



# City Council Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**      **DATE: JANUARY 27, 2026**

**FROM: CITY CLERK'S OFFICE**      **WARDS: ALL**

**SUBJECT: ADOPT AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND RIVERSIDE MUNICIPAL CODE  
CHAPTER 2.78 - CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT**

## **ISSUE:**

Adopt an ordinance amending Riverside Municipal Code (RMC) Chapter 2.78 – Code of Ethics and Conduct.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Adopt an ordinance to amend revisions to Riverside Municipal Code (RMC) Chapter 2.78 - Code of Ethics and Conduct.

## **INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCE:**

On January 6, 2026, the City Council introduced an ordinance to amend the Riverside Municipal Code (RMC) Chapter 2.78 - Code of Ethics and Conduct. The motion carried unanimously with Councilmember Cervantes absent.

## **LEGISLATIVE HISTORY/BACKGROUND:**

Charter Section 202 requires the adoption of a Code of Ethics and Conduct for elected officials and members of appointed boards, commissions, and committees to assure public confidence in the integrity of local government and its effective and fair operation. The first Code of Ethics and Conduct, adopted by a Resolution of the City Council on July 1, 2005, was amended several times.

On April 5, 2016, Ordinance No. 7328 was adopted adding Chapters 2.78 and 2.80 to the Riverside Municipal Code, adopting a revised Code of Ethics and Conduct, and establishing the Board of Ethics (BOE).

RMC Section 2.78.110 provides for annual monitoring and oversight in the following cadence:

- Before the end of July of each year, all boards and commissions shall review and discuss the Code of Ethics and Conduct and submit recommendations, if any, to the BOE for their consideration.
- Then before the end of August, the BOE shall review and discuss the effectiveness of

the Code of Ethics and Conduct and the recommendations of the other boards and commissions, then submit their recommendations to the Governmental Processes Committee (GPC).

- Subsequently, in September, the GPC will review and discuss the effectiveness of this Code of Ethics and Conduct, in addition to the recommendations from the Boards and Commissions, then instruct the City Manager to present a report to the City Council for their consideration.
- Then lastly, prior to the end of each year, the Chair of the GPC will present a report to the City Council, which shall include the recommendations from the Boards and Commissions and GPC. At which time, the City Council conducts a public hearing to review the report and make an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of this chapter. After their discussion, City Council may direct the City Attorney to make any necessary changes to this chapter it deems appropriate.

## **DISCUSSION**

On December 9, 2025, the City Council held a public hearing to review the Code of Ethics and Conduct. Following the public hearing, they approved the proposed revisions to RMC Section 2.78 put forth by the Governmental Processes Committee, with the exception of the proposed new language regarding digital misconduct. The digital misconduct language was referred back to the Board of Ethics and Governmental Process Committee for further review. The City Attorney was then instructed to draft an ordinance amending RMC 2.78 as summarized below and outlined in the ordinance attached: Specifically:

1. Revise “RMC 2.78.040(F) to read as proposed:  
F. Only those who live, work ([including vendors and contractors](#)), or attend school in Riverside may bring a complaint, unless the alleged violation took place outside of the boundaries of the City of Riverside and the complaining party must have personally witnessed or observed the alleged violation.
2. Revise “RMC 2.78.070.A – Written complaint procedures”, add language regarding “whistleblower” complaints to read:  
A. Only alleged violations of the prohibited conduct section of this chapter shall be grounds for a complaint against any public official pursuant to this chapter. [Complainants are covered by whistleblower policies and the City will not retaliate nor tolerate retaliation against those who, in good faith, report suspected fraud, waste, or abuse, or participate in an investigation of a suspected violation.](#)
3. Revise “RMC section 2.78.070.5” and “RMC section 2.78.075.1.c”, to correct clerical error replacing “2.78.070(M)” with “2.78.060(M)” and remove “*including when the policy of the City of Riverside was established*” for alleged violations of Local Law Prohibited to read:  
...For alleged violations of RMC Section 2.78.060(M), the complaining party must identify the specific section(s) of the Charter of the City of Riverside or the Riverside Municipal Code, or the policy of the City of Riverside, ~~including when the policy of the City of Riverside was established~~, that is alleged to have been violated...
4. Under RMC 2.78.110, update “Inclusiveness, Community Engagement, and Governmental Processes Committee” to “Governmental Processes Committee” to reflect the name change that took place January 16, 2024.

5. Revised RMC section 2.78.075(D)(5-7) regarding pre-conference procedures and evidence, to read as follows:

5. The complainant may verbally present to the Board of Ethics any and all evidence, both tangible and testimonial, that will be presented at the hearing to prove the allegations in the complaint. The public official will have the option or opportunity to present to the Board of Ethics any and all evidence, both tangible and testimonial, that will be presented at the hearing or address the evidence presented by the complainant, including whether the complainant has shown that the evidence, ~~if taken as true~~, more likely than not shows that there may be a potential violation of the prohibited conduct ~~section of this chapter~~ **alleged in the complaint**. During the pre-conference, any member of the Board of Ethics may ask questions of the parties.
6. The Board of Ethics shall determine, by a majority vote, whether the complainant has shown that the evidence, more likely than not shows that there may be a potential violation of the prohibited conduct **alleged in the complaint**. **All evidence submitted by the complainant and public official shall be taken in its totality with equal weight given to both parties.**
7. If it is determined by the Board of Ethics that **the evidence shows** it is more likely than not that there may be a potential violation of the prohibited conduct ~~section of this chapter~~ **alleged in the complaint** has occurred, then a hearing panel shall be selected in accordance with RMC Section 2.80.040(B). The City Clerk shall set a hearing date on the complaint within 20 City business days of the pre-conference. The hearing date shall be within 45 City business days following the pre-conference.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact associated with the annual review.

Prepared by: Donesia Gause, City Clerk

Approved as to form: Rebecca McKee-Reimbold, Interim City Attorney

Attachment: Ordinance Final