



Ellsworth is going through a time of big transitions. Some of them were planned, like the decision, last summer, to separate the roles of our police chief and city manager, and search for a new city manager. Other transitions have been in response to events we could not have predicted.

For our City to run smoothly, the citizens must have trust in the members of the City Council, and that trust is created through transparent communication about our priorities and plans. However, the City Council is aware that the number of executive sessions over the past few months has created some frustration.

Executive sessions are not new to Ellsworth City Council. These “closed door” meetings allow for discussions of sensitive information as defined by our charter, as well as state law. The protected information at times concerns personnel discussions such as salary negotiations, contract renewals, performance evaluations, and discipline or HR matters. It’s important that any City Council engage in executive sessions only when necessary. Yet our commitment to transparency must be balanced with the legal rights of City employees.

We believe that it may be helpful to share a description of the general process for handling complaints about any City employee, so that the community can better understand that the current lack of transparency is based in a respect for the rights of the employee. If a complaint is made about a member of the staff, the City Manager will investigate the concern and determine whether discipline is required. If the employee doesn’t agree with the determination, they can appeal to the City Council. If the complaint involves the City Manager, then the City Council will be the investigating body. During the period that a complaint is being investigated, absolute privacy and confidentiality is legally required. If the City decides on a disciplinary outcome, that outcome must remain confidential until the employee’s appeal process is complete.

Everything about this process is intended to protect the employee who is being investigated. While the lack of public information is frustrating for the rest of the City staff and the community, the employee’s right to privacy must prevail. Of course, the employee may share any information that they wish.

We hope that this is a helpful explanation of this process. Despite this turbulent time, we have great confidence in the dedication and expertise of our City staff, and excitement about the introduction of our new City Manager.

-City Council, City of Ellsworth

If you would like to send a message to the City Council for this or other matters important to you, please use the Contact form on the City Council webpage on the official City website, [available here](#).

For media inquiries, contact:

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