

When May Board Members Identify their PPCC Affiliations in Oral and Written Statements?

The PPCC Bylaws provide that only the officers, or those whom the Chair or Board specifically authorize, may speak for the Community Council. The routine use of PPCC titles (e.g., PPCC Board Member, PPCC Area X Representative, Member of the PPCC LUC, etc.) can be misleading and may violate our rules. We urge Board members not to use “signature blocks” identifying their affiliation with PPCC unless the specific communication pertains to their official capacity and otherwise complies with PPCC standards for speaking for the Council. *See* PPCC Bylaws, Article V, Section 5 (below). More specifically:

1. Officers, as well as non-officer Board members designated by the Board or the Chair, may make official statements on behalf of PPCC and/or state Board positions on issues which are not a part of the public record; in doing so they may identify their PPCC affiliations. Section 5.A.

Example #1: The Chair is unable to attend a hearing, and designates the Chair Emeritus (a non-officer) to act in his place in making an official statement on behalf of PPCC at the hearing. The Chair Emeritus may identify her PPCC affiliation in doing so.

Example #2: The Chair asks a non-officer Committee Chair to speak with news media about a matter addressed by the Committee and/or Board that is within the Committee’s purview. The Committee Chair may identify his PPCC affiliation when speaking for this purpose.

2. Board members may also identify their PPCC affiliations in making Board authorized statements and conducting routine communications that are consistent with the functions for which the members were appointed or elected. Section 5.A.

Example #1: The Board has taken an official position on a matter, as reflected in a position letter sent to public officials, a motion posted on the PPCC website, and/or the approved Board meeting minutes. An Organizational Representative may advise her organization’s board or other community members of PPCC’s official position and may identify her PPCC affiliation in doing so.¹

Example #2: Constituents alert their Area Representative to a hazardous condition in the Area. The Area Representative may identify his PPCC affiliation in communicating with constituents and/or public officials in an effort to obtain information about the condition.

Example #3: The At-large Representative wishes to email a recap of events or matters discussed at a Board meeting to community members. The At-large Representative may identify his PPCC affiliation for this purpose.

¹Of course, Board members may not misrepresent the Board’s positions, nor state that the Board has taken a position on a matter when the Board has not done so. Section 5.C.

3. In situations not addressed by Paragraphs 1 and 2 above, Board members may identify their PPCC affiliations when making statements, but in doing so each member must also indicate (a) that he/she is not officially representing the Board on the matter being addressed, and (b) that the Board has either considered and taken no position on the matter, or (c) is still studying the matter, or (d) that the Board has never considered the matter. Section 5.B.

Example #1: A PPCC officer wishes to write an opinion letter reflecting her personal views about a matter that the Board has never considered. She may identify her affiliation with PPCC, but in doing so must also indicate that she is speaking on her individual behalf only, that the designation of PPCC affiliation is for identification only, and that the Board has never considered the matter.

Example #2: An Organizational Representative wishes to testify at a hearing on a matter that the Board has considered but taken no position on. He may identify his affiliation with PPCC, but in doing so must also indicate that he is speaking on his individual behalf only, that the designation of PPCC affiliation is for identification only, and that the Board has considered but not taken a position on the matter.

Example #3: An Area Representative wishes to include her PPCC affiliation in a “signature block” or other automatic signature line appended to all of the Representative’s email messages. She should not do so unless, in situations not addressed by Paragraphs 1 and 2 above, she also includes in each individual email message a statement containing the required qualifying information set forth in Paragraph 3, subsections (a) - (b) above. More particularly, if a signature block is used, the following statement should be added immediately below the listing of PPCC affiliation (in situations not addressed by Paragraphs 1 and 2 above), in a font size no smaller than the largest font size used in the remainder of the signature block: “This correspondence is not made in my official capacity with the PPCC nor does it represent an authorized statement of the PPCC, nor has the PPCC considered this matter except as otherwise stated.” *The better practice is for Board members to identify PPCC affiliations (if needed or desired) on a message-by-message basis rather than automatically, and then only in compliance with the PPCC Bylaws.*

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PPCC BYLAWS, ARTICLE V

Sec. 5. PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

A. Only an officer of the PPCC or other person designated by the Board or the Chair may make official statements on behalf of the PPCC or state a Board position on an issue which is not part of a public record. This limitation does not apply to Board authorized statements or to the conduct of routine communications consistent with the functions for which the individual has been appointed or elected.

B. Whenever a member of the Board desires to make an oral or written statement under conditions which do not meet the specifications of Paragraph A above and that member identifies his/her affiliation with the Board, that member shall inform those to whom the statement is addressed that:

- a. He or she is not officially representing the Board on the matter being addressed, and
- b. The Board has considered the matter and taken no position, or
- c. The Board has considered the matter and is still studying the matter, or
- d. The Board has never considered the matter.

C. No member of the Board shall misrepresent any position or policy approved by the Board, or if the Board has not approved a position or adopted a policy on an issue, misrepresent that the Board has taken a position.

D. No PPCC officer or the Board shall impose any restrictions upon the expression of personal opinions by any PPCC officer or Board member, nor shall any PPCC officer or the Board impose any sanctions upon any PPCC officer or Board member for expressing his or her own personal opinion, so long as such expression of personal opinion is in keeping with the provisions stated above and in the PPCC Standing Rules.