

Proposed Council Rules Revisions
Presented to the Seattle City Council Education and Governance Committee
December 2, 2015

The Council Rules Committee, comprised of various members of the Legislative Department and the City Attorney's Office, propose the following changes to the Council Rules. The Council Rules Committee does not propose changes to the Public Comment and Disruptions to Council and Committee Meetings Rules sections.

Organizational and Stylistic Revisions:

- Reorganizing the document so that it is organized by type of meeting, so that looking something up during a meeting generally requires only one article instead of the entire Rules.
- Making stylistic changes, including rephrasing and the use of the abbreviation CM for councilmember.
- Making the document gender-neutral throughout.

Substantive Revisions:

- Clarifying that the President is responsible for preserving order and decorum within the Council Chamber "when acting as presiding officer." (I.C.3.d)
- Adding the following language in the President Pro Tem Section about the rotating pro tem calendar: "In the case of a Council vacancy and subsequent appointment, the appointee will fill the position of the departed CM in the rotation." (I.D)
- Removing the authority of the President to grant "emergency absences." Clarifying that a majority of the Council can vote to excuse an absence prior to or at the meeting at which the absence occurs to align with current practice. (II.D.3)
- Adding new language to make the introduction, referral, and re-referral process explicit within the Rules for the first time. (III.A.1-2)
- Adding language requiring resolutions to be circulated at least two hours before a Full Council meeting, as is the current rule and practice with amendments to bills and resolutions. (III.A.3)
- Clarifying that Bill and Resolution amendments must be circulated via email to all CMs and Clerk two hours prior to the Full Council meeting. (III.A.6)
- Removing language that required Councilmembers to "rise" to address the Chair to align with current practice. (IV.A)
- In the parliamentary procedures section, clarifying for two subsections ("Lay on the Table," "Hold Indefinitely") that the motion requires a majority of CMs present, not a majority of the entire Council. This aligns with the other motions in this section. (IV.J and IV.L)

- Removing the following sentence to align with current practice: “Other CMs attending meetings shall not leave without notifying the committee Chair.” (VI.E and VII.D)
- Removing the requirement for Divided Reports and replacing it with a requirement for Committee Clerks to notify CMs when a committee vote is not unanimous. This section maintains the current language stating that committee recommendations that are not unanimous shall have Full Council consideration delayed by one week, unless this delay is waived by the Council President and the Committee Chair. (VI.H.5 and VII.G.5)
- Adding more detail explaining the Budget Committee process, including the suspension of regular committee meetings, quorum requirements, and how the Budget Chair presents a proposed balancing package to councilmembers. (VII.H)
- Removing language around a specific Town Hall Committee. (VII)
- Clarifying that the President may amend or abolish Select Committees by memo just as the President may create them by memo. (VII.A)
- Adding language that states that attorney-client privileged communications with the Council can only be waived by unanimous agreement of all nine councilmembers in executive session. (X.D.2)
- Adding the Central Staff Director and/or designee to the list of attendees at Executive Session, to align with current practice. (X.E.3)
- Adding language that the presiding officer may suspend or modify the requirement to electronically record meetings to protect the safe and responsible functioning of the Council. This authority to suspend or modify in extraordinary circumstances already exists for other rules around public access. (XI.G.1)
- Clarifying the language around the use of Council Chamber and referring directly to the separate Council policy and procedure on this matter. (XI.I.2)