



## **Ceremonial & Appearance Request Policy**

The City of Princeton Mayor and City Council welcome the opportunity to recognize our residents, special events and programs, businesses, corporate partners, and employees on those exceptional occasions which make Princeton a community we are all proud to call home. Ceremonial requests approved under this policy shall not constitute an expression of any statement, policy, or position by the City of Princeton with regard to endorsement, support, or opposition for any business, interest group, political platform, candidate for office, or philosophy, unless the request was approved by majority vote of the City Council; for such approved requests, the City's position on the matter will be reflected in the language of the associated documents.

The approval of a ceremonial request should be considered to represent only the present-tense position of the Mayor or City Council as set forth in the associated documents. The City Council shall retain its rights to establish the City's official position on any topic, or to change past positions, policies, or statements, without limitation based on any prior ceremonial request or the comments or activities of any member of its governing body in their personal capacities.

This policy does not apply to appearances or attendance by the Mayor or City Council to similar events in their personal/individual capacities, e.g., as private citizens and/or as candidates for public office. Any and all public appearances, commentary, position statements, expressions of support or opposition, or similar activities by the Mayor or City Council shall be considered for all purposes to be in their personal capacity only, unless approved in accordance with this policy.

### **Guidelines for Ceremonial Requests**

1. All ceremonial requests are subject to final approval by the Mayor and/or City Council. The City of Princeton reserves the right to:
  - a. Edit all ceremonial requests to reflect the City's vision, mission, and goals.
  - b. Decline any ceremonial request without further details.
2. All ceremonial requests should have a specific local connection with the City of Princeton unless the request involves a special significance to the City, region, or state, as determined by the Mayor in consultation with City staff.
3. A ceremonial request which has not been approved by the City Council may be approved by the Mayor alone, but in such cases shall be strictly and expressly

limited to a ceremonial act by the Office of the Mayor, and shall not be attributed as any statement or position by the City Council as a whole or the City of Princeton.

- a. The Mayor is encouraged to present any ceremonial request which is likely to attract controversy or complaint from Princeton residents to the full Council for consideration, and to reserve unilateral approvals for only those matters which are reasonably believed to have support from an overwhelming majority the residents of the City.
  - b. Any documents, certificates, letters, or similar materials relating to a ceremonial request which has not been approved by the City Council shall be worded in a manner which reasonably ensures the distinctions between the Office of the Mayor, the City Council, and the City of Princeton are appropriately maintained.
4. In order to accommodate preparation and scheduling, all requests should be made as far in advance as possible, with a minimum of 5 business days prior to the occasion. Submitted request should not be assumed automatically approved.
5. All requests must be made through the City's online Ceremonial Request Form to be authorized under this policy. Any request which is honored or fulfilled by the Mayor or any members of City Council without prior approval under this policy shall be deemed unauthorized by the City, and shall constitute only the opinion or position of the individuals.
6. Any ceremonial request which may involve the assembly of a quorum of the City Council must be approved with sufficient lead time for the City to post a notice of quorum when required by law. If such notice cannot be posted in accordance with applicable law, any approval shall be deemed void, and it is recommended that members of the Council do not attend unless it is first confirmed that a quorum will not be assembled.
7. No official business of the City shall be conducted during a ceremonial appearance or event unless the matter has also been properly noticed as a public meeting; ceremonial appearance activities are strictly limited to the matters set forth in the associated documents. This includes without limitation a prohibition on any debate or deliberations regarding City business.

### **Types of Ceremonial Requests**

- Proclamations - A proclamation is a formal declaration by the Mayor in honor of a person, group or event. Proclamations will not be issued for business groundbreaking, ribbon-cutting, or grand-opening events. Whenever possible, a sample proclamation or wording should be provided. Proclamations should include no more than (5) five "whereas" statements, and each statement should

be no more than 50 words in length. Longer requests maybe be shortened by city staff. One formal presentation copy will be provided at no charge. Proclamations should be picked up at the Municipal Center, 2000 E. Princeton Drive, unless other arrangements have been made. If you would like the proclamation presented by the Mayor or Council at a Council Meeting or an event, please indicate this with your request.

- Letters - A letter of welcome, greeting, or congratulations will be issued for programs, conferences, conventions, seminars, or other significant events when a proclamation is not appropriate. Whenever possible, a sample letter or wording should be provided. One formal copy will be issued per request. Letters are not eligible for formal presentation by the Mayor or Council.
- Certificates - A certificate is a formal document that extends special recognition. A certificate may be issued for a person or organization for an accomplishment or contribution to show appreciation. Certificates may also be issued for a request when a proclamation or other recognition is not appropriate for the occasion. One formal copy will be issued for each individual or organization to be recognized per request. If you would like the certificate presented by the Mayor or Council at a Council Meeting or an event, please indicate this with your request.
- Appearances/Addresses - Appearances and/or addresses by the Mayor or Council must be scheduled through the City Secretary's Office and coordinated with the Director of Community Engagement. It is not possible for the City to fulfill all such requests.

## **Limitations**

- The activities covered by this policy are not a forum for debate or deliberation by any elected official regarding City business. While members of the City's governing body are free to interact with the public, collect information, solicit opinions of residents, and engage in similar activities necessary and appropriate for the performance of their official duties, the appropriate forum for elected officials to engage in discussion and debate about what City policy should be on any given topic are the public meetings of the Princeton City Council.
- The Mayor and City Council should be careful to avoid the appearance of impropriety with respect to ceremonial requests, whether approved or otherwise, relating to any person who currently has, or can be reasonably anticipated to have in the near future, financial or personal interests in the decisions before the City Council. All officials are encouraged to consult with their personal legal counsel to regarding potential conflicts of interest and the determination of when

association with a person or group through a ceremonial appearance might later require recusal from future agenda items, filing of disclosure forms, etc.

- The City is entitled to moderate and regulate its own official speech activities, and will not approve any ceremonial request submitted by, recognizing, endorsing, or otherwise supporting a party that is in direct opposition to the City or its staff on any pending matter. This includes, without limitation:
  - Any matter subject to a City litigation hold.
  - Current or former City employees/officials in a dispute with the City.
  - Any person or entity who is the subject of pending criminal charges involving the City of Princeton and/or the Princeton PD.
  - Any business or resident who is delinquent on their taxes owed to the City.
  - Persons or entities who have threatened legal action against the City or any of its employees, officials, or other representatives within the preceding 12 months (or longer, depending on the circumstances).
- The City may also decline any request which, if honored, has potential to confuse the public as to the association between the City and the applicant or honoree(s) and/or presents a likelihood of being misconstrued (by a substantial number of the City's residents) as constituting a City endorsement of controversial organizations or positions on any topic, whether or not that topic is the express subject of the ceremonial request. For example, the City might decline an otherwise acceptable request for a Certificate of Recognition for community service activities when submitted on behalf of an organization that is currently or previously associated with racial supremacy (e.g., the KKK).

**NOTE:** If City employees were directed to attend a ceremonial appearance as part of their job duties (e.g., to serve as security for a public official), they would be entitled to appropriate compensation for their time in accordance with City policy and state/federal labor law, which may also implicate overtime pay for events outside of their regular duty schedule. If honoring a ceremonial request would require, or is requested to include, the attendance of "on the clock" City employees then that aspect of the event should be raised with the Council for deliberation and decision regarding such use of City resources.