

HOW TO CONDUCT A CITY COUNCIL MEETING



BASED ON ROBERTS' RULES OF ORDER

MUNICIPAL TECHNICAL ADVISORY SERVICE

● OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

in cooperation with the Tennessee Municipal League

ORDER OF BUSINESS

- 1 Mayor: *The Council will come to order.* (Mayor determines if there is a quorum present. Recorder enters in the minutes the names of those present.)



- 2 The Recorder will read the minutes of the last meeting. Minutes are read. *Are there any corrections to the minutes?* Corrections are suggested without motion or vote. *If there are no (further) corrections the minutes stand approved as read (as corrected).*

- 3 The next order of business is the presentation of petitions, memorials, and remonstrances. Usually the recorder has such matters ready to present. If there is a delegation of citizens, the mayor should invite them to present any matters the citizens wish to present to the council.



- 4 We will have the report of the . . . Officers (e.g., financial report by Recorder) Standing Committees, Special Committees. Motion is made to adopt the financial report. If committee report contains a recommendation, reporting member (usually chairman of the committee) moves that recommendation be adopted. Otherwise, report is filed without action.

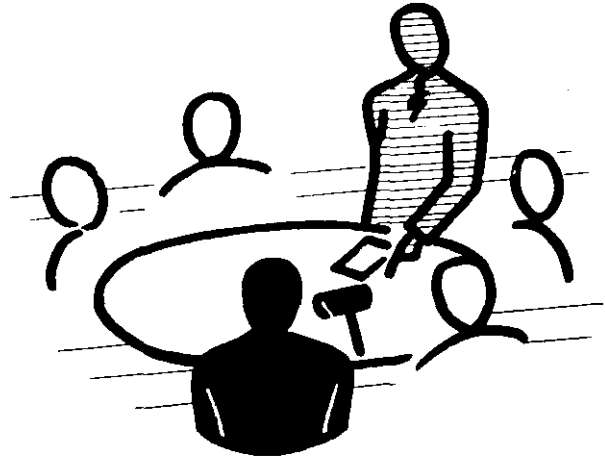
- 5 Is there any unfinished business? (Second and third reading of ordinances.) Action is completed on any business not settled when last meeting was adjourned. (See Handling Main Motions.)

- 6 After unfinished business . . . *Is there any new business?* (Ordinances [first reading] regulations, resolutions.)

Order of business.

- Any council member may introduce an ordinance, resolution, or regulation.
- Ordinances on first reading are usually read by caption only, with introducer explaining contents.
- Ordinances on second reading are usually read by caption only. (Charter or by-laws of some municipalities provide that certain ordinances may not be amended after second reading.)
- Ordinances on third reading should be read in full. Any changes or amendments are offered at this time.

By charter some cities are not required to pass ordinances on three readings. These steps are not applicable in such instances. Each new ordinance, regulation, or resolution is read, discussed, adopted, tabled, referred to a committee or otherwise disposed of before the next is proposed.

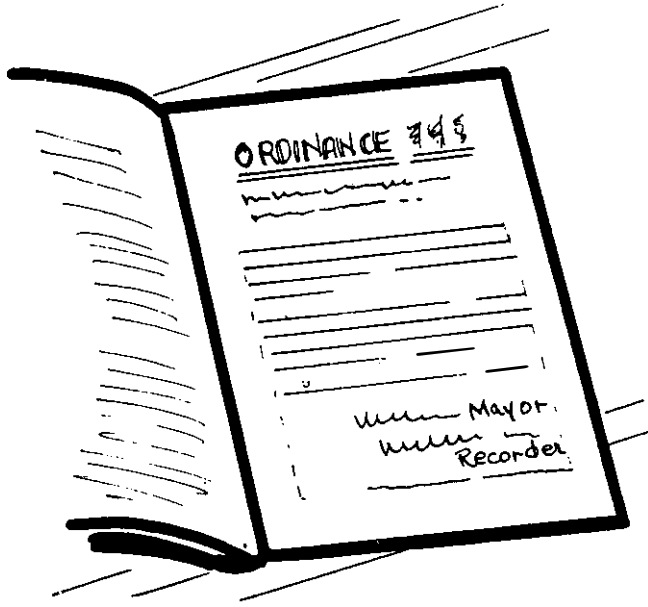


- 7 After business is completed . . . *Are there any announcements?*



- 8 If there is no further business, the meeting will stand adjourned. If no business is presented . . . *The meeting is adjourned.* If council wishes to adjourn meeting before all business is completed, meeting must be adjourned by motion.

KEEPING COUNCIL MINUTES



Record what is done, not what is said. Keep notes together in a special notebook.

Organize the notes into clear, concise statements and record in permanent minute book to be read at next meeting. Record each motion in a separate paragraph.

Minutes should be read and approved by Council at the next regular or adjourned meeting. Ordinances should be kept in an ordinance book and resolutions in a resolution book. Both ordinances and resolutions should be numbered consecutively. If separate books are kept for ordinances and resolutions, the minutes need show only the caption and a space left for a number until passed on final reading, when a number will be assigned. The minutes should show the book and page number where the ordinance is recorded.

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RULES FOR HANDLING MOTIONS

Privileged Motions

To call for orders of the day (to keep meeting to program or order of business) ¹	Has precedence over above motions	No	No	No	No vote required ¹	No
Questions of privilege (to bring up an urgent matter—concerning noise, discomfort, etc.)	Has precedence over above motions	No	No	No	Majority	No
To take a recess	Has precedence over above motions	Yes	Yes, if no motion is pending	Yes	Majority	No
To adjourn	Has precedence over above motions	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
To set next meeting time	Has precedence over above motions	Yes	Yes, if no motion is pending	As to time and place	Majority	Yes

Unclassified Motions

To make motion from table (to bring up tabled motion for consideration) ⁵	Cannot be made if any other motion is pending	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
To reconsider (to bring up discussion and obtain vote on previously decided motion) ⁶		Yes	Yes, when motion is debatable	No	Majority	No
To rescind (repeal decision on a motion) ⁷		Yes	Yes, when motion is debatable	No	Majority or 2/3	Yes

¹Rules for Handling Motions. If there is a tie vote of the council the mayor votes in order to break the tie. (This is the usual procedure. Some charters permit mayor to vote on all questions; some on no questions.) If the mayor is not permitted to vote, or if permitted to vote in all cases, and his vote results in a tie, the motion is lost. Majority vote is sufficient unless by charter certain items require more than a majority.

⁵The mover may request to withdraw or modify his motion without consent of anyone before the motion has been put to council for consideration. When motion is before the council and if there is no objection from anyone in the council the mayor announces that the motion is withdrawn or modified. If anyone objects, the request is put to a vote.

⁷A member may interrupt the speaker who has the floor to rise

to a point of order or appeal, call for orders of the day, or raise a question of privilege.

⁶Orders of the day may be changed by a motion to suspend the rules (See "Incidental Motions").

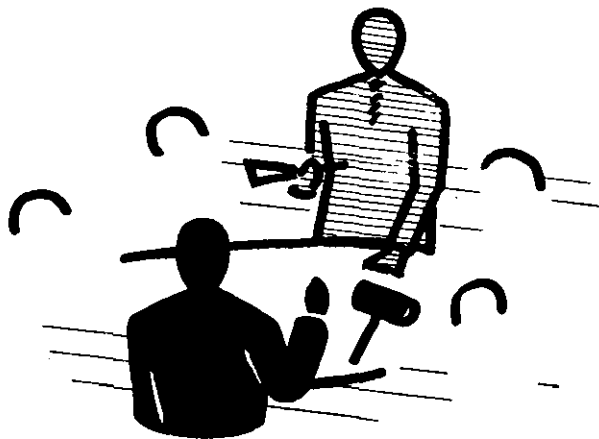
⁶Motion can be taken from the table during the meeting when it was tabled or at the next meeting.

⁶Motion to reconsider may be made only by those who voted on the prevailing side. A motion to reconsider must be made during the meeting when it was decided, or on the next succeeding day if the meeting is carried over.

⁷It is impossible to rescind any action that has been taken as a result of a motion, but the unexecuted part may be rescinded. Notice must be given one meeting before the vote is taken, or if voted on immediately, a 2/3 vote to rescind is necessary.

HANDLING THE MOTIONS

- 1 Councilman addresses the chair. *Mr. Mayor.*

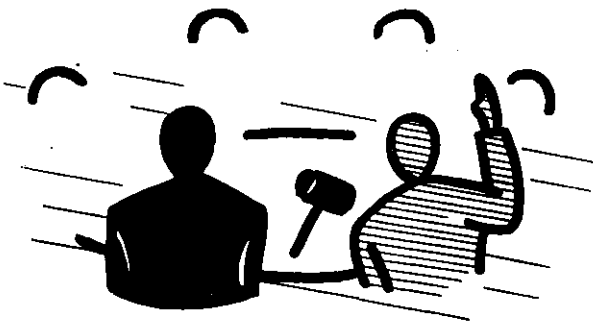


- 2 Mayor recognizes speaker: *Councilman _____.*



- 3 Councilman: *I move the adoption of this ordinance on first reading.*

- 4 Another Councilman: *I second the motion.*



- 5 Mayor: *The motion has been made by (name of mover) and seconded that . . . Is there any discussion?* Discussion must be addressed to the mayor. Motion may be changed by amendment. If the Council does not wish to take final action on the motion, they may dispose of it in some other way. (See Rules for Handling Motions.)

- 6 *Does any person in the audience wish to be heard on this subject?* (Interested persons come forward at this time.)



- 7 When discussion stops . . . *If there is no further discussion* (silence is taken as consent) . . . *All in favor please say "Aye" (yes). All opposed, please say "No."* If there are any dissenting votes, the mayor asks for a roll call. (Recorder calls roll and records the vote.)



- 8 *The Ayes (or Noes) have it. The motion is carried (or is defeated).* If a question is introduced which consists of two or more independent propositions, a member may move that the question be divided into more than one proposition. Thus one or more of the propositions may be adopted, others rejected.



AMENDMENTS TO CHANGE MOTIONS

1 After a main motion has been made and seconded, a councilman may say: *I move to amend the ordinance by. . .* Inserting or adding a word, phrase or sentence. Striking out a word, phrase or sentence. Striking out and inserting a word or phrase or substituting a sentence or paragraph.



2 Another councilman: *I second the motion to amend.*

3 Mayor: *It has been proposed to amend Ordinance— . . . to read as follows. . .* Mayor states the main motion and the amendment, so the group will understand how the amendment changes the motion. Amendment is handled in the same way as a main motion, with . . .

4 Discussion: *Is there any discussion?*

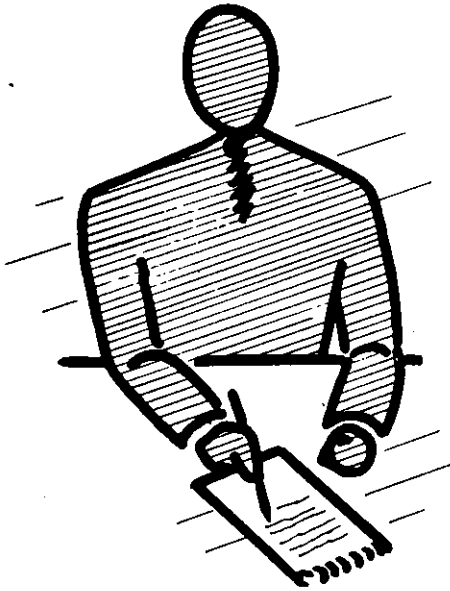
5 Question: *If there is no further discussion, the amendment is . . .*

6 Vote: *All in favor of the amendment . . .* Mayor announces the outcome: *The amendment is carried (or defeated).* The motion now before the house is . . . (Motion—plus the amendment, if carried.)

RULES FOR HANDLING MOTIONS

Types of Motions	Order of Handling	Must Be Seconded	Can Be Discussed	Can Be Amended	Vote Required	Vote Can Be Reconsidered
Main Motion To present a proposal to assembly	Cannot be made if any other motion is pending	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
Subsidiary Motions- To postpone indefinitely action on a motion	Has precedence over above motion	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Affirmative vote only
To amend (improve) a main motion	Has precedence over above motions	Yes	Yes, when motion is debatable	Yes, but only once	Majority	Yes
To refer motion to committee (or special consideration)	Has precedence over above motions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
To postpone definitely (to certain time) action on a motion	Has precedence over above motions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
To limit discussion to a certain time	Has precedence over above motions	Yes	No	Yes	2/3	Yes
To call for vote (to end discussion at once and vote)	Has precedence over above motions	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
To table motion (to lay it aside until later)	Has precedence over above motions	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Incidental Motions To suspend a rule temporarily (e.g. to change order of business)	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No
To withdraw or modify a motion (to prevent vote or inclusion in minutes)*		No	No	No	Majority	Negative vote only
To rise to a point of order (to enforce rules or program)*		No	No	No	No vote, chairman rules	No
To appeal from decision of the mayor (must be made immediately)	These motions have precedence over motion to which they pertain	Yes	Yes, when motion is debatable	No	Majority	Yes

THE RECORDER'S JOB



- 1 Keeps an accurate record of each meeting, including in the minutes:

Kind of meeting (regular, special or adjourned).
Date, hour and place of meeting.

Name and title of officer presiding and presence of quorum.

Approval of previous minutes.

Record of reports.

Record of each main motion (unless withdrawn) with name of person who made it.

Record of points of order and appeals.

Record of all other motions (unless withdrawn).

Record of roll calls.

Time of adjournment.

Signature of Recorder and Mayor.

- 2 Records the presence and absence of council members.
- 3 Keeps copy of charter, with amendments properly entered.
- 4 Keeps a record of all committees.
- 5 Provides list of pending and potential business for mayor before meeting.
- 6 Notifies councilmen of meetings (e.g., if a special meeting is called).

THE MAYOR'S DUTIES



- 1 Calls the meeting to order.
- 2 Keeps meeting to its order of business.
- 3 Handles discussion in an orderly way:
 - Gives every councilman who wishes it a chance to speak.
 - Permits audience participation at appropriate times.
 - Tactfully keeps all speakers to rules of order, and to the question.
 - Should give pro and con speakers alternating opportunities to speak.
- 4 Does not enter into discussion, except to explain matters which he is sponsoring.
- 5 States each motion before it is discussed, and before it is voted upon. May suggest motions (e.g. for adjournment) but not make them.
- 6 Puts motions to vote and announces outcome. May vote in case of a tie (unless prohibited by charter).
- 7 Should be familiar enough with parliamentary law to inform council on proper procedure.
- 8 May appoint committees when authorized to do so.

FINAL FORM OF MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING

Should be typewritten or legibly written in permanent ink.

Should be recorded with a wide margin for corrections.

Should not be defaced. (Corrections should be made by bracketing the erroneous portions and stating correctly in the wide margin.)

Should be kept in book form. If in longhand, a bound book should be used, if typewritten, a looseleaf locking minutebook. If the latter is used, each page should be numbered.

Minutes, when approved, should be signed by Recorder and by the Mayor.