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| CITY OF WINONA WINONA, MINNESOTA ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE | NUMBER: 103-1 | REVISED: 1 | PAGE <u>1</u> OF <u>2</u> |
| | SUBJECT: HANDLING CITIZENS COMPLAINTS | | |

1.0 POLICY:

Citizen complaints provided an opportunity for feedback and identifying problem areas. How well we handle those helps determine to a large extent the level of confidence and respect the public holds for its municipal government. Above all, we are here to serve; and part of our job is effective handling of citizen complaints.

This procedure will present guidelines and suggestions concerning the handling of citizens' complaints. Each Department Head shall assure that employees under his/her supervision are familiarized with the procedure herein established.

2.0 ORGANIZATIONS AFFECTED:

All departments/divisions.

3.0 PROCEDURE:

3.1 Citizen Complaints

A citizen's complaint is a real and important problem to him/her, regardless of what you may think of it.

When handling a complaint, be polite and firm and never argue or become angry with the complainant even if he/she is angry, unreasonable, and insulting toward you and the City. Stay calm, cool and collected; don't take criticisms personally and you'll be better able to help solve the problem...otherwise you'll probably become part of it.

In reference to general administrative or departmental policies, it is better to use "we" instead of "I". "I" should only be used if it refers to a personal responsibility.

3.1.1 Four suggestions for receiving and handling an irate citizen are:

1. Let the citizen talk himself/herself out. He'll/She'll probably then calm down and listen to what you have to say.

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2. Courteously tell the complainant that you are sorry that he/she has not received the service he/she needs rather than trying to excuse or justify the actions of the City or yourself.
3. Offer to do what you can to solve the problem of the caller. If he/she wants to see the top man/woman, let him/her. This is no reflection on your own ability and may go far in calming him/her down. Also, if the complaint is made in person, record the information on paper, this may calm him/her by knowing that you're honest in your intentions of solving his/her problem.
4. Assure the man/woman of the good will of the City government, and when the conversation is ended, thank him/her for calling.

3.2 Four Important Stages in a Complaint Procedure

- 3.2.1 Receive the complaint and record information pertinent to the complaint.
- 3.2.2 Assign responsibility for investigation and correction to the appropriate City employee.
- 3.2.3 Follow up on all complaints and what action, if any, has been taken.
- 3.2.4 The responsible supervisor shall notify the complainant as to what action was taken or will be taken on his/her complaint.

In cases where, for one reason or another, it is impossible or improper to take action, every effort shall be made to explain the reason for not complying with the satisfaction of the person making the complaint.

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