

# City of Los Alamitos

## Administrative Regulation

Regulation:	<b>6.2</b>
Title:	<b>City Council Travel and Reimbursement Policy</b>
Authority:	<b>Adopted by City Council Minute Order</b>
Date:	<b>August 21, 2023</b>
Revised:	<b>May 20, 2024, February 18, 2025</b>

### **1. INTENT AND PURPOSE**

The City of Los Alamitos recognizes the value of attendance by City officials at professional conferences, seminars, meetings with other government officials, professional organizations, community organizations, and constituents and ceremonial events and activities that promote or benefit the City. This policy establishes travel authorization, expense, reimbursement, and reporting standards consistent with California Government Code Sections 53232.2 and 53232.3 and adopted City policies.

### **2. APPLICATION**

This policy applies to City Council Members and appointed members of City boards, commissions, and committees.

### **3. DEFINITIONS**

(A) "Appointed Officials" shall refer to those officials appointed as members of City boards, commissions and committees, which constitute legislative bodies (as defined by Government Code Section 54952)

(B) "City" shall refer to the City of Los Alamitos.

(C) "City Council Members" shall refer to the individuals who comprise the governing body of the City.

(D) "City Manager" shall refer to the City Manager of the City of Los Alamitos, or his or her designee.

### **4. POLICY**

The City reimburses City Council Members and Appointed Officials for expenses incurred in connection with business related travel and attendance at meetings and events, in amounts designated in the approved City budget. The establishment of reasonable limits on expense reimbursement assures a prudent and responsible use of public funds to allow officials to attend beneficial conferences, seminars, and meetings.

Absent unusual circumstances and only with the permission of the City Council, expense reimbursements will not exceed the amounts set forth in this policy. "Reimbursement" for purposes of this policy means all forms of payment for expenses incurred by City officials in the course of their official duties whether paid directly by the City (including without limitation, with a City-issued credit card) or advanced by City officials with personal funds and later reimbursed from City funds.

This policy is not intended to address every issue, exception or contingency that may arise in the course of City travel. Accordingly, the basic standard that should always prevail is to exercise good judgment in the use and stewardship of the City's resources. Specific issues not covered here may be directed to the City Manager.

## **5. TRAVEL REQUESTS AND AUTHORIZATION**

### **A. City Council and Appointed Officials**

Overnight travel for City Council Members shall be coordinated and arranged through the City Clerk's Office and is subject to all provisions of this policy except as otherwise noted. Overnight travel for Appointed Officials shall be coordinated and arranged by the corresponding department.

### **B. City Representation**

When total travel expenses for an event (i.e. registration, lodging, auto, air fare, meals, etc.) will cost over \$500, only one City representative shall be entitled to reimbursement for their attendance. The Mayor/Presiding Officer shall have first right to attend events at the City's expense. Second right shall go to the Mayor Pro Tem/Vice Chair and then to the Council Member with the most seniority.

Should a Council Member believe there is a benefit to the City to incur the cost of sending more than one City Council representative to an event, they may request an item be put on the next City Council agenda for approval. Requests for an additional Council Member's and/or Appointed Official's travel will be processed in accordance with the agenda report deadlines established by the City Clerk's Office.

City Council Members and Appointed Officials are able to attend events without approval of the City Council at their own expenses. It is understood representatives attending at their own expense are attending as individuals and shall not speak on behalf of the City.

## **6. CODE OF CONDUCT**

The City promotes freedom of expression and open communication. It is expected that all Council Members and Appointed Officials will follow the outlined code of conduct

when representing the City and will avoid offending, participating in serious disputes, and disrupting workplaces.

**A. Compliance with Law**

All Council Members and Appointed Officials should comply with all federal, state, and local regulations, including any regulations provided by the event's organization. Council Members and Appointed Officials shall act ethically and responsibly when dealing with the City's finances, partnerships, and public image.

**B. Personal Appearance**

Council Members and Appointed Officials should follow the City's adopted Administrative Rules and Regulation 1.8: Dress Code and Professional Standards Policy. City officials are encouraged to wear City issued attire when appropriate.

Should a Council Member or Appointed Official wish to purchase additional attire they may do so at their own expense as long as the City seal is not used. Use of City logos is permissible. Logos may be requested from the City Clerk's Office.

**C. Job Duties and Authority**

All Council Members and Appointed Officials should fulfill their job duties with integrity and respect toward colleagues, other agencies, and the community.

When Council Members and Appointed Officials speak or take action on behalf of the City, they must do so with consideration of the generally accepted practices of the City or upon approval of the City Council. Should a traveler publicly take a position inconsistent with the City's policy or practice, the Council Member/Appointed Official is obligated to make clear he/she does not speak as a City representative.

**D. Alcohol and Drug Policy**

In compliance with the City's adopted Personnel Resolution, it is policy of the City of Los Alamitos to prohibit the use of alcohol or drugs in connection with the use of City funds, as it constitutes a threat to the safe and efficient performance of public service. With this in mind, the City prohibits the use or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs by any Council Member or Appointed Official while performing City business and/or while on City property.

## **7. COST CONTROL**

To conserve City resources and keep expenses within reasonable standards, City officials must use the most economical mode and class of transportation reasonably consistent with scheduling needs and cargo space requirements, using the most direct and time-efficient route. All factors should be considered, including proximity, safety, and incidental expenses.

When available, government and group rates must be used if they present the least expensive fare.

Incidental Expenses, including bridge, road tolls, parking fees, and similar costs, are considered reimbursable expenses. Baggage handling fees up to \$50 per bag will also be reimbursed.

Expenses for which travelers receive reimbursement from another agency are not reimbursable.

## **8. LODGING**

Actual lodging costs will be reimbursed or paid for when travel on official City business reasonably requires an overnight stay. When an additional charge is imposed for City business related internet/broadband access, the charge may be reimbursed as part of the room rate.

If the lodging is connected with a conference or other organized educational activity, 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 at the time of booking. If the group rate is not available, then travelers shall use comparable lodging that is consistent with the cost control measures outlined in Section 7.

Travelers must request government rates, when available. Lodging rates equal or less than government rates are presumed to be reasonable and reimbursable for purposes of this policy. If government rates are not available at a given time or area, lodging rates that are consistent with Section 7 of this policy are presumed reasonable and reimbursable.

## **9. METHOD OF TRAVEL**

### **A. Automobile Travel**

- (1) City Vehicle. When using a City vehicle, travelers shall be reimbursed for the actual costs of fuel, oil and emergency repairs.
- (2) Private Vehicle. Automobile mileage is reimbursable at the Internal Revenue Service rates presently in effect. The reimbursable amount shall be based upon the actual mileage traveled for the purposes of the traveler's official

duties. In no case shall the amount of reimbursement exceed the cost of the least expensive ticket available via commercial air travel and, if applicable, the cost of a standard size rental car.

- (3) Rental Vehicle. Travelers shall be reimbursed for the cost of a standard size vehicle with the usual and customary levels of insurance. When demonstrable circumstances dictate necessity, travelers may be reimbursed, at the discretion of the City Manager, for upgrading to a larger vehicle.

#### **B. Air Travel**

- (1) Airfare shall be reimbursed at the actual ticket cost as stated on the receipt. The City will only reimburse up to the cost of economy class or equivalent ticket available via commercial air travel.
- (2) Airport proximity to travelers' residences and conference venues shall be prioritized over flight prices.
- (3) Change of flight fees shall not be reimbursable.
- (4) Long-term parking shall be reimbursable for travel exceeding twenty-four (24) hours.

#### **C. Other Transportation**

Taxi, bus, train, shuttle, or other similar fares, including associated gratuities of up to 15 percent, shall be reimbursed at their actual cost as stated on the receipt.

### **10. MEALS**

Meal expenses and associated gratuities up to fifteen (15) percent will be reimbursed at their actual cost or at the Internal Revenue Service rates currently in effect, as set forth in Publication 1542, as amended, or any successor publication, whichever is less, subject to the following restrictions:

- (1) Breakfast will be reimbursed only when travel begins before 7:00 a.m. and extends beyond 8:00 a.m.
- (2) Lunch will be reimbursed only when travel begins before 12:00 p.m. and extends beyond 2:00 p.m.
- (3) Dinner will be reimbursed only when travel begins before 6:00 p.m. and extends beyond 8:00 p.m.

Meals provided for as part of the cost of the travel, including, but not limited to, conference, complementary, or in-flight meals, are not eligible for travel advances or reimbursement. The City will not pay for alcohol or other personal bar expenses.

## **11. PER DIEM ADVANCES**

City officials who do not have City issued credit cards may claim a per diem of up to \$70 per day for meals and incidental expenses associated with City business where an overnight stay is required. Per diem may not be claimed by City officials with a City-issued Cal Card purchasing card.

City officials may claim per diem upon commencement of travel. For each 24-hour period thereafter, the City official can claim up to the full per diem amount. If there is a period of time of the trip with a duration of less than 12 hours, no more than one-half (1/2) the per diem rate may be claimed.

Eligible City officials must submit receipts on expenses purchased using per diem. Unused daily per diem funds must be returned to the Finance Department within fourteen (14) days of return. Failure to submit unused per diem funds constitutes a violation of this policy.

## **12. AUTHORIZED EXPENSES**

City officials may be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of official duties; provided, however, that reimbursement shall always be at the lesser of the actual cost or the IRS rates currently in effect, unless otherwise approved by the City Council in advance as provided below.

The following types of expenses generally constitute authorized expenses, as long as the other requirements of this policy are met and provided that total expenses incurred by the traveler are within the total amount budgeted for that fiscal year:

- (1) Communicating with representatives of regional, state and national government on City policy positions.
- (2) Attending organized educational seminars, conferences or activities designed to improve the City official's skill and information levels.
- (3) Participating in regional, state and national organizations or associations whose activities affect the City's interests; provided, however, that all such travel must be approved in advance by a majority vote of the City Council in a public meeting.
- (4) Attending City events including chamber of commerce events and the Annual Americana Awards.

- (5) Charitable event tickets.

In addition to the previous list of generally authorized expenses, city officials are authorized to attend events or to receive reimbursement for attending California specific events only for the organizations listed below:

- (1) Association of California Cities (local events only)
- (2) Association of Defense Communities
- (3) California Local Agency Formation Commission
- (4) Casa Youth Shelter
- (5) Cypress College Americana Awards
- (6) Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos
- (7) League of California Cities (local events only)
- (8) Los Alamitos Chamber of Commerce
- (9) Los Alamitos Community Foundation
- (10) Los Alamitos Education Foundation
- (11) Los Alamitos Unified School District
- (12) Orange County Fire Authority
  - a. Los Alamitos appointed representatives will have priority for events.
- (13) Orange County Mosquito and Vector Control District
  - a. Los Alamitos appointed representatives will have priority for events.
- (14) Orange County Sanitation District
  - a. Los Alamitos appointed representatives will have priority for events.
- (15) Orange County Water District
- (16) Precious Life Shelter
- (17) Serve Los Al
- (18) St. Isidore
- (19) The Youth Center (Los Alamitos)
- (20) Transitions in Motherhood
- (21) We Care

Additional authorization for events, meetings, or any other reimbursement will require City Council approval before attendance to receive reimbursement.

### **13. UNAUTHORIZED EXPENSES**

Personal expenses that the City will not reimburse include, but are not limited to:

- (1) The personal portion of any trip.
- (2) Political contributions or events.
- (3) Family expenses, including a partner's expenses when accompanying the traveler on City-related business, as well as children or pet-related expenses.

- (4) Entertainment expenses, including theater, movies (either in-room or at the theater), sporting events (including gym, massage and/or golf-related expenses), or other cultural events. However, where the City is acting in a host capacity, those host-related expenses, including entertainment expenses and meals, may be reimbursed with prior approval from the City Manager.
- (5) Non-mileage personal automobile expenses, including traffic citations.
- (6) Mileage expenses to meetings of boards to which the traveler has been appointed and for which the traveler receives a stipend from that organization (e.g. OCFA, OCSD, SCAG etc.)
- (7) Personal losses incurred while on City business.

Any questions regarding the propriety of a particular type of expense should be resolved with the City Council before the expense is incurred.

#### **14. SCHEDULING ASSISTANCE**

Appointed Officials are responsible for maintaining their own calendars. The City will maintain a Council Calendar for event invitations the City is aware of. This Calendar is a planning tool and does not cover every possible event. The City will endeavor to provide notification when received of the listed events in Section 12. When a reservation is requested, calendar notices will be sent out as a courtesy.

#### **15. "NO SHOW" AND REIMBURSEMENT**

Definition of No-Show: A "no-show" occurs when an Appointed Official fails to attend a scheduled event and a reimbursement will not be provided to the City.

Notification Requirements: Appointed Officials are required to provide at least three working days advance notice if they need to cancel a previously requested reservation.

Consequences of No-Show: If an Appointed Official fails to attend a scheduled appointment without providing the required notice, they will be required to reimburse the City the total cost for the reservation within three business days.

Exceptions: Exceptions to the no-show policy may be considered for Appointed Officials who can provide valid documentation of unforeseen circumstances or emergencies that prevented them from attending the event.

Notification of No-Show: In the event of a no-show, the Appointed Official will be notified of the missed event and any associated charges via e-mail from the City Clerk and/or their designee.

Policy Acknowledgment: By requesting the City to reserve your attendance at events, Appointed Officials agree they have read and understood the no-show policy and agree to abide by its terms.

## **16. OTHER EXPENSES**

Expenses that do not fall within the scope of this policy shall be approved by the City Council, in a public meeting, before the expense is incurred.

## **17. DOCUMENTATION OF EXPENSES; EXPENSE REPORTS**

Travelers shall submit expense reports on the "EXPENSE REPORT" form provided by the City to the Treasurer within ten (10) days of incurring the expense.

In order to qualify for reimbursement, expense reports must be accompanied by documentary evidence, such as a receipt, canceled check or bill, for each expense. The documentary evidence should show the amount, date, place, and essential character of the expense.

If a traveler cannot produce documentary evidence, he or she shall not be reimbursed.

If the Treasurer finds that the traveler's aggregate reimbursable travel expenses were greater than the amount of any travel advance, the City shall pay the difference between the travel advance and the reimbursable expenses within thirty (30) days of submission of the "EXPENSE REPORT" form; provided, however, that reimbursement shall never exceed the amount authorized by Government Code Sections 53232.2 and 53232.3, this policy, or the adopted amount budgeted by the City Council.

The Treasurer shall review all forms and documentary evidence for appropriateness and compliance with this policy. Any disputed costs should be discussed between the Treasurer and the City Manager, who shall make a final determination as to whether reimbursement shall be made. If the City Manager deems it necessary, he or she may bring the disputed cost to the City Council for discussion in a public meeting, and the City Council's determination shall be final; provided, also, that the City Council Member whose expense is being discussed shall recuse himself or herself from the discussion. If the City Council cannot come to a decision (e.g. a tie vote), the City Manager's decision shall be final.

All documents related to reimbursable City expenditures are subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act (Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 6250) of Division 7 of Title 1).

## **18. TRAVEL ADVANCE POLICY**

From time to time, it may be necessary for a traveler to request a cash advance to cover anticipated expenses while traveling or doing business on behalf of the City. Such request for an advance shall be submitted to the Treasurer on the "TRAVEL

AUTHORIZATION AND ADVANCE REQUEST” form, as provided by the City. All relevant documentation relating to the proposed expenses must be attached to the form.

- (1) No advance will be authorized in an amount less than one hundred dollars (\$100).
- (2) Any unused advance, or portion of an advance, must be returned to the Treasurer within ten (10) business days of the traveler’s return, along with a completed and signed expense report, pursuant to section 15. Travelers who do not return the unused portion of a cash advance within ten (10) business days are ineligible for any additional advances until such time as the unused amount is returned.
- (3) A travel advance shall not, under any circumstances, be considered a personal loan.
- (4) Any expenditure of a travel advance, other than for the approved purpose of the advance, shall be considered a misappropriation of public funds.
- (5) Funds for prepaid items, such as airfare and registration, are not considered cash advances.

## **19. CITY COUNCIL MEMBER AND APPOINTED OFFICIAL REPORTS**

At their next regular meeting, each City Council Member and Appointed Official shall provide a brief report on any meeting attended at the City’s expense. If more than one City Council Member or Appointed Official attends the same event as prescribed in Section 5B the Mayor or Presiding Officer shall designate one attendee to give the report. The other attendees will be permitted to briefly report on any topics omitted by that designated City Council Member or Appointed Official.

## **20. PENALTIES**

Pursuant to California Government Code section 53232.4, 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:

- (1) The loss of reimbursement privileges.
- (2) Restitution to the City.
- (3) Civil penalties for the misuse of public resources, pursuant to California Government Code section 8314.

- (4) Prosecution for misuse of public resources, pursuant to California Penal Code section 424.

*History:*

*August 21, 2023 – Adopted by City Council*