City of China Grove, Texas

Mayor's Handbook

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Section 1: Role and Authority of the Mayor

The Mayor of the City of China Grove, Texas serves as the Chief Executive Officer under the Mayor–Council form of government authorized by Texas Local Government Code Chapter 22. The Mayor's duties include supervising city staff, executing contracts, preparing agendas, presiding over meetings, and ensuring that all state-mandated reporting and compliance requirements are met.

Key responsibilities include:

- Overseeing the day-to-day operations of all civic City departments.
- Coordinates with the Chief of Police for police operations.
- Hiring, supervising, and terminating department heads.
- Signing official documents, contracts, permits, and reports on behalf of the City.
- Coordinating with Federal Agencies, TCEQ, TMRS, and other state and regional entities.
- Preparing the annual budget and financial reporting for Council adoption.
- Leading disaster response coordination and emergency declarations.

Section 2: Personnel Oversight

Bonding Requirement
The Mayor shall ensure that all key officials required by City policy are bonded, including the Mayor, City Secretary, Municipal Court Clerks, and Permitting Officer. Proof of bonding must be maintained in each personnel file, and renewals shall be tracked annually.

Performance Evaluations
The Mayor shall conduct or delegate annual written performance evaluations for civic employees, consistent with policy in the Employee Handbook. Evaluations shall document strengths, growth areas, and development goals, and shall be retained in each employee's personnel file in accordance with the Texas State Library Retention Schedule.
The Mayor is responsible for supervising civic city staff and ensuring that personnel policies outlined in the Employee Handbook are followed.

- New hires require signed forms filed in both the Council packet and the employee's personnel file.
- Training acknowledgments are required for all required topics and must be filed annually.
- Mayor approves payroll, overtime, sick leave, and personnel actions within budget.

Section 3: Administrative Duties by Law

Work From Home Approval
The Mayor may, at their discretion, authorize limited work-from-home arrangements for the City Secretary or Permitting Officer. Written approval is required prior to any remote work, and the Mayor may rescind approval at any time. The Mayor is responsible for ensuring compliance with confidentiality, records management, and technology use policies during such arrangements.

Agenda Management Oversight
The Mayor shall oversee and confirm that the City Secretary complies with statutory agenda posting requirements and City procedures. This includes timely posting of agendas, assembling Council packets, and ensuring transparency through website publication. The Mayor is ultimately accountable for ensuring that statutory deadlines under the Texas Open Meetings Act are met.

Section 4: Public Works Oversight

Street and Drainage Evaluation
Each March, the Mayor shall commission the City Engineer to evaluate one-third of City streets for drainage and maintenance needs. The Mayor shall present the Engineer's report to Council in June for prioritization of projects.

Project Prioritization and Bidding
The Mayor shall solicit bids for approved projects by October 1 following Council budget adoption and assign a project manager to oversee each approved and funded project.

Ongoing Oversight
The Mayor shall report monthly on the progress of approved projects until completion, ensuring continuity across fiscal years.

- Agenda Posting (HB 1522): Must be posted by 5:00 p.m. on the Friday before a Thursday meeting.
- Records Retention: Ensure compliance with the Texas State Library Retention Schedule (TSLAC).
- Environmental Compliance: Oversee MS4/TCEQ stormwater reports and documentation.
- Public Information Act: Ensure open records requests are processed under Chapter 552.
- Audit & Investment: Approve and submit annual financial audit, quarterly investment and budget-to-actual reports.

Section 5: Monthly, Quarterly, and Annual Reporting Matrix

The Mayor oversees reporting to City Council.

- Departmental Monthly Reporting (City Council Meeting)
  - Municipal Court: Monthly docket and activity reports submitted by Chief and Deputy Court Clerks.
  - Permitting: Monthly permit log summary and compliance report submitted by the Permitting Officer.
  - Code Compliance: Monthly violation and enforcement summary submitted by the Code Compliance Officer.
  - Animal Control: Monthly service call, impoundment, and rabies compliance report submitted by the Animal Control Officer.
- Quarterly Reporting
  - Investment Reports: Quarterly – Feb, May, Aug, Oct (prepared by the Investment Officer and submitted to the Council as a standalone agenda item).
  - MS4/TPDES Stormwater: Quarterly – Feb, May, Aug, Oct (due to Council).
  - Investment Reports: Quarterly – Feb, May, Aug, Oct.
  - Budget-to-Actual Reports: Quarterly – Feb, May, Aug, Oct.
- Annual Reporting
  - Audit Report: Annually by March (per LGC §103.001).
  - Tier II Chemical Inventory (if applicable): Annually by March 1.
  - Handbook Reviews: Annually by September.
  - Budget Adoption: Annually by September.
  - Training Certifications: Reviewed and filed annually (fiscal year-end).

Section 6: Training and Compliance Requirements

- Mandatory Staff Training (tracked per position):
- Cybersecurity Awareness – annually (Gov't Code §2054.5191)
- Harassment Prevention – annually (Title VII, EEOC guidance)
- Open Meetings Act – required for elected officials (Gov't Code §551.005)
- Public Information Act – for records-related positions (Gov't Code §552.012)
- MS4/Stormwater Pollution Prevention – annually for City Hall field personnel
- TMRS, JBCC, TDLR, TMCEC – per job role certification requirements

Section 7: Forms and Checklists

Recommended Forms:

- New Hire Acknowledgment & Personnel Action Form
- Annual Training Checklist (Appendix I, Employee Handbook)
- Purchase Order Form (Appendix C, Employee Handbook)
- Invoice Approval Form (Appendix C, Employee Handbook)
- Council Agenda Submission Template
- Quarterly Report Templates (MS4, Investment)

Section 8: Calendar of Key Annual Deadlines

- The City maintains a master compliance calendar of deadlines, hearings, and reporting requirements.
- Responsibility for Updates: The Mayor is responsible for keeping the calendar current.
- Posting: The City Secretary is responsible for posting the updated calendar to the City website.
- Council Approval: Council approval is not required for this calendar.
- Use of the Calendar: For accuracy, employees, aldermen, and citizens should always rely on the version published on the website rather than printed copies, to ensure they are referencing the most up-to-date information.

Section 9: Workplace Safety Oversight

Safety and Risk Management
The Mayor shall oversee workplace safety practices to ensure compliance with City and state requirements. Responsibilities include:

- Reviewing all incident and injury reports within 24 hours of submission.
- Ensuring periodic safety drills and emergency procedures are conducted.
- Confirming that department heads enforce use of protective equipment, safe operation of vehicles/equipment, and reporting of unsafe conditions.
- Coordinating with staff to address identified risks promptly.

This oversight ensures a safe and healthy environment for both employees and the public.

Section 10: TML Governance Guidance for Class A General Law Cities

This section summarizes key principles from the Texas Municipal League (TML) as they apply to the City of China Grove, a Class A General Law City operating under a Mayor–Council form of government without a City Manager. TML guidance reflects best practices derived from the Texas Local Government Code (LGC) and case law relevant to small municipalities.

City Structure and Authority

- China Grove is governed by Chapter 22 of the Texas Local Government Code, which defines the Mayor–Council form.
- The City Council consists of five aldermen and a mayor, all elected at-large unless otherwise specified by ordinance.
- There is no City Manager; the Mayor functions as the Chief Executive Officer of the City.

Mayor's Authority (per TML and LGC Ch. 22)

- Presides over meetings and votes only in the event of a tie [LGC §22.037].
- Supervises city staff, appoints department heads (e.g., police chief) with council consent, and enforces laws and ordinances [LGC §22.042].
- Signs all city contracts and checks unless otherwise delegated.
- Responsible for daily administration and emergency response duties in the absence of a city manager.

Council's Oversight and Policy Role

- The Aldermen (Councilmembers) serve as the legislative and policymaking body.
- Duties include:
    - Approving ordinances, resolutions, and the budget.
    - Authorizing contracts, tax rates, and salaries.
    - Approving all hiring and promotion of City staff, including Police, per China Grove ordinance and LGC §22.051.
- Council does not direct staff individually; all oversight is exercised through formal votes and actions.

Hiring and Personnel Matters

- The City Council must formally vote to approve all new hires, promotions, or dismissals of department heads, including Police.
- The Mayor may not unilaterally appoint employees without Council action unless explicitly delegated by ordinance.
- Council may establish salary ranges, comp time caps, and employment policies by ordinance or resolution [LGC §141.001 et seq.].

Ordinances and Enforcement

- Ordinances must be adopted by majority vote and published if required.
- Once adopted, they are binding law, and enforcement authority rests with the Mayor and designated officers (e.g., police).
- Mayoral Veto and Override
- Under LGC §52.002 and supporting case law, the Mayor of a General Law City may veto ordinances passed by Council. A veto may be overridden by a three-fourths (75%) vote of the full Council (i.e., 4 out of 5 Aldermen), consistent with parliamentary guidance.

TML Guidance on Delegation

- TML recommends that in the absence of a city manager, clear written policies and ordinances should define who may act in various capacities (e.g., purchasing, supervision).
- TML strongly discourages informal delegation without written authorization.

Additional Notes

- The City Secretary plays a critical support role as custodian of records, election administrator, and liaison for legal notices.
- Council may not reduce or withhold compensation of officials during their elected term (LGC §141.001).
- During Regular and Special Meetings, Aldermen must refrain from directly addressing citizens during the meeting unless first recognized by the Mayor. Any feedback or clarifying question to the public must be routed through the Mayor to maintain order and prevent violations of the Texas Open Meetings Act. This ensures decorum in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order and your adopted meeting procedures.
- In contrast, Workshop Meetings are more informal and single-focused. At the Mayor's discretion, Aldermen and citizens may engage in collaborative dialogue, provided no votes are taken and all discussions stay within the scope of the posted agenda. These sessions are intended to encourage broader public input and deeper Council discussion without formal action.

Section 11: Council Meetings – Procedure and Public Interaction

Use of Robert's Rules of Order

The City of China Grove has adopted Robert's Rules of Order as the general parliamentary procedure governing its City Council meetings. These rules provide structure and fairness in the conduct of public meetings, ensuring that all members have an opportunity to speak and that decisions are made in an orderly fashion.
Under Robert's Rules, the Mayor presides over meetings and may recognize members who wish to speak, rule on motions, and maintain decorum. Motions must be seconded before being debated or voted on. A majority vote of the quorum is required to pass a motion unless a higher threshold is required by law.
These rules may be temporarily suspended by majority vote for efficiency or informal discussion but should be adhered to for any binding votes or formal proceedings.

Citizen Interaction and Alderman Conduct

Council meetings include a 'Citizens to Be Heard' section where members of the public may address the Council on any topic. Aldermen are permitted to ask clarifying questions in response to citizen comments during this portion of the meeting, as long as the topic is not also listed elsewhere on the agenda.

Aldermen may also, at any point during a meeting, request feedback or comments from citizens in attendance. This is permissible under Texas law and is consistent with fostering open and responsive local government, provided that such interactions do not become debates or circumvent posted agenda requirements under the Texas Open Meetings Act.

Section 12: Police Policy Oversight Responsibilities

This section outlines key areas of the CGPD Policy Manual that require or benefit from Mayoral oversight, coordination, or high-level review. These items reflect updates to the Police Handbook as of July 2025.

Policy 17A: Timekeeping, Leave, and Compensation

The Mayor is responsible for ensuring the implementation of citywide timekeeping and compensation policies, including adherence by police personnel to the comp time bank cap (40 hours) and use of location-enabled time clocks. Oversight includes review of budgeted overtime and reconciliation of payroll approvals.

Policy 18: Patrol Vehicle Use
The Mayor should confirm enforcement of the patrol vehicle policy through budget oversight and review of vehicle-related complaints. City-owned vehicles are for official business only, with take-home restrictions and no use for off-duty jobs.

Policy 19: Patrol Coverage Expectations
The Mayor may verify police coverage levels and effectiveness through periodic shift log review, citizen feedback, or city audits. All streets are to be patrolled at least once per shift.

Policy 20: Outside Employment
Outside employment for police personnel must be disclosed to and approved by the Chief. The Mayor may ensure this policy is upheld through periodic audits or if complaints arise regarding conflicts of interest.

Policy 21: Disciplinary Procedures
While discipline is administered by the Chief, the Mayor retains authority in reviewing or approving serious actions involving termination or legal risk. The Personnel Action Form requires the Mayor's signature for certain actions.

Policy 22: Animal Control Liaison Responsibilities
The Mayor shall oversee the transition of Animal Control duties to a civic employee and ensure the police liaison protocol is observed in criminal animal-related cases or emergencies.

Policy 23: Code Compliance Liaison Responsibilities
The Mayor shall oversee Code Compliance leadership staffing and direct coordination with police liaisons for criminal escalations, municipal citations, or abatement support.

Section 13: Civic Employee Oversight – Schedule and Dress Code

Municipal Clerk Work Schedule Oversight
- Municipal Clerks are limited to working 28 hours per week. To ensure coverage of business hours, the Mayor shall confirm that an annual rotating schedule is created:
    - One Clerk shall work 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM with a 1-hour combined lunch/break time.
    - One Clerk shall work 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM with a 1-hour combined lunch/break time.
- This schedule should be established and approved by the City Secretary at the beginning of each fiscal year.

Civic Employee Dress Code Oversight
The Mayor may review and support enforcement of the employee dress code to ensure a casual yet professional appearance. Prohibited attire includes:
- Shorts
- Low-cut tops
- Clothing exposing the midriff
- flip/flops

Exceptions may be made for City-branded casual attire on designated workdays or Casual Thursdays, with department head approval.

Section 14: Oversight of Civic Employee Policies

Disciplinary Policy
The Mayor shall ensure that department heads implement, and document progressive discipline as outlined in the Employee Handbook. Oversight includes monitoring compliance with verbal warnings, written warnings, suspensions, and terminations, and ensuring fairness and consistency.

Overtime and Compensatory Time Policy
The Mayor is responsible for approving any overtime prior to its occurrence. Unauthorized overtime will be subject to discipline.

Leave Request Procedures
The Mayor shall support department heads in ensuring proper advance notice for all vacation and sick leave requests. All leave forms shall be tracked and retained according to policy.

Harassment and Grievance Reporting
The Mayor shall receive and confidentially address any reports of harassment, discrimination, and knowingly false or malicious complaints of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation not resolved at the department level. The Mayor ensures compliance with City policy and legal requirements for workplace conduct.

Probation and Training
The Mayor shall verify that all new employees complete a 90-day probationary period with performance evaluation and that training checklists are implemented during onboarding.

At-Will Employment and Disclaimer
The Mayor shall ensure that all staff understand the at-will nature of City employment and that policies do not constitute a binding contract.

Handbook Review and Update
The Mayor is responsible for coordinating an annual review of the Employee Handbook with department heads and presenting revisions to City Council for approval.

Section 15: Time Commitment of the Mayor

The Mayor of China Grove, serving in a part-time capacity under the General Law Class A Mayor–Council governance model, is expected to contribute an average of 20 hours per week toward city governance duties. This may include policy review, citizen engagement, meeting preparation, oversight of department operations, and coordination with Councilmembers.

Section 16: Mayor Pro-Tem Duties

- The Mayor Pro-Tem is appointed by the City Council from among the Aldermen and serves as acting Mayor in the absence or disability of the Mayor. Duties include:
    - Presiding over meetings when the Mayor is unavailable
    - Executing legal documents and authorizing actions if the Mayor is unable to do so
    - Serving as a signer on all City financial accounts
    - Collaborating with the Mayor on policy decisions, emergency planning, and leadership continuity

The Mayor Pro-Tem shall maintain availability and awareness of pending issues to fulfill these responsibilities effectively.

Section 17: Emergency Succession and Temporary Authority

In the event the Mayor is incapacitated, absent, or resigns, the Mayor Pro-Tem shall assume the duties of Mayor until a permanent replacement is elected or appointed. This includes oversight of meetings, personnel matters, and execution of financial instruments. Department Heads shall direct urgent matters to the Mayor Pro-Tem during this period. Succession procedures shall follow the Texas Local Government Code for Class A General Law Cities.

Section 18: Public Communication and Transparency

Important Voting Thresholds

- Budget Adoption requires a 60% affirmative vote of the full Council (i.e., 3 of 5 council seats).
- Tax Rate Adoption requires a quorum of 4 aldermen and 60% affirmative vote of the full Council (i.e., 3 of 5 council seats) as per Tax Code §26.05.

These thresholds are calculated based on the full number of seats—even if one or more seats are vacant.

Note: Per LGC §22.039, quorum is defined as a majority of the full governing body, regardless of vacancies. This means if fewer than 4 Aldermen remain seated due to resignations, key actions such as budget adoption or hiring may become legally infeasible, potentially triggering a special election under Election Code §41.001.

The Mayor shall lead by example in maintaining transparent, factual, and respectful communication with the public. This includes:

- Posting key updates on the City message board
- Responding to citizen emails and inquiries within a reasonable time
- Refraining from engaging in political or controversial commentary on official channels
- Encouraging staff to use official City email addresses and coordinated messaging

The Mayor may delegate communications to the City Secretary or Public Information Officer where appropriate.

Section 19: Budgetary Responsibilities

Department heads (including the Chief of Police) play a central role in preparing, refining, and presenting the City's annual budget and tax rate proposals. While the Mayor and Aldermen make the final policy decisions, staff ensure compliance with state law, prepare supporting documents, and provide accurate information for Council review. This section outlines the employee responsibilities in the timeline below, which runs from May through September and aligns with the Texas Local Government Code (Chapter 102) and the Texas Tax Code (Chapter 26).

Annual Budget & Tax Rate Adoption Timeline

Budget Process (LGC Chapter 102)	Tax Rate Process (Tax Code Chapter 26)
May 1–15 – Mayor & City Secretary begin planning; review actuals; update templates; prepare First Draft Budget.	*(No Tax Rate steps in May) *
May 15–31 – Dept. Heads submit requests; Mayor & City Secretary prepare First Draft; salary tables prepared; First Draft Budget Workbook posted before June Council Meeting.	*(No Tax Rate steps in May) *
June Council Meeting Budget discussion No Action. *Optional Council Workshop for continued budget review and adjustments (commonly scheduled).*	*(No Tax Rate steps in June) *
Post June meetings – Mayor revises draft using Workshop Template; updates from Dept. Heads; numbers verified with City Secretary & Investment Officer; Updated Budget posted before July Meeting; Mayor files Proposed Budget with City Secretary (LGC §102.005).	*(No Tax Rate steps in June) *
Early July – no later than the 1st Monday: Final Proposed Budget posted on City website (30-day rule); July Council Meeting: budget discussion only.	*(No Tax Rate steps in July) *
Mid-July – Submit Budget Public Hearing Notice to Wilson County News (17 days before August meeting; LGC §102.006).	*(Tax Rate notice not yet required) *
August Council Meeting – First Thursday: Budget Public Hearing (LGC §102.006) and Budget Adoption (LGC §102.009(a)). - Quorum of 3 → all 3 must vote yes - Quorum of 4 → 3-to-1 vote carries (60%).	*(Tax Rate notice step is next) * *Optional Council Workshop to review tax rate scenarios and worksheets (commonly scheduled). *
Mid-August – (No budget steps)	Submit Tax Rate Public Hearing Notice to Wilson County News (17 days before September meeting; Tax Code §26.05).
September Council Meeting – (No budget steps)	First Thursday: Tax Rate Public Hearing and Tax Rate Adoption (Tax Code §26.05(c)). - Quorum of 4 required - 3-to-1 vote carries (60%) - If adopted rate > voter-approval rate, election required.
Post-Adoption – Upload adopted budget to website; notify Bexar County & Appraisal District; update internal systems.	Same post-adoption tasks: upload adopted tax rate; notify Bexar County & Appraisal District; update systems.

Note: Workshops are optional but commonly scheduled to allow additional Council discussion of the budget (July) and tax rate (August).

19.1 Post-Budget Staff Activity (October–December)

- Conduct a post-budget debrief with department heads to evaluate what worked well and where processes can improve.
    - Ensure they understand budget line items affecting daily operations.
    - Compile a lessons-learned summary for discussion with Council.
- Begin tracking budget implementation (e.g., major purchases, new hires, capital projects) to ensure Council decisions are carried out.

- Start early planning for capital projects and upcoming grant cycles; coordinate with external partners if needed.
- Update internal procedures and templates for the next budget cycle (agenda forms, budget request templates, fund balance reports).
- Confirm that the final adopted budget and tax rate are posted on the City's website and available in the City Secretary's office for public access.
- Provide any required budget copies or certifications to the County Clerk, Appraisal District, and other authorities.

19.2 Budget Legal Support References

- LGC §22.039 – Quorum for governing body is majority of full membership, including vacancies.
- LGC §102.005 – Proposed budget must be filed with the City Secretary.
- LGC §102.006 – Budget hearing and 10-day notice requirement in newspaper of general circulation.
- LGC §102.009(a) – Budget must be adopted before start of fiscal year (October 1).
- Tax Code §26.05 – Tax rate adoption, notice, and hearing requirements.
- Election Code §41.001 – Uniform election dates if quorum is lost and a special election is required.
- LGC §102.008 – Amendments to the budget are allowed by Council ordinance; staff must prepare supporting documentation.
- Tax Code §26.04 – County appraisal district's role in certifying tax rolls; staff must monitor deadlines to ensure compliance.

Section 20: Finance, and Purchasing Oversight

Travel and Expense Reimbursements

- The Mayor shall approve all City-related travel in advance and review requests for expense reimbursements. Reimbursable expenses must be supported by receipts, comply with City per diem limits, and include correct GL codes. Unauthorized or excessive expenses shall not be reimbursed.
- The Mayor is responsible for:
    - Ensuring purchasing practices follow Council-adopted thresholds and ordinances
    - Approving any budget amendments prior to Council submission
    - Maintaining oversight of contracts and service agreements

The Mayor is a signer on City accounts and shall regularly review financial reports with the City Secretary or contracted financial officer.

Section 21: Council Packet Review and Message Board Usage

The Mayor is responsible for encouraging a culture of preparedness and transparency. All Councilmembers should be reminded of their obligation to read the full Council packet before each meeting. To facilitate better understanding and support efficient meetings, the City message board should be used to:

- Ask clarifying questions
- Request additional documentation
- Share concerns or updates with staff or fellow Aldermen

While the use of the message board is strongly encouraged, the Mayor must ensure that all posts made by elected officials do not suggest agreement, action, or collective deliberation. Such activity is prohibited under the Texas Open Meetings Act. The Mayor may remind Aldermen of this responsibility if needed.

Section 22: Maintaining a Full Council: Preventing Governance Failure

Why a Full Five-Member Council Matters

The City of China Grove operates under a Type A General Law, Mayor-Council form of government. By law, the governing body is the Mayor and five aldermen. The system is designed to function only when all five positions are filled. When membership falls below five, risks compound quickly.

Dangers of Dropping to Three Members

If the Council ever dwindles to three members, the City faces immediate and severe consequences:

- Loss of Quorum for Special Meetings
  The Texas Local Government Code requires a majority of the full council (four members) to call and hold a special meeting. With only three members seated, the Council cannot legally convene for urgent matters outside of the regular monthly meeting.
- Budget Cannot Be Passed
  State law requires every city to adopt a balanced budget by the beginning of its fiscal year (September 30 for China Grove). Without at least four voting members, the City cannot meet quorum requirements to pass the budget. Failure to adopt a budget on time can result in a shutdown of city operations, including furloughing police officers and staff.
- Tax Rate Cannot Be Set
  The Texas Tax Code requires the City Council to adopt an annual property tax rate by deadline. If the Council cannot act, the rate defaults to the No-New-Revenue (NNR) rate—the lowest possible amount—cutting off critical funding for police, roads, and city services.
- Vacancies Cannot Be Filled by Appointment
  Once the Council falls to three members, it loses the legal authority to appoint replacements. The only remedy is a special election.
    - In the majority of cases, these elections must be held on uniform election dates in May or November.
    - If the filing window has closed, the City must wait until the *next* cycle—leaving the Council hamstrung for months.
    - The City also bears the cost, often $15,000–$30,000 for a single election administered through Bexar County.

The Mayor's Responsibility

It is the Mayor's duty to prevent the City from ever reaching this crisis point. That means:

- Promoting Candidates – The Mayor must actively encourage qualified citizens to run for alderman seats in every election cycle.
- Educating the Community – Remind voters that vacancies have serious costs and can paralyze city operations.
- Leading by Example – Show by action and word that a full Council is essential for governance, stability, and financial security.

⚠ Quick Reference Box: The Risk of Three Members

- Can't hold special meetings
- Can't pass the budget → City shutdown, furloughs
- Can't set the tax rate → Defaults to NNR rate
- Can't appoint replacements → Forced into costly special elections (May/Nov only)