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

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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.)

   a. Any council member may introduce an ordinance, resolution, or regulation.
   b. Ordinances on first reading are usually read by caption only, with introducer explaining contents.
   c. 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.)
   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 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.
Privileged Motions
To call for orders of the day (to keep meeting to program or order of business) Has precedence over above motions
Questions of privilege (to bring up an urgent matter—concerning noise, discomfort, etc.) Has precedence over above motions
To take a recess Has precedence over above motions
To adjourn Has precedence over above motions
To set next meeting time Has precedence over above motions

Unclassified Motions
To make motion from table (to bring up tabled motion for consideration) Cannot be made if any other motion is pending
To reconsider (to bring up discussion and obtain vote on previously decided motion) Yes, if no motion is pending
To rescind (repeal decision on a motion) Yes, when motion is debatable

No No No No vote required¹
No No No Majority No
Yes Yes, if no motion is pending Yes Majority No
Yes Yes, if no motion is pending As to time pending and place
Yes No No Majority No
Yes No No Majority No
Yes Yes, when motion is debatable No Majority No
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.

²The 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.

³A 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.

¹Orders of the day may be changed by a motion to suspend the rules (See "Incidental Motions").

²Motion can be taken from the table during the meeting when it was tabled or at the next meeting.

³Motion 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.

³It 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.
   Another Councilman: I second the motion.

4. 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.)

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

6. 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.)

7. 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.
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.

Another councilman: I second the motion to amend.

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...

Discussion: Is there any discussion?

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

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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Motions</th>
<th>Order of Handling</th>
<th>Must Be Seconded</th>
<th>Can Be Discussed</th>
<th>Can Be Amended</th>
<th>Vote Required</th>
<th>Vote Can Be Reconsidered</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 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subsidiary Motions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>To postpone indefinitely action on a motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motion</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Affirmative vote only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To amend (improve) a main motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes, when motion is only once debatable</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incidental Motions</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>To refer motion to committee (or 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To postpone definitely (to certain time) action on a motion</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To limit discussion to a certain time</td>
<td>Has precedence over above motions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To call for 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>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To table 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>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*These motions have precedence over motion to which they pertain*
IN COUNCIL MEETINGS . . .

THE RECORDER'S JOB

1. Keeps an accurate record of each meeting, including:
   - 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.