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

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*Municipal Technical Advisory Service*

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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.
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.

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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

July 16, 2008

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.

THE RECORDER’S JOB
1. The recorder keeps an accurate record of each meeting, including in the minutes:
   - The kind of meeting (regular, special, or adjourned);
   - The date, hour, and place of meeting;
   - The name and title of officer presiding and the presence of quorum;
   - Approval of the previous minutes;
   - A record of reports;
   - A record of each main motion (unless it is withdrawn) with the name of person who made the motion;
   - A record of points of order and appeals;
   - A record of all the other motions (unless withdrawn);
   - A record of roll calls;
   - The time of adjournment;
   - Signatures of the recorder and mayor.
2. The recorder records the presence and absence of councilmembers.
3. The recorder keeps a copy of the charter, with amendments properly entered.
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.
HOW TO CONDUCT A CITY COUNCIL MEETING
BASED ON ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER

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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Motions</th>
<th>Order of Handling</th>
<th>Can Be Amended</th>
<th>Can Be Discussed</th>
<th>Vote Required</th>
<th>Vote Can Be Reconsidered</th>
<th>Can Be Seconded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MAIN MOTION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To present a proposal to assemble</td>
<td>Can be made if any other motion is pending</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To postpose indefinitely action on a motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To amend (improve) a main motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To postpose definitely (to a certain time) action on a motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To limit the discussion to a certain time</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To call for a vote (to end discussion at once and vote)</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To table a motion (to lay it aside until later)</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUBSIDIARY MOTIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To postpone indefinitely action on a motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To amend (improve) a main motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To refer a motion to committee (for special consideration)</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To call for a vote (to end discussion at once and vote)</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To table a motion (to lay it aside until later)</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INCIDENTAL MOTIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To suspend a rule temporarily (e.g., to change the order of business)</td>
<td>No precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To withdraw or modify a motion (to prevent a vote or inclusion in minutes)</td>
<td>No precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></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>No precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To set next meeting time</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>As to time &amp; place</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRIVILEGED MOTIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To appeal from the decision of the mayor (must be made immediately)</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></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 previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To adjourn</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To take recess</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To raise a point of order (to enforce rules or程序)</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reconsider (to bring up discussion and obtain a vote on a previously decided motion)</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To rescind a decision on a motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over previous motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority or 2/3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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*Yes, when motion is debatable.
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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 council and if there is no objection from a member, the mayor may rule 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 rise to a point of order or appeal, to call for orders of the day, or to make a motion to reconsider. A motion to reconsider must be made during the meeting when it was decided, or on the next succeeding meeting if it was carried over. If the motion is taken immediately, a two-thirds vote is necessary. Notice must be given one meeting before the vote is taken. If voted on immediately, a two-thirds vote to reconsider is necessary.

3. A motion to reconsider may be made only by those who voted on the preceding side. A motion to reconsider must be made during the meeting when it was decided, or on the next succeeding day if it was carried over. If voted on immediately, a two-thirds vote to reconsider is necessary. Notice must be given one meeting before the vote is taken. If voted on immediately, a two-thirds vote to reconsider is necessary.

4. If a motion is debatable.

5. Majority or 2/3, if no motion is pending.
July 16, 2008

HOW TO CONDUCT A CITY COUNCIL MEETING
BASED ON ROBERT’S RULES OF ORDER

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