

City of Pacific Grove, California

City Council Policy

Policy Governing	Policy No.	Effective Date	Page
Meeting and Travel Expense Reimbursement	000-2	January 2, 1986	1 of 6

BACKGROUND:

In the performance of City business, certain travel and attendance at meetings is required for the City Council, members of City boards, commissions, and committees, and City employees.

PURPOSE:

This policy applies to all City of Pacific Grove Employees, Council Members, and Board/Committee/Commission Members (“Travelers”) and is intended to establish uniform procedures by which Travelers shall report and be reimbursed for expenses incurred in connection with authorized travel on behalf of the City.

This policy allows for economical and efficient travel in order to derive the greatest benefit from the travel at the most effective cost. It does not allow Travelers to benefit financially as a result of the travel. Travelers are responsible for exercising good judgement in requesting, arranging and fulfilling a travel request to mitigate costs to the City.

I. POLICY:

- a. Travel will be authorized when necessary and in the best interest of the City.
- b. All travel and meeting expenses for Travelers shall be approved as part of the annual budget process. Once the budget is approved, travel and meetings included therein will be considered as approved and no further Council action is necessary. Appropriations and controls will be made on a departmental basis. All necessary travel and meetings not included in the budget shall require prior Council approval.
- c. Travel within California shall be subject to review and approval for reimbursements/advances by the following approving officials:

Traveler	Approval to Travel	Approval for Payment
Employees	Department Director	Department Director
City Council	Mayor and City Manager; or City Council ⁽¹⁾	City Manager

¹ The Mayor Pro Tempore may authorize a City Council Member in the Mayor's absence. The City Council may consider approval of Council Member travel if authorization is not provided by both approving officials.

Boards, Committees, Commissions	Department Director	City Manager
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- d. Travel for City Council members and members of boards, commission, and committees that is not included in the budget must be approved on consent at a City Council meeting prior to the travel dates.
- e. All out of state travel for City employees must receive final approval by the City Manager.
- f. All approving officials are responsible for making the determination that the travel is necessary and that the benefit for which the travel is requested cannot be achieved through other means that could eliminate the necessity for travel, while still accomplishing the benefit to the City.
- g. Official meetings and travel expenses are authorized for reimbursement, to the extent of funds appropriated in the annual budget, to Travelers for the following activities:
 1. Attendance at conferences and meetings sponsored by organizations in which the City holds membership or affiliation.
 2. Attendance at training sessions, professional workshops, and seminars as required for maintaining proficiency or meeting standards established by the City or required by other authority (i.e., POST).
 3. Attendance at professional meetings related to City business and designed to provide information needed for the successful conduct of City operations.
 4. City business related travel as determined by the appropriate approving official.
 5. City sponsored meetings at which registration or meal fees are charged.
 6. Community activities or special events at which City representation is desirable as determined by the City Manager and is authorized in the annual budget appropriation.

II. TRAVEL ESTIMATES AND AUTHORIZATION

All Travelers are required to prepare an estimate of travel costs *prior* to purchasing any training sessions, workshops, seminars, conferences, or other events. This information should include the following:

- a. Dates and times of requested travel;
- b. Copy of the event announcement;
- c. Estimated standard lodging based on one of the following criteria:
 1. [U.S. General Services Administration \(GSA\) lodging rates for the appropriate location](#);
 - or

2. Copies of at least three competitive lodging proposals based on the government rate for the dates of travel, if the standard accommodations are above the GSA rate; or
 3. A negotiated group rate that is available to conference or training attendees at the specified standard room rate.
- d. Amount of per diem requested.
 - e. Any estimated mileage reimbursement, airfare, rental car, or similar costs.

During the fiscal year, reimbursement for required travel and meetings is authorized only when there is an existing unobligated balance in the appropriate account(s).

The City will pay for the costs incurred by Travelers, subject to review. Additional costs associated with companions are the responsibility of Travelers.

III. SECURING TRAVEL AND REPORTING

- a. Employees
 1. The City may provide travel advances to employees for per diem and other costs. Reservations for lodging, airfare, and related costs may be made using a City or personal credit card; or a Travel Expense Form only after the travel has been approved.
- b. City Council Members
 1. In consideration of numerous expenses incidental to serving as a Mayor or Council Members, the City Council shall receive a monthly salary as authorized by the City Charter and City ordinances. This salary is intended to reimburse Council Member incurred expenses for telephone and meeting expenses from travel, and meetings in Monterey County.
 2. For travel and meetings outside of Monterey County, Council Members may be reimbursed for actual and necessary expenses as authorized in the annual budget. Sections 53232.1-53232.3 of the California Government Code defines reimbursement for legislative body expenses. The procedures included within this policy are intended to be consistent with the relevant sections of the Government Code.
 3. Council Members may submit travel estimates based on the criteria included in Section II or a reasonable estimate of expenses as determined by the City Manager. Any lump sum advancements based on the estimates may be expended by the Council Member as appropriate for the travel or meeting. All actual and necessary expenses incurred during travel shall be filed with the City at the conclusion of travel on the Travel Expense Form, with the accompanying receipts. If the authorized expenses for lodging, airfare, mileage, and similar costs, are more than the advanced amount; the City shall reimburse the Traveler for costs. If the authorized travel expenses are below any advanced amount, the Traveler shall pay the City the difference. Companions are

encouraged to attend as appropriate, but no differential in travel allowance will be given.

4. Council travel expenses will be included in the monthly check register that is provided at Council Meetings.
- c. Boards, Commissions, and Committees

The City may provide travel advances to members of a board, commission, or committee for per diem and other expenses. Reservations for lodging, airfare, and related costs may be made using a City or personal credit card; or a Travel Expense Form only after the travel has been approved.

IV. REIMBURSEMENTS

Travelers who are required to travel for City business or training are eligible to claim reimbursement for the following:

- a. Meals and incidentals for overnight stays:
 1. If business travel requires an overnight stay away from home, Travelers are eligible to receive the [United States General Services Administration \(GSA\) per diem rate that is applicable to the destination.](#)
 2. Total travel time (work time, plus the lunch period, plus round-trip travel time) must equal or exceed 12 hours).
 3. For the first and last calendar day of travel, the per diem is calculated at 75% of the appropriate per diem rate.
 4. No receipts are required for per diem.
 5. Snacks are a personal expense and are not reimbursable
 6. Claims for alcoholic beverages are prohibited.

A Traveler may not claim a per diem allowance or reimbursement for any meal which is provided, or otherwise available, with lodging or the function being attended.

- b. Lodging expenses shall be reimbursed or paid on the basis of standard, non-deluxe accommodations for the attendee only. This shall be based on the criteria that has been included in Section II (c) of this Policy; and consistent with the authorized travel. If the Traveler chooses to incur additional costs above the rates, they may do so at their own expense. Other charges, such as additional guests, room service, personal telephone calls, and in-room movies are not reimbursable unless such charges are standard inclusions in the one-person rate.
- c. Transportation costs for air, train, personal vehicle, or bus shall be reimbursed or paid based upon the lowest fare available. City vehicles shall be used whenever possible for transportation. City gasoline credit cards shall be used for refueling City vehicles. The use of private vehicles is discouraged.

1. Reimbursement for private automobile use shall be at the rate currently accepted by the Internal Revenue Service for purposes of income tax deductions, not to exceed the lowest round trip air fare cost.
 2. If the Traveler uses a private automobile to travel directly from the home to a meeting or conference, the mileage distance should be computed using the most direct route from the Traveler's work site or home, whichever is less.
 3. When applicable, Travelers are also encouraged to carpool to save on transportation costs. When carpooling of private vehicles occurs, the vehicle owner only is to be reimbursed.
- d. Registration and other fees and charges for the meeting or training shall be reimbursed or paid at cost.
 - e. Incidental expenses such as parking tolls, transportation between meeting sites, business telephone calls and other business expenses shall be reimbursed at cost.
 - f. The use of rental vehicles will be authorized and reimbursed only when other alternative transportation is not available at the destination.

V. STIPENDS FROM EXTERNAL PARTIES

When a Council Member, member of a board, commission, or committee, or City employee represents the City on a joint powers agency (JPA) or other board for which a stipend or allowance is paid, the City will not typically provide a reimbursement for expenses. These costs are presumed to be paid by the JPA or board; or be paid through the allowance. If a case arises where a JPA or board does not reimburse for the expenses and the stipend is insufficient to cover the costs, Travelers may request reimbursement for travel that would be beneficial to the City. All Travelers requesting reimbursement under this section, must go through the regular approval process.

Stipends received by City employees in these situations shall be paid to the City.

VI. PROCEDURE

- a. All requests for travel and attendance at conferences meetings must be submitted in the annual budget request. After review, the City Manager or Administrative Services Director shall recommend travel and meeting expenditures for the fiscal year.
- b. Following Council approval of the annual budget, travel and meetings may be taken as authorized.
- c. To facilitate budgetary planning, Travelers shall provide their appropriate approving authority with a copy of the Travel Expense Form or information listed in Section II showing the complete estimates of travel costs including registration, hotel, airfare, mileage, per diem, and any other costs.

- d. Claims for travel reimbursements will be submitted using a Travel Expense Form and approved by the department head or the designated approving authority and sent to the Administrative Services Director for approval and payment.
- e. All Travel Expense Forms must be filled out correctly or they will be returned to the Traveler for corrections, which may delay the payment.
- f. Claims must be turned in to the Administrative Services Department within 15 days of the traveler's return.

Claims shall include:

- 1. Name and address of Traveler;
- 2. Name of conference, training, seminar (etc.) and location of travel;
- 3. Dates of travel;
- 4. GL account number to which expenses are to be charged; and
- 5. Expense identification such as registration, mileage, airfare, etc. and the amount of each expense.
- 6. Receipts for all expenses, with the exception of per diem, must be attached to the Travel Expense Form. If receipts are missing a Lost Receipt form must be submitted with an explanation of the expense
- 7. If the authorized expenses for lodging, airfare, mileage, and similar costs, are more than the advanced amount; the City shall reimburse the Traveler for costs. If the authorized travel expenses are below any advanced amount, the Traveler shall pay the City the difference.

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Resolution No. 22-040

Amended: September 7, 2016
Resolution No. 16-048

Amended: November 4, 1998
Resolution No. 08-56

Amended: February 7, 1990
Resolution No. 6056

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Resolution No. 5971

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Resolution No. 5681