

# **Guidelines for Council Committee Meetings**

Approved by Council 2/23/1996  
Revised and approved by Council 12/23/2005

**Guidelines:** *These Guidelines are designed to ensure clear, fair and open debate, leading to sound decision making.*

**Committee Meetings:** *Committee meetings provide the opportunity for Council Members to build their understanding of issues, resolve conflicts, develop compromises, identify information gaps and give direction to staff if items need additional work before full Council consideration.*

## **Meeting Procedures**

### **Preparation**

1. Department staff develops ideas with direction from elected officials or department heads.
2. Direction from elected officials to departments must be consistent with City Goals and Department Work Plans. If the direction is in conflict with Department Work Plans, the Council must agree to amend the Work Plan.
3. Department staff prepares a Request for Council Action and submits it to the Council Committee Coordinators by the designated deadlines.
4. Deadlines may be waved only by the committee chair.

### **Agendas**

1. Agendas are set by the committee chair, with assistance from department staff and the Committee Coordinator.
2. Agendas are divided into Consent, Discussion, Public Hearings and Receive and File items.
3. Late items and walk-on's require approval by the chair.
4. Agendas are posted on the city Web site before the committee meeting.

### **Meetings**

1. Committee meetings provide time for city staff and the public to address issues on the agenda.
2. City staff and the public may speak at committee meetings at the discretion of the chair.
3. The chair may limit the time and number of speeches for committee meetings and Public Hearings.
4. The committee process is directed by the chair instead of following formal Roberts Rules of Order because discussion and debate is less formal than full Council meetings.
5. Council Members who are not committee members may speak to issues on the agenda.

### **Procedures**

1. State motions clearly before beginning discussion.
2. Put directions to staff in the form of a motion to be voted on by the committee.
3. Be seated in order to vote.
4. State clearly to the chair if you wish to be recorded as voting "no" or "not voting" on an action at the time of the vote. Unless there is a specific request to have your vote individually identified, all actions are recorded as "The motion passed on a voice vote" and no ayes or nays are listed.

# Roles and Responsibilities

## Committee Chair

### General Procedures

1. Ensure all parties receive a fair hearing by providing basic due process. Consult with the City Attorney when procedural issues arise.
2. Begin the meeting on time. Make sure the Committee Coordinator is ready to record actions. State the name of the Committee meeting taking place and date, and introduce the Committee chair and other members present.
3. Set and conduct Public Hearings and other meetings.
4. Adhere to preset or time-certain items and published times for Public Hearings.
5. Coordinate schedule changes with Committee Coordinators and Council Members.
6. Make rulings on committee process. If the ruling is challenged by a committee member, the chair may ask the City Attorney for an opinion. The Attorney may reference the Council Rules or Robert's Rules of Order. If the challenge remains, the committee may vote to override the chair.
7. Consider reports only in the committees to which they have been addressed or formally referred.

### Speaker Management

1. Present opening statement explaining the purpose, process, rules of conduct if necessary to prepare the public for the discussion and testimony.
2. Explain agenda to public: consent items, time-certain items.
3. The chair may deviate from the written agenda when city staff or the members of the public are waiting to speak.
4. Ask each speaker to give his or her name, address and association or department.
5. Keep speakers to the point. Explain time limits and recommend that only new information be presented.
6. Thank or acknowledge and then excuse speaker.

### Committee Actions

1. Clarify directions to staff from individual committee members. Put the request in a formal motion which states deadlines and the staff person responsible for acting on the direction. "Council Member X moves to give the following direction to staff..." This may be amended by other Council Members. Take a voice vote to record the committee's position.
2. Repeat motions before voting, or when in doubt, ask the Committee Coordinator to read the motion. If the motion is unclear, ask the maker of the motion for clarification.
3. Most votes are voice votes. The chair may request a roll call vote by the Committee Coordinator. The Committee Coordinator announces the vote totals and the chair declares the result.
4. Take separate votes on each motion, especially when there are numerous motions.
5. State the results of the vote: "That item is approved."
6. Identify the next steps. State if the action is to be referred or is already in another committee. If the item is postponed, state the date of the next meeting at which it will be discussed.
7. Ensure all actions are clear to the Committee Coordinator before moving on to the next item.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Committee Members**

1. Prepare for meetings. Read committee packets in advance of the meeting. Contact city staff if there are questions or issues about any information in the packets.
2. Inform the chair in advance, if possible, if specific information is needed from staff or if changes to reports are anticipated.
3. Arrive on time. Inform the chair if you will be absent or late.
4. Address the chair and speak to the issue or to the motion before the committee.
5. Confine debate to the merits of the question.
6. Avoid personal attacks.
7. Respectfully question staff and public to ensure clarity on issues.
8. Avoid side conversations with staff or other committee members during the meeting.
9. Avoid temporary absences from committee meetings so the committee does not spend time repeating background information or discussions.
10. Prepare copies for council members and the public of any materials introduced at the committee meeting.

### **City Staff**

1. Meet committee deadlines so information is available in committee packets and Council Members can study issues in advance of the meeting.
2. Provide written and electronic staff reports for all committee actions including Ordinances and Resolutions.
3. Present clear and complete options and recommendations to the committee. State clearly what actions are needed from the committee.
4. When necessary, discuss complex issues with Council Members in advance of the meeting or request a special study session.
5. Direct statements and questions to the chair. Ask for clarification when in doubt about Council directions or intent.
6. Limit verbal updates and amendments to what is absolutely necessary.
7. Prepare copies for council members and the public of any materials introduced at the committee meeting.

### **Council Committee Coordinators**

1. Advise the chair on committee process.
2. Prepare notices in accordance with the Open Meeting Law.
3. Prepare and distribute agendas.
4. Organize and distribute committee-related documents.
5. Produce the legal record of committee actions.
6. Accurately summarize testimony when the meetings are not tape recorded.
7. Record names and addresses of all persons who participate.
8. Provide information to the public regarding committee actions. Post information on the City's Web site.
9. Write directions to staff, addressed to the department head.