



COMMISSION LEADERSHIP CODE

APPROVED BY COMMISSION ON

MAY 20, 2013

The Three R's of the City of Valley City Commission Leadership Code:

Roles

Responsibilities

Respect

The contents of this Leadership Code include:

- Overview of Roles & Responsibilities
- Policies & Protocol Related to Conduct
- Commission Conduct with One Another
- Commission Conduct with City Staff
- Commission Conduct with The Public
- Commission Conduct with Other Public Agencies
- Commission Conduct with Boards, Task Forces and Committees
- Commission Conduct with The Media
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- Sanctions
- Principles of Proper Conduct
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The constant and consistent theme through all of the Leadership Code is "respect." Commission members are confronted with difficult decisions and tremendous stress in making those decisions that may impact thousands of lives. Despite these pressures, elected officials are called upon to exhibit appropriate behavior at all times. Demonstrating respect for each individual through words and actions is the touchstone that can help guide Commission members to do the right thing in even the most difficult situations.

Overview of Roles & Responsibilities

"Leadership is an action, not a word."-- Richard Cooley

Other resources that are helpful in defining the roles and responsibilities of elected officials can be found in the Ordinances or the North Dakota Century Code.

President of the Commission (Note: The President of the Commission is commonly referred to as the Mayor.)

- The Chief Executive Officer of the City of Valley City is the President of the Commission.
- Acts as the official head of the City for all ceremonial purposes.
- Chairs Commission meetings

- Recognized as spokesperson for the City.
- Selects substitute for City representation when President cannot attend.
- Makes judgment calls on proclamations, Special Orders of the Day, etc.
- Recommends subcommittees as appropriate for Commission approval
- Leads the Commission into an effective, cohesive working team.
- Signs documents on behalf of the City.
- Serves as official delegate of the City to events and conferences

Votes on all motions as prescribed in Commission Form of Government

Commission Member

All members of the City Commission, including the President of the Commission, have equal votes. No Commission member has more power than any other Commission member, and all should be treated with equal respect.

All Commission members should:

- Fully participate in City Commission meetings and other public forums while demonstrating respect, kindness, consideration, and courtesy to others.
- Prepare in advance of Commission meetings and be familiar with issues on the agenda.
- Represent the City at ceremonial functions at the request of the President.
- Place activities and events on the Commission's weekly activities calendar that invite official participation of all Commission members. A list of the activities of individual Commission members may also be submitted for public record at the option of the Commission member.
- Be respectful of other people's time. Stay focused and act efficiently during public meetings.
- Serve as a model of leadership and civility to the community.
- Inspire public confidence in Valley City's government.
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity in every action and statement.
- Participate in scheduled activities to increase team effectiveness and review Commission procedures, such as this Leadership Code.

Committee Chair

The President will chair official meetings of the City Commission, unless another Commission member is designated as Chair of a specific meeting or committee.

- Maintains order, decorum, and the fair and equitable treatment of all speakers
- Keeps discussion and questions focused on specific agenda item under consideration
- Makes parliamentary rulings with advice, if requested, from the City Attorney who acts as an advisory parliamentarian. Chair rulings may be overturned if a Commission member makes a motion as an individual and the majority of the Commission votes to overrule the Chair.

Policies & Protocol Related To Conduct

"Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for kindness."

-- Seneca

Ceremonial Events

Requests for a City representative at ceremonial events will be handled by City staff. The President will serve as the designated City representative. If the President is unavailable, then City staff will determine if event organizers would like another representative from the Commission. If yes, then the President will recommend which Commission member should be asked to serve as a substitute. Invitations received at City Hall are presumed to be for official City representation. Invitations addressed to Commission members at their homes are presumed to be for unofficial, personal consideration.

Correspondence Signatures

Commission members do not need to acknowledge the receipt of correspondence, or copies of correspondence, during Commission meetings. The City Administrator will prepare official letters in response to public inquiries and concerns. These letters will carry the signature of the President unless the President requests that another Commission member or City Administrator sign them.

If correspondence is addressed only to one Commission member then that Commission member should check with the City Administrator on the best way to respond to the sender.

Endorsement of Candidates

Commission members have the right to endorse candidates for all Commission seats or other elected offices. It is inappropriate to mention endorsements during Commission meetings or other official City meetings.

Non-agenda Items/Suspension of the Rules

During a designated period of the agenda, citizens, Commission members and staff may bring forth issues or questions that are not on the meeting's agenda. Topics should be legislative items requiring action by the Mayor or the Commission, study issues for future consideration, and requests for information. Each speaker, citizen or elected official, will be limited to five minutes.

In the event the non-agenda item needs action taken by the Commission, a motion to suspend the rules should be offered. The vote to suspend the rules needs unanimous approval before further action on the item may take place.

Public Meeting Hearing Protocol

The applicant or appellant shall have the right to speak first. The President will determine the length of time allowed for this presentation. Speakers representing either pro or con points of view will be allowed to follow. The Chair will determine how much time will be allowed for each speaker, with 3 to 5 minutes the standard time granted. The applicant or appellant will be allowed to make closing comments. The President has the responsibility to run an efficient public meeting and has the discretion to modify the public hearing process in order to make the meeting run smoothly.

Commission members will not express opinions during the public hearing portion of the meeting except to ask pertinent questions of the speaker or staff. "I think" and "I feel" comments by Commission members are not appropriate until after the close of the public hearing. Commission

members should refrain from arguing or debating with the public during a public hearing and shall always show respect for different points of view.

Main motions may be followed by amendments, followed by substitute motions. Any Commission member can call for a point of order. Only Commission members who voted on the prevailing side may make motions to reconsider. Commission members who desire to make the first motion on issues which they feel strongly about should discuss their intention with the President in advance of the Commission meeting.

Commission Conduct with One Another

"In life, courtesy and self-possession, and in the arts, style, are the sensible impressions of the free mind, for both arise out of a deliberate shaping of all things and from never being swept away, whatever the emotion, into confusion or dullness."

-- William Butler Yeats

Commissions are composed of individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, opinions, and goals. Despite this diversity, all have chosen to serve in public office in order to preserve and protect the present and the future of the community. In all cases, this common goal should be acknowledged even as Commission may "agree to disagree" on contentious issues.

IN PUBLIC MEETINGS

Practice civility and decorum in discussions and debate

Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of a free democracy in action. This does not allow, however, Commission members to make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments. Shouting or physical actions that could be construed as threatening will not be tolerated.

Honor the role of the President in maintaining order

It is the responsibility of the President to keep the comments of Commission members on track during public meetings. Commission members should honor efforts by the President to focus discussion on current agenda items. If there is disagreement about the agenda or the Chair's actions, those objections should be voiced politely and with reason, following procedures outlined in parliamentary procedure.

Avoid personal comments that could offend other Commission members

If a Commission member is personally offended by the remarks of another Commission member, the offended Commission member should make notes of the actual words used and call for a "point of personal privilege" that challenges the other Commission member to justify or apologize for the language used. The Chair will maintain control of this discussion even if it involves the Chair's personal comment.

Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches

Commission members have a public stage to show how individuals with disparate points of view can find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the community as a whole.

IN PRIVATE ENCOUNTERS

Continue respectful behavior in private

The same level of respect and consideration of differing points of view that is deemed appropriate for public discussions should be maintained in private conversations.

Be aware of the insecurity of written notes, voicemail messages, and e-mail

Technology allows words written or said without much forethought to be distributed wide and far. Would you feel comfortable to have this note faxed to others? How would you feel if this voicemail message was played on a speakerphone in a full office? What would happen if this e-mail message was forwarded to others? Written notes, voicemail messages and e-mail should be treated as potentially "public" communication.

Even private conversations can have a public presence

Elected officials are always on display – their actions, mannerisms, and people around them that they may not know monitor language. Lunch table conversations will be eavesdropped upon, parking lot debates will be watched, and casual comments between individuals before and after public meetings noted.

Commission Conduct with City Staff

"Never let a problem become an excuse."-- Robert Schuller

Governance of a City relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials, who set policy, and City staff, who implements and administers the Commission's policies. Therefore, every effort should be made to be cooperative and show mutual respect for the contributions made by each individual for the good of the community.

Treat all staff as professionals

Clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual is expected. Poor behavior towards staff is not acceptable.

Limit contact to specific City staff

Questions of City staff and/or requests for additional background information should be directed only to the City Administrator, City Attorney, City Auditor or other appropriate department head.

Requests for follow-up or directions to staff should be made only through the City Administrator, City Auditor, or City Attorney when appropriate. When in doubt about what staff contact is appropriate, Commission members should ask the City Administrator for direction. Materials supplied to a Commission member in response to a request will be made available to all members of the Commission so that all have equal access to information.

Do not disrupt City staff from their jobs

Commission members should not disrupt City staff while they are in meetings, on the phone, or engrossed in performing their job functions in order to have their individual needs met.

Never publicly criticize an individual employee

Commission members should never express concerns about the performance of a City employee in public, to the employee directly, or to the employee's supervisor. Comments about staff

performance should be made to the City Administrator through printed correspondence or conversation. Comments about staff in the office of the City Attorney should be made directly to the City Attorney.

Do not get involved in administrative functions

Commission members must not attempt to influence City staff on the making of appointments, awarding of contracts, selecting of consultants, processing of development applications,.

Check with City staff on correspondence before taking action

Before sending correspondence, Commission members should check with City staff to see if an official City response has already been sent or is in progress.

Do not attend meetings with City staff unless agreed to by staff.

While recognizing all City government business is considered open unless specifically excluded by North Dakota Century Code, even if the Commission member does not say anything, the Commission member's presence implies support, shows partiality, intimidates staff, and hampers staff's ability to do their job objectively.

Limit requests for staff support

Routine secretarial support will be provided to all Commission members. The City Administrator (or staff) opens all mail for Commission members, unless a Commission member requests other arrangements. Mail addressed to the President is reviewed first by the City Administrator who notes suggested action and/or follow-up items.

Requests for additional staff support – even in high priority or emergency situations -- should be made to the City Administrator who is responsible for allocating City resources in order to maintain a professional, well-run City government.

Do not solicit political support from staff

Commission members should not solicit any type of political support (financial contributions, display of posters or lawn signs, name on support list, etc.) from City staff. City staff may, as private citizens with constitutional rights, support political candidates but all such activities must be done away from the workplace.

Commission Conduct with the Public

"If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them."

-- Francis Bacon

IN PUBLIC MEETINGS

Making the public feel welcome is an important part of the democratic process. No signs of partiality, prejudice or disrespect should be evident on the part of individual Commission members toward an individual participating in a public forum. Every effort should be made to be fair and impartial in listening to public testimony.

Be welcoming to speakers and treat them with care and gentleness

"I give many public presentations so standing up in front of a group and using a microphone is not new to me. But I found that speaking in front of Commission was an entirely different experience. I was incredibly nervous and my voice was shaking. I think the reason was because

the issue was so personal to me. The Commission was going to take a vote that would affect my family's daily life and my home. I was feeling a lot of emotion. The way that Commission treats people during public hearings can do a lot to make them relax or to push their emotions to a higher level of intensity."

Be fair and equitable in allocating public hearing time to individual speakers

"The first thing the Mayor (President) said to me was to be brief because the meeting was running late and the Commission was eager to go home. That shouldn't be my problem. I'm sorry my item was at the end of the agenda and that there were a lot of speakers, but it is critically important to me and I should be allowed to say what I have to say and believe that the Commission is listening to me."

The President will determine and announce limits on speakers at the start of the public hearing process. Generally, each speaker will be allocated five-minutes with applicants and appellants or their designated representatives allowed more time. If many speakers are anticipated, the Chair may shorten the time limit and/or ask speakers to limit themselves to new information and points of view not already covered by previous speakers.

No speaker will be turned away unless he or she exhibits inappropriate behavior. Each speaker may only speak once during the public hearing unless the Commission requests additional clarification later in the process. After the close of the public hearing, no more public testimony will be accepted unless the Chair reopens the public hearing for a limited and specific purpose.

Give the appearance of active listening

It is disconcerting to speakers to have Commission members not look at them when they are speaking. It is fine to look down at documents or to make notes, but reading for a long period of time gazing around the room gives the appearance of disinterest. Be aware of facial expressions, especially those that could be interpreted as "smirking," disbelief, anger or boredom.

Ask for clarification, but avoid debate and argument with the public

Only the Chair – not individual Commission members - can interrupt a speaker during a presentation. However, a Commission member can ask the Chair for a point of order if the speaker is off the topic or exhibiting behavior or language the Commission member finds disturbing.

If speakers become flustered or defensive by Commission questions, it is the responsibility of the Chair to calm and focus the speaker and to maintain the order and decorum of the meeting. Questions by Commission members to members of the public testifying should seek to clarify or expand information. It is never appropriate to belligerently challenge or belittle the speaker. Commission members' personal opinions or inclinations about upcoming votes should not be revealed until after the public hearing is closed.

No personal attacks of any kind, under any circumstance

Commission members should be aware that their body language and tone of voice, as well as the words they use, can appear to be intimidating or aggressive.

Follow parliamentary procedure in conducting public meetings

The City Attorney serves as advisory parliamentarian for the City and is available to answer questions or interpret situations according to parliamentary procedures. The Chair, subject to the appeal of the full Commission, makes final rulings on parliamentary procedure.

IN UNOFFICIAL SETTINGS

Make no promises on behalf of the Commission

Commission members will frequently be asked to explain a Commission action or to give their opinion about an issue as they meet and talk with constituents in the community. It is appropriate to give a brief overview of City policy and to refer to City staff for further information. It is inappropriate to overtly or implicitly promise Commission action, or to promise City staff will do something specific (fix a pothole, remove a library book, plant new flowers in the median, etc.).

Make no personal comments about other Commission members

It is acceptable to publicly disagree about an issue, but it is unacceptable to make derogatory comments about other Council members, their opinions and actions.

Remember that Valley City is still a small town

Commission members are constantly being observed by the community every day that they serve in office. Their behaviors and comments serve as models for proper deportment in the City of Valley City. Honesty and respect for the dignity of each individual should be reflected in every word and action taken by Commission members, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is a serious and continuous responsibility.

Commission Conduct with Other Public Agencies

"Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest."

-- Mark Twain

Be clear about representing the city or personal interests

If a Commission member appears before another governmental agency or organization to give a statement on an issue, the Commission member must clearly state: 1) if his or her statement reflects personal opinion or is the official stance of the City; 2) whether this is the majority or minority opinion of the Commission.

If the Commission member is representing the City, the Commission member must support and advocate the official City position on an issue, not a personal viewpoint.

If the Commission member is representing another organization whose position is different from the City, the Commission member should withdraw from voting on the issue if it significantly impacts or is detrimental to the City's interest. Commission members should be clear about which organizations they represent and inform the Commission of their involvement.

Correspondence also should be equally clear about representation

City letterhead may be used when the Commission member is representing the City and the City's official position. A copy of official correspondence should be given to the City Administrator to be filed in the Commission Office as part of the permanent public record.

It is best that City letterhead not be used for correspondence of Commission members representing a personal point of view, or a dissenting point of view from an official Commission position. However, should Commission members use City letterhead to express a personal

opinion, the official City position must be stated clearly so the reader understands the difference between the official City position and the minor viewpoint of the Commission member.

Commission Conduct with Boards, Committees & Task Forces

"We rarely find that people have good sense unless they agree with us."--Francois, Duc de La Rochefoucauld

The City has established several Boards, Committees and Task Forces as a means of gathering more community input. Citizens who serve on Boards, Committees and Task Forces become more involved in government and serve as advisors to the City Commissioners. They are a valuable resource to the City's leadership and should be treated with appreciation and respect.

If attending a Board, Task Force or Committee meeting, be careful to only express personal opinions

Commission members may attend any Board, Task Force or Committee meeting which are open to any member of the public. However, they should be sensitive to the way their participation – especially if it is on behalf of an individual, business or developer -- could be viewed as unfairly affecting the process. Any public comments by a Commission member at a Board, Committee or Task Force meeting should be clearly made as individual opinion and not a representation of the feelings of the entire City Commission.

Limit contact with Board, Task Force and Committee members to questions of clarification

It is inappropriate for a Commission member to contact a Board, Committee or Task Force member to lobby on behalf of an individual, business, or developer. It is acceptable for Commission members to contact Board, Committee or Task Force members in order to clarify a position taken by the Board, Committee or Task Force.

Remember that Boards, Committees and Task Forces serve the community, not individual Commission members

The City Commission appoints individuals to serve on Boards, Committees and Task Forces, and it is the responsibility of Boards, Committees and Task Forces to follow policy established by the Commission. But Board, Committees and Task Force members do not report to individual Commission members, nor should Commission members feel they have the power or right to threaten Board, Committees and Task Forces with removal if they disagree about an issue. Appointment and re-appointment to a Board, Task Force or Committee should be based on such criteria as expertise, ability to work with staff and the public, and commitment to fulfilling official duties. A Board, Task Force or Committee appointment should not be used as a political "reward."

Be respectful of diverse opinions

A primary role of Boards, Task Forces and Committees is to represent many points of view in the community and to provide the Commission with advice based on a full spectrum of concerns and perspectives. Commission members may have a closer working relationship with some individuals serving on Boards, Task Forces and Committees, but must be fair and respectful of all citizens serving on Boards, Task Forces and Committees.

Keep political support away from public forums

Board, Task Force and Committee members may offer political support to a Commission member, but not in a public forum while conducting official duties. Conversely, Commission members may support Board, Task Force and Committee members who are running for office, but not in an official forum in their capacity as a Commission member.

Inappropriate behavior can lead to removal

Inappropriate behavior by a Board, Task Force or Committee member should be noted to the President, and the President should counsel the offending member. If inappropriate behavior continues, the President should bring the situation to the attention of the Commission and the individual is subject to removal from the Board, Task Force or Committee.

Commission Conduct with the Media

"Keep them well fed and never let them know that all you've got is a chair and a whip."

-- Lion Tamer School

The media, for background and quotes, frequently contacts Commission members.

The best advice for dealing with the media is to never go "off the record"

Most members of the media represent the highest levels of journalistic integrity and ethics, and can be trusted to keep their word. But one bad experience can be catastrophic. Words that are not said cannot be quoted.

The President is the official spokesperson for the representative on City position.

The President is the designated representative of the Commission to present and speak on the official City position. If the media contacts an individual Commission member, the Commission member should be clear about whether their comments represent the official City position or a personal viewpoint.

Choose words carefully and cautiously

Comments taken out of context can cause problems. Be especially cautious about humor, sardonic asides, sarcasm, or word play. It is never appropriate to use personal slurs or swear words when talking with the media.

Conflicts of Interest & Personal Benefit

Conflicts of Interest

City Commission members should declare a personal interest in any official actions and withdraw from participation in that action. If a law or policy permits a public servant to have such an interest, in seeking the opportunity to further that interest, or in furthering the interest if the opportunity is obtained, the Commission member who has the personal interest shall comply fully with all procedures required under the applicable laws or policies, and shall not, under any circumstances, gain or attempt to gain any advantage by virtue of being in a public position.

No City Commission member shall accept or receive, directly or indirectly, from any person any personal benefit under circumstances in which it can be reasonably inferred that the benefit is intended to influence the Commission member in the performance or nonperformance of any official duty or as a reward for any official action of the Commission member.

No person, including any vendor, contractor, business, or board of the City shall offer or give any personal benefit to any Commission member or any partner-in-interest of the Commission member.

No Commission member nor partner-in-interest of that Commission member shall solicit from any person, directly or indirectly, any personal benefit, regardless of value, or the promise of receiving a personal benefit in the future, for the Commission member.

No current or former Commission member shall intentionally use or disclose information gained in the course of, or by reason of, his or her official position or activities in any way that could result in the receipt of any personal benefit for the Commission member, for a partner-in-interest of that Commission member, or for any other person, if the information or if the Commission member has not been authorized to communicate it to the public.

No Commission member shall, in such capacity, participate in the discussion, debate, deliberation or vote, or otherwise take part in the decision making process on any agenda item before the City Commission in which the Commission member or a partner-in-interest has a conflict of interest.

Sanctions

**"You cannot have a proud and chivalrous spirit if your conduct is mean and paltry;
for whatever a man's actions are, such must be his spirit."**

-- Demosthenes

Public Disruption

Members of the public who do not follow proper conduct after a warning in a public hearing may be barred from further testimony at that meeting or removed from the Commission Chambers.

Inappropriate Staff Behavior

Commission members should refer to the City Administrator or the City Attorney who do not follow proper conduct in their dealings with Commission members, other City staff, or the public. These employees may be disciplined in accordance with standard City procedures for such actions

Commission members Behavior and Conduct

City Commission members who intentionally and repeatedly do not follow proper conduct may be reprimanded or formally censured by the Commission and have official travel restricted. Serious infractions of the Leadership Code could lead to other sanctions as deemed appropriate by Commission.

Commission members should point out to the offending Commission member infractions of the Leadership Code. If the offenses continue, then the matter should be referred to the President in private. If the President is the individual whose actions are being challenged, then the matter should be referred to the Vice-President.

It is the responsibility of the President (or Vice-President) to initiate action if a Commission member's behavior may warrant sanction. If the President (or Vice President) takes no action, the alleged violation(s) can be brought up with the full Commission in a public meeting.

If violation of the Leadership Code is outside of the observed behaviors by the President or Commission members, the alleged violation should be referred to the President (or Vice-President). The President (or Vice-President) should ask the City Attorney to investigate the allegation and report the findings. It is the President's (or Vice-President's) responsibility to take the next appropriate action. These actions can include, but are not limited to: discussing and counseling the individual on the violations; recommending sanction to the full Commission to consider in a public meeting; or forming a Commission ad hoc subcommittee to review the allegation; the investigation and its findings, as well as to recommend sanction options for Commission consideration. Videotaping of the complaint hearing should be used for a Commission ad hoc subcommittee.

Principles of Proper Conduct

Proper conduct IS ...

- Keeping promises
- Being dependable
- Building a solid reputation
- Participating and being available
- Demonstrating patience
- Showing empathy
- Holding onto ethical principles under stress
- Listening attentively
- Studying thoroughly
- Keeping integrity intact
- Overcoming discouragement
- Going above and beyond, time and time again
- Modeling a professional manner

It all comes down to respect

Respect for one another as individuals. . . respect for the validity of different opinions . . .

respect for the democratic process . . . respect for the community that we serve.

Checklist for Monitoring Conduct

- Will my decision/statement/action violate the trust, rights or good will of others?
- What are my interior motives and the spirit behind my actions?
- If I have to justify my conduct in public tomorrow, will I do so with pride or shame?
- How would people whose integrity and character I respect evaluate my conduct?
- Even if my conduct is not illegal or unethical, is it done at someone else's painful expense? Will it destroy their trust in me? Will it harm their reputation?
- Is my conduct fair? Just? Morally right?
- If I were on the receiving end of my conduct, would I approve and agree, or would I take offense?
- Does my conduct give others reason to trust or distrust me?

- Am I willing to take an ethical stand when it is called for? Am I willing to make my ethical beliefs public in a way that makes it clear what I stand for?
- Do I exhibit the same conduct in my private life as I do in my public life?
- Can I take legitimate pride in the way I conduct myself and the example I set?
- Do I listen and understand the views of others?
- Do I question and confront different points of view in a constructive manner?
- Do I work to resolve differences and come to mutual agreement?
- Do I support others and show respect for their ideas?
- Will my conduct cause public embarrassment to someone else?

Glossary of Terms

attitude	The manner in which one shows one's dispositions, opinions, and feelings
behavior	External appearance or action; manner of behaving; carriage of oneself
civility	Politeness, consideration, courtesy
conduct	The way one acts; personal behavior
courtesy	Politeness connected with kindness
decorum	Suitable; proper; good taste in behavior
manners	A way of acting; a style, method, or form; the way in which things are done
point of order	An interruption of a meeting to question whether rules or bylaws are being broken, such as the speaker has strayed from the motion currently under consideration
point of personal privilege	A challenge to a speaker to defend or apologize for comments that a fellow Council member considers offensive
propriety	Conforming to acceptable standards of behavior
protocol	The courtesies that are established as proper and correct
respect	The act of noticing with attention; holding in esteem; courteous regard