

CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA

COUNCIL POLICY MANUAL

**SUBJECT: City Credit Cards, Meals, Meetings
And Travel Expenses**

Policy No. 300-3
Effective Date: 09/12/06
Revised: _____
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BACKGROUND

Previously, the City Council had several policies relating to use of City credit cards, meetings and travel expenses and reimbursement procedures. These policies were reviewed, updated, and consolidated following the adoption of AB 1234.

PURPOSE

To set forth the policy for official City travel and use of City credit cards and to establish procedures for reimbursement of expenses incurred by City Council members, appointed officials, members of special boards, commissions, committees, and employees while traveling overnight on official City business.

POLICY

General

The City of Lake Elsinore appreciates the value of having its elected officials travel to, participate in, and educate themselves at professional conferences, seminars, meetings and other related training events as they relate to the elected officials' official duties. In an effort to foster and encourage participation in such events in accordance with state law, particularly Government Code, Sections §53232 *et seq.*, the City has promulgated the foregoing policy for reimbursement of various travel and related expenses incurred by elected officials who attend approved events.

The primary goal of this policy is to establish guidelines, which shall be complied with when elected officials find themselves arranging, and participating in travel, lodging, and other approved expenses. Reimbursement is available for actual costs that are reasonable and necessary out-of-pocket expenses incurred on City business as provided herein. When travel and related expenses are necessary, it is the responsibility of each elected official to incur these expenses at the lowest reasonable cost to the City commensurate with schedules, work, and time constraints.

The City Treasurer or his/her designee shall review all elected official's credit charges and expense reimbursements and report any improper charges to the City Council.

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Credit Cards

Before any City credit card is assigned to an elected official, the elected official must agree to the terms and conditions contained in the City's credit card agreement and the debt limit on such credit cards shall not exceed \$2,500. The City Council reserves the right to request that an individual elected official immediately surrender a credit card assigned by the City for any reason.

A credit card assigned to an elected official shall be used only for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of the elected official's official duties. Elected officials may not use a credit card assigned to the elected official for personal charges.

Any improper use of a credit card assigned to the elected official, including but not limited to improperly making personal charges, and charges for meals and incidental expenses (including stand-alone beverage charges), or failure to timely submit receipts, will subject the elected official to action by the City Council. Such action includes but is not limited to public reproof and/or cancellation of the City assigned credit card.

Elected officials with a credit card assigned by the City must submit expense reports and receipts no later than ten (10) days after incurring a charge.

Travel

A. Ground Transportation

Airport-to-hotel shuttle service should be used for ground transportation between an airport or train station and a hotel whenever available. Taxis are to be used only when the scheduled shuttle service or other methods of public transportation are not cost-effective, unavailable, or incompatible with the City business mission.

B. Travel with Vehicles

When traveling by car for elected official business, a City-owned vehicle can be used if needed. The vehicle may be reserved by contacting the City Manager's office. The vehicle must be returned immediately following the official City business.

In selecting and accepting rental cars, elected officials should be sensitive to both cost and appearance considerations. As with all City expenditures, the community

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is justifiably concerned that City dollars are being stretched as far as possible. Accordingly, whenever possible elected officials should avoid requesting or accepting luxury vehicles.

If a rental car is used on a trip combining business and more than minimal personal travel, only that portion of the expense attributable to City business is payable by the City; the elected official is responsible for the portion of expense attributable to personal use.

When several elected officials or other City officials are attending the same event, an effort should be made to coordinate plans and if possible share any needed rental cars or City pool vehicle.

Rental car collision insurance (collision damage waiver or CDW for damage to the rental car) should be purchased on the rental contract, but do not purchase the liability (PD/PI, for damage to other cars) insurance. Elected officials must carry the name of the City insurer and its insurance policy number when renting automobiles. Information concerning the City's insurer and insurance policy number can be obtained by the Administrative Service Department, Risk Division.

C. Fuel Purchases

When traveling on City business, elected officials are encouraged to use City gasoline credit cards to purchase fuel for City vehicles. Elected officials are not permitted to use a City gasoline credit card to purchase fuel for their personal car or personal travel. Gasoline credit cards may be checked out through the Public Works Department as the Gasoline credit cards are assigned to a specific vehicle. Gasoline credit cards and receipts must be returned immediately to the Public Works Department upon the elected official's return.

Elected officials may use their City issued credit card for fuel purchases for rental cars; the elected official is responsible for the portion of expense attributable to personal use.

When using the elected official's personal vehicle for office City business activities, the official may seek reimbursement based on the mileage driven to attend the event and the reimbursement rate with the U.S. Government's Domestic Travel Rates. These rates can be obtained by accessing www.gsa.gov website or the City's Administrative Services Department.

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D. Parking

Parking fees on City travel are reimbursable; less expensive yet safe parking should be used whenever possible.

E. Tickets

Elected officials are responsible for any parking tickets, moving violations, or fines that they receive while using a vehicle on City business.

F. Airline Travel

Except for reasons of time and/or monetary allocation, transportation for trips of 200 miles or more may be by airline travel. Elected officials must travel using coach fare or using the lowest available fare arriving or departing within one hour of the desired time provided that such reimbursements shall not exceed the U.S. Government's Domestic Travel Rates. These rates can be obtained by accessing www.gsa.gov website or the City's Administrative Services Department. Unauthorized airline travel will be billed to the elected official and will subject the elected official to action by the City Council. Such action may include but is not limited to public reproof.

Meals

A. Meal Expenses for Local Meetings

The City will reimburse actual costs of meals for City business meetings within the greater Southern California area as listed below. Additionally, this applies to the use of the official's City issued credit card.

- Meals with outside business associates for the purpose of a business discussion or the promotion of good working relations
- Meals which are part of a business program or officially sponsored by business or professional associations related to an elected official's work with the City
- Meals that a Councilmember has while traveling on City business
- City official meals as long as City business is conducted during those meals

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The City's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Policy remains in effect while the elected official is on official City business; therefore, alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable.

B. Expenses Not to Exceed Federal Per Diem Rates

Elected officials may claim reimbursement for actual costs of personal meals and incidentals provided that such reimbursements shall not exceed the U.S. Government's Domestic Per Diem Rates in effect for their travel destination, except as otherwise provided herein. Incidental expenses are defined as fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, and bellhops.

The Domestic Per Diem Rates can be obtained by accessing the U.S. General Services Administration's website at www.gsa.gov or by contacting the Administrative Services Department for assistance.

C. Tips or Gratuities

Reasonable tips in relation to services rendered will be reimbursed. In the case of meals, tipping is not to exceed 15 percent of the total cost of the meal; in the case of taxis, 10 percent of the total fare is deemed acceptable. If necessary, porters and bellhops may be used and tipped from \$1 to \$2 per bag or box.

Lodging

Lodging costs shall not exceed the maximum group rate published by the conference or activity sponsor, provided that lodging at the group rate is available to an elected official at the time of booking. If the group rate is not available, the elected official shall use comparable lodging provided that such reimbursements shall not exceed the U.S. Government's Domestic Lodging Rates. These rates can be obtained by accessing www.gsa.gov website or the City's Administrative Services Department.

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Miscellaneous Costs

A. Personal Expenses

The City will not pay for expenses, which are of a purely personal nature, even if incurred while on City business. This includes:

- The cost of personal entertainment (books, theater tickets, movies, sporting events, etc.)
- The cost of personal care items (toiletries, hair styling, manicures, etc.)
- Valet and laundry service is not reimbursable for business trips of fewer than five consecutive days, unless necessary to clean clothing soiled while working
- The cost of additional travel insurance accidental injury or death while traveling on City business in excess of such insurance already provided by the City

B. Spouse and Significant Other Accompaniment

Spouses and significant others may accompany an elected official when traveling on business, provided, however, that the cost associated with such accompaniment shall not be reimbursable.

C. Personal Travel

Personal travel (e.g., vacations, extended weekends and so on) combined with business travel is permitted. Any costs (e.g., extra hotel nights, additional stopovers, long distance calls and so forth) associated with personal travel are not reimbursable or paid by the City.

Procedure for Seeking Reimbursement

In order for the City to pay or reimburse for business trips or other expenditures incurred for City business, the elected official must submit an expense reimbursement form to the Administrative Services Department. Expense forms must be reviewed and approved by the City Treasurer or his/her designee.

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An elected official may submit his/her expense report at any time during the month but no later than 45 days after the travel event in which the expense was incurred. It is the elected official's responsibility to submit the expense report in a timely manner.

In addition to providing written documentation of expenses incurred, an elected official shall provide brief reports on meetings or conferences that were attended at the expense of the City at the next regular meeting of the City Council.

All documents related to reimbursable agency expenditures are public records subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act (Cal. Gov. Code Section §6250 et seq.).

Documentation

Expense reports must include adequate documentation, which include copies of credit card receipts, lodging receipts, receipts for cash expenditures, meal receipts, shuttle and taxi receipts, and parking receipts. A very limited exception applies in those rare instances where a receipt cannot reasonably be obtained (for example, tolls, public transportation, tips). In such cases where receipt is not obtainable, a written memo must be supplied.

Elected officials must be as specific as possible in describing each expense. Each expense item should detail the following:

- Reason for expense (for example, League of California Cities' conference)
- Type of expense (for example, meal, travel, and hotel)
- Persons involved (for example, names of people for whom a meal was purchased, their title, and place of business)

Penalties for Violations of Policy

Penalties for misuse of public resources or falsifying expense reports in violation of expense reporting policies may include, but are not limited to the following:

- The loss of reimbursement privileges
- The loss of credit card privileges
- Restitution to the City

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- Civil penalties for misuse of public resources pursuant to California Government Code Section 8314
- Prosecution for misuse of public resources pursuant to California Penal Code Section 424

HISTORY

Adopted by Resolution No. 2006-152

9/12/06

Revised by Resolution No. 2019-____
