Technical Bulletins: How to Conduct a City Council Meeting Based on Roberts' Rules of Order

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ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Mayor: The council will come to order. (The mayor determines if there is a quorum present. The recorder enters in the minutes the names of those present.)

2. The recorder will read the minutes of the last meeting. The minutes are read. Are there any corrections to the minutes? Corrections are suggested without a 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 the group to present any matters it wishes to the council.

4. We will have the report of the...officers (such as a financial report by the recorder), standing committees, and special committees. A motion is made to adopt the financial report. If the committee report contains a recommendation, the reporting member (usually the chairman of the committee) moves that the recommendation be adopted. Otherwise, the 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 the unfinished business...Is there any new business (ordinances on first reading, regulations, resolutions)?
   a. Any councilmember may introduce an ordinance, resolution, or regulation.
   b. Ordinances on first reading are usually read by caption only, with the introducer explaining the contents.
   c. Ordinances on second reading usually are read by caption only. (Charters or by-laws of some municipalities prohibit the amendment of certain ordinances after second reading.)
   d. 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 one is proposed.

7. After all the business is completed...Are there any announcements?

8. If there is nothing further, the meeting will stand adjourned. If no business is presented...The meeting is adjourned. If the council wishes to adjourn the meeting before all business is completed, the meeting must be adjourned by motion.
HOW TO CONDUCT A CITY COUNCIL MEETING
BASED ON ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER

HANDLING THE MOTIONS
1. Councilmember addresses the chair.
   Mr./Madam Mayor.
2. Mayor recognizes speaker:
   Councilmember __________________.
3. Councilmember: I move the adoption of this
   ordinance on first reading.
4. Another councilmember: I second the motion.
5. Mayor: The motion has been made by
   ________________ 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, it may
   dispose of the motion in some other way.¹
6. Does any person in the audience wish to be
   heard on this subject? (Interested persons
   come forward.)
7. When the discussion ends...If there is no
   more discussion (silence is consent), all in
   favor, please say “aye.” All opposed, “no.” With
   dissenting votes, the mayor requests roll
   call. The recorder calls the roll and records
   the vote.
8. The “ayes” (or “nos”) have it. The motion
   is carried (or defeated). If a question is
   introduced that 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 is made and
   seconded, a councilmember may say:
   I move to amend the ordinance by...and
   striking out, inserting, or substituting
   a word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph.
2. Another member: I second the motion
   to amend.
3. Mayor: It has been proposed to amend
   Ordinance __________ to read as follows...
   The mayor states the main motion and
   amendment so it is understood how the
   amendment changes in the motion. The
   amendment changes the motion. The
   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...The
   mayor announces the outcome: The
   amendment is carried (or defeated). The
   motion now before the house is...(the motion
   plus the amendment, if carried).

KEEPING COUNCIL MINUTES
Record what is done, not what is said. Keep
the notes together in a special notebook.

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

¹If there is a tie vote of council, the mayor votes to break the tie. (This is the usual procedure. Some charters permit
the mayor to vote on all questions; some on no questions.) If the mayor isn’t permitted to vote, or if permitted to
vote in all cases and his/her vote results in a tie, the motion is lost. A majority vote is sufficient unless, by charter,
certain items require more than a majority.
HOW TO CONDUCT A CITY COUNCIL MEETING
BASED ON ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER

The minutes should be read and approved by the 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 a caption and space left for the number assigned when passed on final reading. Minutes should show book and page number where the ordinance/resolution is recorded.

4. The recorder keeps a record of all committees.
5. The recorder provides to the mayor before each meeting a list of pending and potential business.
6. The recorder notifies the councilmembers that special meetings are called.

THE MAYOR’S DUTIES
1. The mayor calls the meeting to order.
2. The mayor keeps the meeting to its order of business.
3. The mayor handles the discussion in an orderly way by:
   • giving councilmembers who wish a chance to speak;
   • permitting audience participation at the appropriate times;
   • tactfully keeping all speakers to the rules of order, and to the question; and
   • trying to give pro and con speakers alternating chances to speak.
4. The mayor does not enter into discussion, except to explain matters that he/she is sponsoring.
5. The mayor clearly states each motion before it is discussed, and before it is voted upon. The mayor may suggest motions (such as for adjournment), but not make them.
6. The mayor puts motions to a vote and announces the outcome. He or she may vote in case of a tie (unless prohibited by charter).
7. The mayor informs the council of parliamentary procedure.
8. The mayor appoints committees when he/she is authorized to do so.
FINAL FORM OF MINUTES
OF COUNCIL MEETING

The final council minutes:

- should be typewritten or written legibly in permanent ink;
- should have a wide margin for corrections;
- should not be defaced. Corrections should be made by bracketing the erroneous portions and stating corrections in the wide margin;
- should be kept in book form. If in longhand, a bound book should be used; if typewritten, use a loose-leaf, lock minute book. If using the latter, number each page; and
- should be signed, when approved, by the recorder and mayor.
# Rules for Handling Motions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Motion</th>
<th>Order of Handling</th>
<th>Can Be Amended</th>
<th>Can Be Discussed</th>
<th>Vote Required</th>
<th>Can Be Vote</th>
<th>Must Be Seconded</th>
<th>Vote Can Be</th>
<th>Can Be Considered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main Motion</strong></td>
<td>To present a proposal to assembly</td>
<td>Cannot be made if any other motion is pending</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To postpone indefinitely action on a motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To amend (improve) a main motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To postpone definitely (to a certain time) action on a motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To call for a vote (to end discussion at once and vote)</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To table a motion (to lay it aside until later)</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subsidiary Motions</strong></td>
<td>To postpone indefinitely action on a motion</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To amend (improve) a main motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To refer a motion to committee (for special consideration)</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To table a motion (to lay it aside until later)</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incidental Motions</strong></td>
<td>To suspend a rule temporarily (e.g., to change the order of business)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To interrupt the discussion at once and vote</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To call for orders of the day (to keep the meeting to the program or the order of business)</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To set next meeting time</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes**</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Privileged Motions</strong></td>
<td>To make a motion from the table (to bring up a tabled motion)</td>
<td>Cannot be made if any other motion is pending</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reconsider (to bring up discussion and obtain a vote on a previously decided motion)</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To appeal from the decision of the mayor (must be made immediately)</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To rescind a decision on a motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

2. A member may interrupt the speaker who has the floor to raise a point of order, to call for orders of the day, or to raise a question of privilege.

3. Orders of the day may be changed by a motion to suspend the rules (see Incidental Motions).

4. If no motion is pending, a two-thirds vote to rescind is necessary.

5. A motion to reconsider may be made by those who voted on the prevailing side, but the reconsidered part may be rescinded. Notice must be given one meeting before the vote is taken. If voted on immediately, no motion is rescind.
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