and public testimony;
 - c. ask respectful questions of persons speaking to the Commission, with intent to obtain information; and
 - d. avoid argument and dismissive tone with any person appearing at the meeting.
3. Commissioners shall avoid appearing to speak for the Commission without the consent of the Commission as a whole or the Chair of the Commission:
 - a. Commissioners shall not make unilateral promises, statements or decisions without the consent of the Commission as a whole.
 - b. Commissioners shall use letterhead, or correspond in a manner appearing to be official, for Commission business only. Commission business is that business specially requested by the Chair or staff, or authorized by the Chair.
 - c. Commissioners shall follow appropriate steps if they believe that there is significant information that is missing from a discussion or issue. These steps include requesting information at a Commission meeting, gathering the support of other Commissioners who request the same information, and communicating in writing with the Chair to explain the need for the information. As a matter of courtesy, Commissioners shall disclose to the other Commissioners and Executive Director their intent to request information from external sources, being mindful of not interfering with working relationships with other entities.
 - d. Commissioners who have not prevailed on a vote shall not actively seek to undermine the Commission or criticize Commissioners or staff for acting on a decision with which the Commissioner does not agree. However, Commissioners may continue to point out how their individual opinion differs from the majority.
 - e. Commissioners who represent the Commission before another agency, organization, or media should first state the Commission's majority position. Commissioners should express their individual opinions and comments only after clearly stating that the opinions and comments are their own.
4. Commissioners who receive information pertinent to and/or influential on a decision pending before the Commission shall forward that information to the Executive Director for use by all

Commissioners. Commissioners shall not disclose information discussed in executive sessions with any other person.

5. Commissioners having a concern about the performance of other Commissioners or staff shall not discuss the concern in public:
 - a. A Commissioner having a concern about an aspect of performance of another Commissioner shall bring that concern to the Commission Chair, after taking the opportunity to resolve such concerns with the Commissioner in question.
 - b. A Commissioner having a concern about an aspect of performance of a staff person shall bring that concern to the attention of the Executive Director.
 - c. A Commissioner having a concern about the performance of the Executive Director shall bring that concern to the Commission Chair or to the Chair of the Executive Committee.

Sanctions

After exhausting possibilities for resolution under #5 above, the Commission shall have discretion to sanction a member of the Commission for violation of this code of conduct. This will be done in public session. Sanctions may include but are not limited to, oral or written public reprimands, and reporting of violations to members' appointing authorities. Such sanctions require a majority vote of the Commission. Violations of this code of conduct are not exclusive if a member's action also violates federal, state, local, or other legal authorities.

Approved by the full Gorge Commission on November 12, 2008