



POLICY AND PROCEDURE

CITY OF VANCOUVER WASHINGTON		INDEX		
		Administrative/Council/City Manager		
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City Council Meetings	Supersedes	Prepared by:	Approved by:	
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1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish formal procedures for the conduct of City Council meetings.

2.0 Organizations Affected

City Council/City Manager

3.0 References

City Council Resolution M-3239, August 9, 1999
 City Council Resolution M-3258, November 22, 1999
 City Council Resolution M-3350, July 23, 2001
 City Council Resolution M-3412, December 12, 2002
 City Council Resolution M-3607, April 16, 2007
 City Council Resolution M-3737, March 21, 2011
 City Council Resolution M-3844, December 15, 2014
 City Council Resolution M-3912, November 14, 2016
 City Council Resolution M-3980, September 24, 2018
 City Council Resolution M-4157, December 13, 2021
 City Council Resolution M-4172, June 6, 2022
 City Council Resolution M-4201, December 19, 2022
 City Council Resolution M-4204, January 9, 2023
 City Council Resolution M-4287, July 15, 2024
 City Council Resolution M-4327, February 24, 2025

4.0 Presiding Officer

The Presiding Officer at all meetings of the Council is the Mayor, and in the absence of the Mayor, the Mayor Pro Tempore will act in that capacity. If both the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore are absent, the most senior member in attendance shall act in that capacity. Seniority amongst members of the Council shall be established according to the date members first join the Council. In the event two or more members of the Council are elected from the same election, seniority among such members shall be established according to number of votes received (such that the highest available seniority is conferred to the Councilmember-elect who received the greatest number of votes).

4.1. Choosing Mayor Pro Tempore

The Mayor Pro Tempore shall be chosen according to *Section 2.04 of the Vancouver City Charter* and Ranked Choice Voting. All members of the City Council, including those nominated for Mayor Pro Tempore, shall vote unless they abstain for a qualifying reason. See Section 10.16.3. The City Council Assistant shall prepare and circulate a ballot containing the names of all nominees. Council members will then be given an opportunity to fill out and return their ballot to the City Council Assistant who will tally the votes as follows:

- If a nominee receives 50 percent or more of first-choice votes, that nominee wins.
- If no nominee exceeds 50 percent of first-choice votes, the nominee(s) in last place is/are eliminated. All the votes for the eliminated nominee(s) are then reallocated to whichever nominee those voters ranked second.
- The elimination process is repeated until one nominee receives over 50 percent of the vote.

In the event that the first round of ranked choice voting results in a tie between two or more nominees, the Presiding Officer may call for further discussion from the City Council and repeat the process above, as needed, until a Mayor Pro Tem has been selected. Copies of all counted ballots will be affixed to the meeting minutes.

4.2. Obligations of Presiding Officer

The Presiding Officer shall:

- (1) Preserve order and decorum in the Council chambers in accordance with Section 10.14;
- (2) Observe and enforce all rules adopted by the Council;
- (3) Decide all questions on procedure and order, in accordance with these rules, subject to appeal by a Councilmember;
- (4) Recognize Councilmembers in the order in which they request the floor, giving every Councilmember who wishes an opportunity to speak. The Presiding Officer, as a Councilmember, shall have only those rights, and shall be governed in all matters and issues by the same rules and restrictions as other Councilmembers.

- (5) From time to time, appoint Councilmembers to serve on ad hoc committees.

5.0 General Information

5.1 Meetings Schedule

City Council meetings are held on the first, second, third, and fourth Mondays of a month (“Regular Meetings”) in the City Council Chambers, 415 West 6th Street, Vancouver, Washington. Special Meetings may be scheduled on the fifth Monday of a month on an as-needed basis for in-depth policy discussions, and other dates upon proper notice. (RCW 42.30.080).

The Vancouver City Charter requires that Council meet “regularly” but not less often than twice each month. All Regular meetings will begin at 6:30 p.m., unless otherwise advertised, and will adjourn no later than 11 p.m. To continue past this time, a majority of the Council must concur.

In the event a City-recognized holiday occurs on Monday, the Council shall not meet. The City Manager’s Office will develop the next year’s annual Council meeting schedule by December 1 each year. The meeting calendar will be presented for Council approval at the first meeting in December.

The adopted annual schedule will be distributed to Council, the media, and all City departments, and will be placed on the City’s website before January 1 of each year. City Council may, at any time, add, cancel or change a meeting date and/or time by a majority vote of the Council and proper notification to the press. Special meetings not included in the adopted annual meeting schedule may be called in accordance with Section 9.0.

5.2 Quorum

At all meetings of the Council, a majority of the Council constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business, but a lesser number may adjourn from day to day or until the time of the next regular meeting and may compel the attendance of absent members in such manner and under such penalties as the City Council shall prescribe. (*Section 2.10 of Vancouver City Charter*)

5.3 Councilmember Absences from Meetings

Councilmembers shall inform the Mayor or City Manager, as well as Council Assistant, if they are unable to attend any Council meeting, or if they will be late to any meeting. A majority vote is required following the initial meeting roll call to excuse any Councilmember absence as outlined per Section 10.1.

5.4. Council Seating

The Presiding Officer and six elected Councilmembers sit on a dais facing the public with the Presiding Officer seated in the middle. The Councilmembers are seated based on seniority, with the most senior Councilmember seated on the Presiding Officer's left side and continuing in decreasing seniority away from the Presiding Officer. Maintaining order, exceptions may be made to balance seating on the dais. The order is continued at the far opposite side of the dais and progressing toward the Presiding Officer's right side, resulting in the least senior Councilmember seated on the Presiding Officer's right side.

5.5 Council Meeting Staffing

The City Manager shall attend all meetings of the Council. In the event of the City Manager's absence, the Deputy City Manager shall attend. At the discretion of the City Manager, the Deputy City Manager, department heads, and other staff members shall attend. The City Manager may make recommendations to the Council and shall have the right to take part in the discussions of the Council but shall have no vote.

5.6 Recording Proceedings

The City Clerk or delegate shall maintain action minutes of all Regular, Special Meetings and Workshops of the Council in accordance with statutory requirements and Section 2.11 of the Vancouver City Charter. Such minutes shall be open to public inspection and will also be posted on the City's website. City Council meeting minutes can be corrected if in error but shall not be revised without a majority affirmative vote of the Council at a regularly scheduled Council meeting.

5.7 Broadcasting

Regular meetings, including workshops, are cablecast live and replayed on CVTV-23 and CVTV-323, and streamed live at www.cvtv.org, to the extent consistent with this policy and whenever reasonable use of technology allows.

5.8 Media Representation at Council Meetings

All public meetings of the City Council and its advisory committees shall be open to the media, freely subject to recording by radio, television, electronic, and photographic services at any time, provided that such arrangements do not interfere with the orderly conduct of the meeting.

6.0 Order of Business

Regular meetings shall follow a general order of business to ensure consistency and enhance public expectations as to the general format of the agenda.

Modifications to the order of business and meeting format as provided for in Sections 6.1 may occur in the event of scheduling necessities or by Council action.

6.1. Regular Meetings

The order of the agenda for Regular Council meetings will be as follows:

- Pledge of Allegiance
- Call to Order and Roll
- Approval of Minutes
- Proclamations and Special Presentations
- Community Member Communication
- Consent Agenda
- Public Hearings
- New Business
- Unfinished Business
- Communications
 - From the Council
 - From the Mayor
 - From the City Manager
- Adjournment

6.1.1. Regular Meetings with a Community Communication Forum

The agenda for Regular Meetings with a Community Communication Forum will follow the same order as Regular Meetings except:

- CVTV Coverage will end following Communications from the City Manager, following which there will be no Final Action¹ by the Council; and
- Communications from the Community (the Monthly Community Forum) will be the last agenda item preceding adjournment.

7.0 Workshops

At the discretion of Council, Council workshops are held Mondays from 4 to 6 p.m. Occasionally, the Mayor and City Manager may extend workshops beyond this timeframe as needed. Workshop times will be published on the final agenda, and Councilmembers will be given as much advance notice as possible if a workshop is scheduled to fall outside this normal timeframe.

During these meetings, items needing in-depth discussion are introduced and reviewed. No formal action is taken at workshops. Formal action is defined as a collective positive or negative decision following an actual vote by a majority of the Council upon a resolution, order or ordinance.

¹ Once the Presiding Officer has ordered that CVTV end the television broadcast of a regular City Council meeting, no additional Final Action shall be taken. “Final Action” as used in this policy means a collective positive or negative decision, or an actual vote by a majority of the members of a governing body when sitting as a body or entity, upon a motion, proposal, resolution, order, or ordinance. (See also, RCW 42.30.020.)

Council will, on a regular basis, be provided with an on-going preview of upcoming workshops.

8.0 Executive Sessions

An Executive Session is a council meeting or portion of a council meeting that is closed except to the Council, City Manager and authorized staff members and/or consultants authorized by the City Manager. The public is restricted from attendance. Executive Sessions may be held during Regular meetings, Workshops or Special council meetings and will be announced by the Mayor. Before convening an Executive Session, the Mayor shall announce the purpose of the meeting and the anticipated time when the session will be concluded. Should the session require more time, a public announcement shall be made that the meeting is being extended and the duration of the extension. Executive Sessions shall be held in accordance with the provisions of the Washington State Open Public Meetings Act. Council Regular Meetings, and Workshops are “regular meetings” as that term is defined by RCW 42.30.075 and used in RCW 42.30.110(1).

9.0 Special Meetings

The city clerk shall call special public meetings of the City Council upon the approval of the Mayor or a majority of the Councilmembers. Any request shall state the subjects to be considered at such special meeting and no other subject shall there be acted upon. (Section 2.10 of the Vancouver City Charter)

Notice of every special meeting shall be given in writing personally, by fax or email to every Councilmember, to the City Manager, to the City Attorney, and to all local news media representatives who have on file with the city clerk a request for such notices. The notice shall be posted on the City’s website, prominently displayed at the main entrance to City Hall and the meeting site if the meeting is not being held at City Hall. The notice must be delivered or posted at least 24 hours before the meeting. The notice shall state the place and time of the meeting and the business to be conducted. The Council shall not make final disposition of any matter not included in the notice.

Councilmembers are active in their community and attend many meetings and events. The people of Washington have declared that all meetings of a public agency shall be open and public. When a quorum of the council is present at a meeting where action is taken, the meeting is subject to the Open Public Meetings Act. A “meeting” of the Council occurs “when a majority of its members gathers with the collective intent of transacting the governing body's business.”² “Action” is broadly defined as the transaction of the official business of an agency including “deliberations, discussions, considerations, reviews, [and] evaluations” and receipt of testimony.³ If Councilmembers plan to attend an event or meeting with the intent of transacting City business, they should notify the City Manager’s Office so that it can be determined if a quorum of the Council will be present. If a quorum will be present the City Manager’s Office will provide a notice of a special meeting of the

² Citizens All. for Prop. Rights Legal Fund v. San Juan County, 184 Wn.2d 428, 444, 359 P.3d 753, 761 (2015).

³ RCW 42.30.020

Council. In order to prepare and give notice of the meeting, Councilmembers need to notify the City Manager's Office at least one week before the meeting.

If a quorum of Council is present at an event or meeting without notice having been provided, Councilmembers shall "self-police" by either having members leave to avoid a quorum or by not sitting together and not discussing City business. In the absence of an agreement otherwise, the Councilmember(s) whose arrival triggered the quorum shall leave the event or meeting.

10.0 Council Meeting Protocol

10.1 Call to Order and Roll Call

The Presiding Officer shall call the meeting to order and request the Council Assistant call roll of Councilmember attendance. Lack of response by a Councilmember at the time of roll call will indicate the absence of that Councilmember. A majority vote is required to excuse any Councilmember absence. Councilmembers should provide advance notice of absences whenever possible, as provided for in Section 5.3.

10.2 Changes to Agenda Item Order

The Presiding Officer may, with the concurrence of the Councilmembers, take agenda items out of order or change the order of the agenda.

10.3 Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes shall be approved by a majority vote of the Council. Councilmembers who were absent from the meeting may either vote on approval of those minutes or may choose to abstain from voting.

10.4 Formal Proclamations and Special Presentations

A proclamation is an official announcement or recognition as defined and signed by the Mayor. The issuance of a proclamation at a Council meeting shall be at the discretion of the Mayor.

Proclamations will be briefly summarized by the Mayor and presented to the recipient(s). The recipient(s) will be allowed to make brief comments.

Special presentations include, but are not limited to, retirements, commendations and recognition by the Mayor and City Council. Audience applause may be permitted following proclamations and presentations at the discretion of the Presiding Officer.

10.5 Community Member Communications on Agenda Items

Members of the public are invited to speak for a total of approximately three minutes each about any item on that evening's Council Agenda that is not already scheduled for public

hearing or which otherwise allows for public testimony. Such public comment is taken at the beginning of the meeting under Community Member Communication and is subject to the provisions of Section 10.14. A total of ninety (90) minutes of public testimony (or less depending on the number of speakers) will be taken on the Agenda, unless the opportunity for public testimony is extended by majority vote of the Council.

Item numbers to be considered under Community Member Communications shall be indicated on the agenda. Testimony taken under Community Member Communications shall follow protocol set forth in Section 10.14.

10.6 Consent Agenda

Items appearing on the Consent Agenda are routine items voted on by a single motion. Typical items include payment of bills, awarding contracts, adoption of resolutions that do not require a public hearing, and first reading of ordinances. Any Councilmember may remove any item from the Consent Agenda for discussion and separate action. Councilmembers should indicate which items they wish to pull from the Consent Agenda prior to the Council's vote on the full Consent Agenda.

10.7 Ordinances for First Reading

First readings of ordinances shall follow the provisions provided for in the City of Vancouver Charter, Section 2.13. Upon passage at first reading, City Council sets a date for second reading and public hearing. The Presiding Officer shall read the title of any ordinance passed on first reading into the record.

10.8 Public Hearings

Public hearing items are those specific items being considered by Council on which community members are invited to present their views. Certain item types may be required by law to be scheduled as a public hearing. The Presiding Officer will state the public hearing procedures before each public hearing. Except as otherwise required by law, or otherwise announced by the Presiding Officer, a total of ninety (90) minutes of public testimony (or less depending on the number of speakers) will be taken on the Public Hearings. Provided, that the opportunity for public testimony on Public Hearings may be extended by majority vote of the Council.

All public hearings are advertised in The Columbian at least three days in advance, or as required by law, and information is posted on the City's website. In an emergency, most public hearings can be called within 24 hours with proper media notification, unless longer notice is required by law.

Public testimony on public hearing items is subject to the provisions of Section 10.14.

10.9 Ordinances for Second Reading and Public Hearing

Community members are invited to present their views on proposed ordinances before a final vote by Council. All public hearings on proposed ordinances are advertised in accordance with Section 10.8.

The Presiding Officer shall read into the record the title of any ordinance appearing for second reading at the time of its consideration on the agenda. Second readings of ordinances shall follow the provisions provided for in the City of Vancouver Charter, Sections 2.14 and 2.15.

10.10 Council and City Manager Communications

City Councilmembers, Mayor and the City Manager make special announcements or provide updates on current issues or items of Council interest.

Councilmembers, the Mayor and the City Manager may also present new proposals and seek feedback on such at this time.

10.11 Community Member Forum

A Community Member Forum will generally be conducted at the last Regular Meeting of each month. Each forum will be conducted as either a “Regular Meeting with a Community Communication Forum” (Section 6.1.1 and Section 10.11.1) or as a “Quarterly Community Forum” (Section 10.11.2).

10.11.1 Regular Meeting with a Community Forum

Each Regular Meeting with a Community Forum will be audio recorded by the Council Assistant and conducted in a manner such that it is fully compliant with Washington’s Open Public Meetings Act (RCW 42.30), but in general, will not be televised. At each monthly community forum, members of the public are invited to speak for a total of approximately three minutes each on any lawful topic related to City business. Such public comment is subject to the restrictions, limitations, and provisions of Section 10.14. Advance registration is required for remote testimony as specified in Section 10.14. A total of sixty (60) minutes of public testimony (or less depending on the number of speakers) will be taken at the monthly community forum, unless the opportunity for public testimony is extended by majority vote of the Council. Community member forum events shall also be subject to the provisions of Section 5.1 requiring adjournment by 11 p.m. unless extended by majority vote of the City Council.

10.11.2 Quarterly Community Forum

A Quarterly Community Member Forum will be held four times per year, approximately coinciding with the last Regular meeting in each quarter of the year and at additional meetings as noticed and announced. The format of these Community Member Forums, and at additional meetings as noticed and announced, may vary from quarter to quarter and will be conducted in accordance with Ground Rules announced in advance of the meeting notice and/or by the Presiding Officer at the beginning of the meeting.

10.12 New Business

Matters that do not appear on the agenda may be raised as new business.

10.13 Unfinished Business

Council discusses ongoing issues or items continued from earlier meetings.

10.14 Public Testimony and Conduct

10.14.1 Designation as Limited Public Forum.

Although the City Council desires to allow the opportunity for public comment, the business of the City must proceed in an orderly, timely manner. Council meetings are considered a 'limited public forum' which means the time, place and manner of speech can be regulated.

10.14.2 Registration and Submission of Written Materials.

Speakers who wish to testify before the City Council are required to complete a "Testimony Registration Form" which requests the speaker's name, address, agency or group represented, the item the speaker wishes to testify on, and their position on the subject. Distinct cards will be used to identify whether community members wish to offer testimony on items that appear on the agenda or, if applicable, as a part of a community forum. Advance registration is required.

Those who wish to testify in-person, must submit a written Testimony Registration Card to the City Council Assistant by the beginning of the meeting or at such later time as the Presiding Officer may permit.

Community members who wish to submit written testimony, or testify through the City's remote meeting platform, must register online by 12:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Copies of written testimony shall be distributed to the City Council in advance of the meeting. Council prefers lengthy written testimony to be submitted at least a week prior, so Council has a chance to fairly consider the comments.

10.14.3 Time, place, and manner of permitted comments.

Community members may present verbal comments when recognized by the Presiding officer and invited to speak. Comments shall only be made from one of the podium microphones, or via online testimony. No comments shall be made from any other location, and anyone making "out of order" comments or noises shall be subject to removal from the meeting pursuant to Section 10.14.5.

When recognized, speakers will be invited by the Presiding Officer to step up to the place designated for testimony, give their name and place of residence for the record, and limit remarks to approximately three minutes. All remarks will be addressed to the Council as a whole. Public comments are opportunities for speakers to briefly address the entire Council, and those speaking are to address members of Council and not the audience.

10.14.4 Prohibited Conduct.

Members of the audience are prohibited from disrupting, disturbing, delaying or impeding the orderly conduct of a meeting of the Vancouver City Council or any of its boards, commissions or work groups. Therefore, each person who addresses the Council, or its boards, commissions, or work groups, shall do so in an orderly manner, upon recognition by the Presiding Officer, and refrain from disorderly words or conduct.

The term “disorderly words or conduct” as used in this City Council Policy means that those addressing the City Council shall not, by words or action, engage in unlawful conduct or make any threatening, harassing, slanderous, profane, or prohibited political⁴ remarks to any member of the Council, staff or the general public. Any person who violates this policy while addressing the Council, or disrupts or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of any Council meeting, may be requested to leave the meeting and may have their right to provide verbal comment suspended pursuant to Section 10.14.5.

10.14.5 Enforcement and Suspension of Verbal Comment Rights.

The Presiding Officer, City Manager, or City Manager’s designee has the authority to enforce the Rules of the City Council and preserve order at all meetings of the Council, its boards, commissions, committees, or work groups, and to cause the removal of any person from any meeting for disorderly words or conduct as described herein, or for otherwise disrupting, disturbing, delaying or impeding the orderly conduct of a Council meeting. The Presiding Officer and City Manager may command assistance of any peace officer of the City to enforce all lawful orders to restore order at any meeting.

⁴ Pursuant to RCW 42.17A.555, the City is prohibited from allowing testimony in support or opposition to any ballot proposition except as expressly allowed by law. The City is also prohibited from allowing testimony in support of any person’s campaign for an elective office.

Conduct in any form that interferes with Council's ability to timely conduct the business of the City will not be allowed. If a situation arises where a speaker exceeds the three minutes (unless permitted to continue by the Presiding Officer), is speaking on matters other than City business, or is otherwise disruptive in a manner that interferes with the ability of the Council to conduct the business of the City, the City Clerk, with permission of the Mayor, will turn off the microphone, and the Mayor will ask the speaker to please stop talking and step away from the podium. In the case of remote meetings, the speaker will be muted.

If the speaker continues after the first request, the Mayor will ask the speaker once again to stop talking, and will warn the speaker that failure to stop will result in a suspension of their privilege to speak at public comment for 90 days. If the speaker continues, the Mayor will gavel in a five-minute recess and the speaker who caused the disruption shall be issued a written notice of 90-day suspension of the right to provide verbal comment at any Open Public Meeting of the Vancouver City Council its boards, committees, commissions, or work groups. In the event the same speaker disrupts a second public meeting of the City of Vancouver within 1-year of their first notice of suspension, they shall be issued a 180-day suspension of the right to provide verbal comment.

Upon return from recess, public comment will start again with a caution from the Mayor that if any other speaker refuses to stop talking after being asked to do so after the three minutes or is otherwise disruptive, the remainder of the public comment for the night will be terminated.

10.15 Council Discussion

All Council discussion shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised. The City Attorney is the Parliamentarian. Every Councilmember shall be provided with a copy of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised when first joining the Council.

10.16 Voting

10.16.1 Roll Call Votes

The Council Assistant will take a roll call vote, if requested by the Presiding Officer, a Councilmember, or as required by law. The roll call vote shall be by seniority with the least senior member voting first.

10.16.2 Tie Vote

The passage of a Motion, Resolution or Ordinance is lost by a tie vote, provided that the question may be brought forward again at the request of any member at the same meeting or at the next meeting when any members who were absent or disqualified at the time of the tie vote are present.

10.16.3 Votes on Questions

Each member present shall vote on all questions put to the City Council except on matters on which he or she has been disqualified for a conflict of interest or under the Appearance of Fairness Doctrine. Such a member shall disqualify himself or herself prior to any discussion of the matter. If abstaining, the Councilmember must state the reasons for abstaining, identifying one or more of the following: (1) an excused absence from the prior council meeting and/or (2) a conflict of interest and/or (3) an Appearance of Fairness issue. See Policy 100-39. A Councilmember, who abstains but fails to identify the absence, conflict of interest and/or Appearance of Fairness issue, will be considered to have voted for the majority's position in respect to questions before the council and have their vote so recorded. When disqualification of a member or members results, or would result, in the inability of the Council to act on a matter on which it is required by law to take action, any member who is absent or who is disqualified under the Appearance of Fairness Doctrine may subsequently participate, provided such member first shall have reviewed all materials and listened to all tapes of the proceedings in which the member did not participate.

10.17 Adjournment

There being no further business, the Presiding Officer adjourns the meeting.

11.0 Agenda Preparation

11.1 General Information

The City Manager's office will prepare an agenda for each Council meeting specifying the time and place of the meeting and set forth a brief general description of each item to be considered by the Council. The agenda is subject to approval by the Mayor and the City Manager.

11.2 Placing Item on the Agenda

An item may be placed on a Council meeting agenda by any of the following methods:

- (1) By any two (2) or more Councilmembers,
- (2) By the City Manager, or
- (3) By the Mayor.

11.3 Adding an Item to a Published Agenda

An item may be added to a Regular meeting agenda, per Section 11.2, after the agenda is closed and the notice published if an amended agenda is published, provided to the Mayor and City Councilmembers and posted on the City's website prior to the subject meeting date.

An item may be added to a Regular meeting agenda on the subject Council meeting date as a walk-on item if the Councilmember or City Manager requesting the addition of the item explains the necessity and receives a majority vote of the Council to amend the agenda at the public meeting.

11.4 Agenda Finalization Schedule

Agenda materials will be available at City Hall and on the City's website for City staff, the media and public by Wednesday prior to the meeting. Agenda materials will be available for Councilmembers by Tuesday prior to the meeting.