



**City of Seattle**

**Legislative Department**

**General Rules and Procedures  
of the  
Seattle City Council**

**(As adopted by Resolution 32096, \_\_\_\_\_, 2023)**

**GENERAL RULES AND PROCEDURES  
OF THE SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL**

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## **GENERAL RULES AND PROCEDURES OF THE SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL**

### **I. COUNCIL COMPOSITION, POWERS, AND DUTIES**

#### **A. Council – General Authority; Annual Report; Legislation Retirement.**

1. The City Council shall establish rules for its proceedings.<sup>i</sup>
2. As the Legislative branch of City government, the City Council shall establish policy for the City.
3. The City Council has the authority to create and use committees of its members to facilitate its legislative functions; provided that no committee of the Council and no individual member of the Council shall have or exercise executive or administrative power, except as provided in the Charter.<sup>ii</sup>
4. The Council has authority to punish its members and others for disorderly or otherwise contemptuous behavior in its presence, and to expel for such behavior in its presence any members by the affirmative vote of not less than two-thirds of its members, specifying in the order of expulsion the cause thereof.<sup>iii</sup>
5. The Council shall produce an Annual Legislative Report, as designated by the President. The report shall identify accomplishments of the Council in the preceding year and objectives of the Council for the coming calendar year, in a report format determined by the President.
6. Council Bills, Resolutions, Clerk Files, and Appointments in committee or before the City Council for at least one year prior to March 1st of each year shall be considered for retirement.
7. Throughout these Rules, “City Council” is used when referring only to the body that meets at regular meetings as described in Rule II.A and actions taken by that body, regardless of meeting type. “Council” is used when referring to the City Council or any subdivision of it, as the context requires.

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 4.

<sup>ii</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 4.

<sup>iii</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 4.

**B. Members – Abbreviated as CMs; General Duties; Protest of Actions.**

1. Members of the City Council, or Councilmembers, are abbreviated as CMs throughout these Rules.
2. CMs shall
  - a. Uphold the public trust and demonstrate integrity, honesty, and fairness;
  - b. Exercise budget and fiduciary responsibility
  - c. Be responsive to citizens; and
  - d. Disqualify themselves from acting on City business when disqualification is required by the City’s Code of Ethics<sup>i</sup>, by common law, or by the Appearance of Fairness Doctrine.  
(See “Council Rules for Quasi-Judicial Proceedings Before the City Council” as adopted by Resolution 31602.)  
(See Rule V.A.1 Voting Required.)
3. Any CM may protest against the action of the City Council upon any question and have the oral objection entered upon the Journal of the Proceedings. If the protesting CM wishes the Journal of the Proceedings to contain a written objection, the objection shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk within 48 business hours following the action being objected.

**C. President – Appointment; Duties.**

1. Biennially, and also whenever the position of President becomes vacant, the City Council shall elect from its members a President who shall perform the usual functions of a presiding officer.<sup>ii</sup>
2. The President may be removed by the affirmative vote of not less than two-thirds of all CMs.<sup>iii</sup>
3. The President shall:
  - a. Preside over City Council meetings.
    - i. Call the City Council to order at the hour appointed for City Council meetings, or at the hour to which the City Council shall have adjourned at the preceding session.
    - ii. Proceed with the order of business if a quorum is in attendance.

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<sup>i</sup> SMC Chapter 4.16.

<sup>ii</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 4.

<sup>iii</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 4.

- b. Sign all Bills in authentication of their passage in open session<sup>i</sup> and sign all Resolutions in authentication of their adoption.
  - c. Promote efficient operation of the Council, including setting the City Council agenda and expediting parliamentary debate, or if there is no objection from any other CM, expediting the passage of routine motions.
  - d. Preserve order and decorum within the Council Chamber when acting as a presiding officer.
  - e. Assign legislation to committees.
  - f. Monitor committee agendas to ensure issues are appropriate to respective committees, and within the scope or work program of said committee, or as otherwise assigned.
  - g. Act as Mayor in the Mayor's absence from the City or incapacitation.<sup>ii</sup>
    - i. The President may simultaneously serve as President and act as Mayor; however, when the President, acting as Mayor, is confronted on a particular matter with a conflict of duties and responsibilities so fundamental that the public interest requires it, the President shall act as Mayor only.
    - ii. If, under Charter Art. XIX, § 6.B, the President declines to become Mayor upon a Mayoral vacancy, the Council's duty to select one of its members to become Mayor shall be performed within five days of the President's declination.
  - h. Head the Legislative Department<sup>iii</sup>, including providing for the orientation of new CMs.
4. The President may speak to points of order, inquiry, or information in preference to other CMs. The President shall, with respect to a question of order: decide the question (which decision is appealable to the City Council by any CM); or submit the question to CMs to decide by a majority of CMs present and voting.  
(See Rule IV.G Point of Order.)
  5. While speaking upon any question before the City Council, the President shall have the right to turn the Chair over to the President Pro Tem.
  6. The President may create select or other non-standing committees as provided in Rule VII.A.
  7. As provided by Rule VI.B, the President shall not serve as the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee.

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 11.

<sup>ii</sup> Charter, Art. V, § 9.

<sup>iii</sup> Charter, Art. III, § 3.

**D. President Pro Tem – Designation; Duties.**

1. Biennially, the City Council shall designate by Resolution a list of Presidents Pro Tem. The list shall start with the most senior CM other than the President and continue in descending order of seniority, with alphabetical order of last name used to break ties, and the position shall rotate monthly. In the case of a City Council vacancy and subsequent appointment, the appointee shall fill the position of the departed CM in the rotation.
2. In the absence of the President Pro Tem, the CM designated for the next month shall act as President Pro Tem.
3. The President Pro Tem shall:<sup>i</sup>
  - a. Act as President in the case of incapacitation or absence of the President.
  - b. Act as President when the President, acting as Mayor, is confronted with a conflict of duties and responsibilities so fundamental that the public interest requires it.  
(See Rule I.C.3.h President.)

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. V, § 9.



## II. CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

### A. Regular Meetings – Time; Location; Quorum; Preliminary Agenda.<sup>i</sup>

1. The City Council shall meet each Tuesday except as listed below. Regular meetings shall convene at 2 p.m., and the City Clerk shall enter the time of adjournment in the Journal of the Proceedings.
  - a. If a Tuesday is a legal holiday, then the regular meeting shall be held on the next day that is not a legal holiday.
  - b. Regular meetings are not held on the Tuesdays following the last two Mondays in the months of August and December.
  - c. Any regular meeting may be canceled by the President or a majority vote of CMs.
2. Regular meetings are held at Seattle City Hall in the Council Chamber. The City Council may meet at another location in the event of an emergency or disaster.<sup>ii</sup>
3. A quorum consists of a majority of all nine CMs except as listed below.<sup>iii</sup>
  - a. During a declared emergency under Article V, § 2 of the Charter, a quorum shall for all purposes consist of a majority of all CMs who are available to participate in City Council meetings and are capable of performing the duties of the office; and in such a declared emergency for all purposes, the City Council shall consist of a majority of such CMs available to participate in regular City Council meetings.
  - b. Except when Rule II.A.3.a applies, in order to select a person to fill a vacancy on the City Council, a quorum shall consist of a majority of those CMs currently holding office.
4. Less than a quorum of CMs may adjourn from day to day, or until the next regular meeting, and may compel the attendance of absent members in such a manner and under such penalties as the City Council prescribes.<sup>iv</sup> (See Rule II.D.3 Attendance.)
5. Preliminary agendas of upcoming regular meetings shall list items on which action is expected to be taken and shall be made available to the public. All reasonable effort shall be made to publish the preliminary agenda online at least two business days prior to the meeting.
6. The Council prefers to conduct its business in person when practicable. Recognizing that CMs may not be able to attend every meeting in person due to unavoidable and

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 6.

<sup>ii</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 6.

<sup>iii</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 3.

<sup>iv</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 3.

sometimes unforeseeable circumstances, any CM may at their sole discretion participate and vote by any electronic means (e.g., multi-party telephone or video conferencing) utilized by the Council for such purpose provided that the Office of the City Clerk is able to accommodate such participation.

**B. Special Meetings – Calling; Notice; Limitations; Location.**

A special meeting is a meeting held at a time, date, or location that differs from a regular meeting.

1. The Mayor, the President of the City Council, or any three CMs may call a special meeting.<sup>i</sup>
2. Notices of special meetings shall be in accordance with RCW 42.30.080.
  - a. The only items of business for which final action may be taken at a special meeting are those items listed on the written notice.
  - b. Special meetings are held in the Council Chamber in Seattle City Hall unless: a specific alternate location is established by the party calling the meeting, whether the Mayor, the President, or three CMs; and notice as required under RCW 42.30.080 is given.
3. The Council prefers to conduct its business in person when practicable. Recognizing that CMs may not be able to attend every meeting in person due to unavoidable and sometimes unforeseeable circumstances, any CM may at their sole discretion participate and vote by any electronic means (e.g., multi-party telephone or video conferencing) utilized by the Council for such purpose provided that the Office of the City Clerk is able to accommodate such participation.

**C. Emergency Meetings – Calling; CMs’ Electronic Attendance.**

1. Emergency City Council meetings may be called by the Mayor, President, or any two CMs, consistent with the provisions of chapter 42.30 RCW and RCW 42.14.075.<sup>ii</sup>
2. Meeting time, location, and notice requirements do not apply to emergency meetings called for emergency matters as permitted by RCW 42.30.070, RCW 42.30.080, and RCW 42.14.075.
3. Emergency meetings are open to the public unless exempt under chapter 42.30 RCW.
4. If a natural disaster, fire, flood, earthquake, enemy attack, imminent enemy attack, or other catastrophic emergency that renders a CM’s physical attendance at a meeting impracticable, or if approved by a majority of CMs present and voting at an emergency meeting, the CM may participate and vote by any electronic means (e.g.,

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 6.

<sup>ii</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 6.

multi-party telephone or video conferencing) utilized by the Council for such purpose.

5. The Council prefers to conduct its business in person when practicable. Recognizing that CMs may not be able to attend every meeting in person due to unavoidable and sometimes unforeseeable circumstances, any CM may at their sole discretion participate and vote by any electronic means (e.g., multi-party telephone or video conferencing) utilized by the Council for such purpose provided that the Office of the City Clerk is able to accommodate such participation.

**D. Attendance – Requirements; Excuses.**

1. CMs shall attend all regular City Council meetings, unless excused by the City Council.
2. A CM may obtain a leave of absence or be excused from a particular meeting by vote of the City Council before or during the meeting to which the leave of absence or excuse would apply.
3. Three CMs, including the President or President Pro Tem acting in the capacity of the President, or four CMs otherwise, may compel the attendance of absent unexcused or on-call CMs at the City Council meeting, and may adjourn from day to day if necessary until a quorum can be convened.<sup>i</sup>
4. A CM shall be granted a leave of absence by submitting written notice to the President as soon as practical of a personal situation that would entitle a City employee to family and medical leave, paid parental leave, or paid family care leave under Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Sections 4.26.010, 4.27.020, or 4.29.020. The notice shall give a reasonable estimate of dates to which the leave of absence shall apply.
5. No more than four CMs may be excused from any one City Council meeting, except during November budget deliberations, when no more than two CMs may be excused from any one City Council meeting.
6. If the maximum number of CMs has been excused for any one particular meeting, the last CM so excused shall be considered on-call. An on-call CM may make arrangements with any other excused CM to switch on-call status. Any such switch must be communicated with the President and the City Clerk.
7. The City Clerk shall record the attendance and requests for excused absence(s) from City Council meetings in the Journal of the Proceedings.

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 3.

### III. CITY COUNCIL BUSINESS

#### A. Legislation – Introduction; Referral; Requirements.

1. Introduction of Legislation.
  - a. All submitted legislation shall be reviewed by the City Clerk before it is sent to the Council President.
  - b. All Council Bills and Resolutions shall include a Summary and Fiscal Note.
  - c. The President shall assign the appropriate committee or City Council to receive the legislation and determines when to send the legislation to the committee chair. If a primary sponsor of legislation requests that the Council President place legislation onto the Council’s Introduction and Referral Calendar without the support of the Chair of the committee with subject matter jurisdiction for doing so, then the Council President will confer with the Chair of the standing or select committee with subject matter jurisdiction prior to placing the legislation on the Introduction and Referral Calendar regardless of whether the legislation in question is routine or time sensitive.
  - d. The committee chair determines whether and when to place the legislation onto the Council’s Introduction and Referral Calendar. Any CM may be the primary sponsor of legislation, but the Council President may choose to include selected legislation on the Council’s Introduction and Referral Calendar as “Executive Requested” or “[Department] Requested Legislation” (i.e., naming the department who generated the legislation) rather than including a CM as sponsor. If legislation is sponsored, it has a single primary sponsor and optional co-sponsors. Prior to introduction by the Council, additional co-sponsors of the legislation may be added with consent of the primary sponsor, except that co-sponsors added outside an open session shall not cause the total number of co-sponsors to meet or exceed a quorum of its assigned committee (or City Council if there is no assigned committee).
  - e. When adoption of the Introduction and Referral Calendar is being considered during each City Council meeting, it may be modified by a majority vote of CMs present and voting. Modifications include amendment to titles, committee referral, sponsorship, and removing or adding legislation.
  - f. After the Introduction and Referral Calendar is adopted, legislation is in the control of the referred committee or City Council.
  - g. Before final passage by the Council, additional co-sponsors of the legislation may be added in open session with consent of the primary sponsor.
2. Relieving a Committee of Legislation.

The City Council may relieve a committee of legislation in one of two ways:

- a. With consent from the current committee chair, the proposed committee chair, and the President, legislation may be re-referred to the proposed committee on the Introduction and Referral Calendar; or
  - b. A motion to relieve the committee may be considered at the City Council meeting during consideration of the adoption of the Introduction and Referral Calendar and requires a majority vote of CMs present and voting.
3. A Resolution shall not be adopted at the same meeting at which it is introduced except by passage of at least two-thirds vote of CMs present and voting, except that resolutions pursuant to SMC Chapter 10.02 to terminate civil emergencies require at least two-thirds vote of all CMs.
  4. Resolutions not on the City Council Introduction and Referral Calendar or City Council agenda shall not be added for introduction and adoption at the same City Council meeting unless previously reviewed by the Law Department and circulated via email to all CMs, the Central Staff Director, and the City Clerk by 5:00 p.m. on the preceding business day.
  5. Council Bills not on the City Council Introduction and Referral Calendar shall not be added to the Introduction and Referral Calendar for introduction at the same City Council meeting such action is requested unless previously reviewed by the Law Department and circulated via email to all CMs, the Central Staff Director, and the City Clerk by 5:00 p.m. on the preceding business day.
  6. A Bill shall not be introduced and passed at the same meeting, except for the weekly Bill for payment of bills, salaries, and claims.<sup>i</sup>
  7. No Bill shall become an Ordinance unless on its final passage at least a majority of all nine CMs vote in its favor.<sup>ii</sup> In some cases, passage requires more than a majority vote.
  8. Amendments to Bills and Resolutions shall not be presented at a City Council meeting unless previously reviewed by the Law Department and circulated via email to all CMs, the Central Staff Director, and the City Clerk at least two hours before the meeting. In cases, including but not limited to, amendments to development regulations subject to the Growth Management Act, a statute may require additional public notice and opportunity for public comment before an amended Bill may be passed.

**B. Order of Business.**

1. The President shall announce the business of the City Council at its regular meetings, which shall ordinarily be disposed of in the following order:
  - a. Call to Order

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 8.

<sup>ii</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 8.

- b. Roll Call
  - c. Presentations
  - d. Public Comment
  - e. Approval of the Introduction and Referral Calendar
  - f. Approval of Consent Calendar
  - g. Approval of the Agenda
  - h. Committee Reports (discussion and vote on Bills, Resolutions, Clerk Files, and Appointments)
  - i. Items removed from Consent Calendar
  - j. Adoption of Other Resolutions
  - k. Other Business
  - l. Adjournment
2. Upon the passage of each Bill, the President shall announce that the President is signing the Bill, and if so requested by any CM, that Bill shall be read at length so as to ensure its correctness before it shall become enrolled.<sup>i</sup>

**C. Reconsideration of Vetoed Bills.<sup>ii</sup>**

1. The City Council shall reconsider and vote again on the passage of any Bill that is vetoed by the Mayor, in accordance with the Charter.
2. Reconsideration shall occur not less than five days after the Mayor's written objection of the Bill is published, and not more than 30 days after the return of the Bill by the Mayor.
3. Passage of a Bill during reconsideration shall be by two-thirds vote of all the CMs.
4. Any Bill presented to the City Council for reconsideration that does not pass during the first vote of reconsideration shall be deemed finally lost.

**D. Journal of the Proceedings.**

1. The City Clerk shall record into the Journal of the Proceedings of the Seattle City Council the proceedings of the City Council at its regular and special meetings, and recommendations to the City Council by committees.

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 11.

<sup>ii</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 12.

2. The Journal of the Proceedings shall be presented to the City Council for approval at a regular City Council meeting.
3. The Journal of the Proceedings is a public document.

**E. Consent Calendar.**

At the discretion of the President, the agenda for a particular Council meeting may include a consent calendar to allow the Council to act on administrative items or items for which no debate or inquiries are expected. Included on this consent calendar can be matters such as approval of minutes, payment of bills, and Committee Reports (vote on Bills, Resolutions, Clerk Files, and Appointments) with a unanimous vote and no abstentions. For any committee-reported Bill, Resolution, Clerk File, or Appointment with a unanimous vote and no abstentions, the committee Chair may request that the Council President place it on a consent calendar. Upon request by any CM, an item shall be removed from the consent calendar and placed on the regular agenda for a separate vote, according to Rule III.B. Multiple removed items shall be considered in the same order as they had been presented on the consent calendar.

## IV. PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES

If these General Rules and Procedures are silent on a matter of parliamentary procedure, the 12th Edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the Council in all cases to which it is applicable.

### A. Rules of Debate.

When any CM wishes to speak, the CM shall address the Chair.

1. When recognized, the CM shall, in a courteous manner, confine comments to the question under debate.
2. The primary sponsor of a Bill, Resolution, Clerk File, Appointment, or motion has the privilege of speaking first and last upon it.
3. No CM shall impugn the motives of any other CM, or speak more than twice except for explanation during the consideration of any one question.
4. No CM, having obtained the floor while a debatable motion is immediately pending at a meeting of the Council, shall speak for longer than ten minutes at one time unless all CMs present agree by unanimous consent to extend the limits of debate or two-thirds of CMs present and voting pass a motion to extend the limits of debate.

### B. Consideration of Motions.

1. No motion shall be entertained or debated until duly seconded and announced by the Chair.
2. The motion shall be recorded and, if requested by any CM, it shall be read by the City Clerk before it is debated.
3. Until the Chair states the question, the maker of the motion has the right to modify or withdraw it. If the motion is modified by the maker before the Chair states the question, the CM who seconded the motion may withdraw the second.
4. Motions shall be entertained in the order of precedence outlined in the 12th Edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised.



MOTION TO:	Debatable?	Amendable?	Vote?	May be reconsidered?
Adjourn	No	No	Maj	No
Recess	No	Yes	Maj	No
Reconsideration (Rule V.G)	Yes	No	Maj	No
Lay on the Table (Rule IV.J)	No	No	Maj	Yes
Take from the Table (Rule IV.K)	No	No	Maj	No
Call the Question (Rule IV.H)	No	No	2/3	Yes
Postpone to a Certain Time (Rule IV.I)	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes
Commit or Refer to a Committee	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes
Amend or Substitute	Yes	Yes	Maj	Yes
Postpone Indefinitely (Rule IV.L)	Yes	No	Maj	Affirmative vote may be reconsidered
All motions must be seconded to be entertained or debated. See Rule IV.B.1.				

**C. Amendment Form.**

1. Any CM may offer for consideration amendments to proposed legislation to the body considering that legislation, whether at a City Council, select, or standing committee meeting. An amendment is a pending motion until it is voted on. Amendments to legislation must be written in accordance with City Clerk amendment standards. Motions to amend legislation must be seconded, are debatable, and require a majority vote of CMs present and voting to be adopted. Proposed amendments should take the form of either:
  - a. To insert, or to add language;
  - b. To delete language;
  - c. A combination of a and b having the following forms:

- i. To delete and insert (which applies to words);
  - ii. To substitute; that is, to delete a paragraph or the parts or the entire text of a legislation or main motion, and insert another in its place.
2. Added language shall be underlined and deleted language shall be shown with strikethrough format.
3. To promote efficiency, the Chair may accept consideration of an oral amendment that can be clearly stated in a suitable form. The Chair may also request the oral amendment be reread or presented in writing before the question is stated.

**D. Parliamentary Inquiry.**

A CM may direct a Parliamentary Inquiry to the presiding officer to obtain information on a matter of parliamentary law or the rules of the organization bearing on the business at hand. Inquiries may relate to e.g., making an appropriate motion, raising a proper point of order, or clarifying the parliamentary situation or the effect of a motion.

**E. Recognition by the Chair.**

If two or more CMs seek recognition at the same time, the Chair shall decide the one who shall speak first.

**F. Division of a Question.**

Any CM may call for a division of a question, which shall be divided if it embraces subjects so distinct that, if one is taken away, a substantive proposition shall remain for the decision of the Council.

**G. Point of Order.**

1. The Chair has the right to decide all points of order, in which case Rules IV.G.2 through IV.G.5. apply. The Chair may instead submit the question on a point of order to CMs to decide by a majority vote of the CMs present and voting.
2. If dissatisfied with the decision of the Chair, any CM may appeal the decision.
3. In all cases of appeal, the question shall be: “Shall the decision of the Chair be sustained?”
4. No CM may speak more than once on an appeal without the consent of a majority of CMs in attendance.
5. The decision in response to the appeal shall be by a majority vote of the CMs in attendance. In case of a tie vote, the decision of the Chair shall stand.

**H. Call the Question.**

A CM may make a motion to Call the Question (also known as Previous Question) to end debate on an immediate pending motion. This motion requires a two-thirds vote in favor and may be considered at committee meetings.

**I. Postpone to a Certain Time.**

To postpone a question to a certain time, the motion shall state a definite date, meeting, or hour, or until after a certain event.

**J. Lay on the Table.**

A majority of CMs present and voting may decide to temporarily halt consideration of a question immediately and without debate during a meeting. The maker of a motion to Lay on the Table must state the reason for the motion. A motion that has been laid on the table may, in either the current or subsequent meeting, be brought back by a motion to Take from the Table.

**K. Take from the Table.**

Once a question has been laid on the table, it may be taken from the table by a majority vote of CMs present and voting, as soon as the interrupting business has been disposed of or whenever no other question is pending. A motion that has been laid on the table may, in either the current or subsequent meeting, be brought back by a motion to Take from the Table.

**L. Postpone Indefinitely.**

A majority of CMs present and voting may decide not to take a direct vote or position on a main question by disposing of it with a motion to Postpone Indefinitely. The question shall not be brought back again for at least 60 days.

## V. CITY COUNCIL VOTING

### A. Voting Required; Disqualification Process.

1. Every CM in attendance shall vote on all actions before the City Council, except when CMs must disqualify themselves from voting as required by either the City's Code of Ethics<sup>i</sup> or the Washington State Appearance of Fairness Doctrine. CMs may also disqualify themselves from voting to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest, unless a majority of those present vote that there is no conflict.  
(See Rule V.D.2 Announcing and Recording Votes.)
2. Abstentions are not allowed on actions, other than procedural, amending, and final votes on Resolutions at City Council meetings. CMs not having abstained or disqualified themselves pursuant to Rule V.A.1 shall vote by saying "Aye" or "No." CMs having abstained or disqualified themselves pursuant to Rule V.A.1 shall vote by saying "Abstain" or "Present."
3. All votes shall be recorded by the City Clerk in the Journal of the Proceedings.<sup>ii</sup>

### B. Roll Call Voting.

A roll call vote shall be taken when voting on final passage of Bills, the consent calendar, and on other business when requested by a CM. A roll call vote is called in alphabetical order of last name, except for the President, whose name is always called last. At each regular Council meeting, the first name on the roll, in a systematic rotation, is moved to the name immediately preceding the President's name.

### C. Voice Vote.

A voice vote may be taken on any matter of business before the City Council, unless a roll call vote has been requested as provided in Rule V.B, or unless a CM is participating electronically.

### D. Announcing and Recording Votes.

1. After a roll call vote, the City Clerk shall announce the "ayes" and "nos" in addition to "abstentions" and "disqualifications" for all votes and enter them into the Journal of the Proceedings. The announcement of the result of any vote shall not be postponed.
2. When a CM is in attendance and has been disqualified from voting under Rule I.B.2.d, the City Clerk shall record and announce "in attendance, but disqualified from voting."  
(See Rule V.A.1 Voting Required.)

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<sup>i</sup> SMC Chapter 4.16.

<sup>ii</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 4.

**E. Proxy Votes.**

There are no proxy votes.

**F. Tie Vote.**

In the event of a tie vote, a motion does not pass.

**G. Motion to Reconsider.**

1. After the final vote on any motion, Bill, Resolution, Clerk File, or Appointment, and before the adjournment of the meeting at which that vote was taken, any CM who voted with the prevailing side may move for reconsideration of the original motion. Seconds to motions for reconsideration may be from either side.
  - a. If the result of the final vote is to pass any motion, Bill, Resolution, Clerk File, or Appointment, any reconsideration vote must take place before adjournment of that meeting, or else there shall be no reconsideration vote.
  - b. If a Bill is moved for final passage and fails to pass at a City Council meeting, and a motion to reconsider is made, the motion to reconsider shall not be voted on before the next meeting of the City Council.<sup>i</sup>
2. A motion to reconsider takes precedence over every other motion, except a motion to adjourn.
3. Motions to reconsider a vote upon amendments to any pending question shall be made and decided immediately.
4. A motion to amend that does not pass in a committee meeting shall not be reconsidered, but the motion to amend may be offered to the City Council.

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 10.

## VI. STANDING COMMITTEES<sup>i</sup>

### A. Formation.

1. Standing committees are formed after the biennial election of a President.
2. Formation of standing committees, i.e., the identification of committees' scopes of work, regular meeting schedules, and Chair and membership assignments, shall be adopted by Resolution.

### B. Membership.

1. A standing committee consists of at least four members and, if the committee has fewer members than the Council has CMs, may include an alternate. A committee has a Chair and may have a Vice-Chair.
2. If the vacancy of a City Council position requires the appointment and/or election of a replacement CM, the replacement CM shall assume the replaced CM's committee duties and responsibilities, unless stated otherwise by Resolution.
3. Only CMs who are designated members of the standing committee (or the alternate if serving as a member) may sponsor amendments before the committee, or vote at its meetings. Voting rights of members include the power to make, second, amend, and vote on all motions.
  - a. If invited by the Chair or Vice-Chair, a CM other than the designated members (or the alternate if serving as a member) may participate as a non-committee member without voting rights in a standing committee meeting.
  - b. Participation of non-committee members is limited to taking part in debate, upon recognition by the Chair, and the authorship of amendments, to be submitted in accordance with Rule IV.C.1.
4. The quorum requirement for standing committee meetings is three CMs unless a greater number is stated by Resolution.
5. The President shall not serve as the Chair or Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee.

### C. Meetings.

1. Meetings are held in the Council Chamber in Seattle City Hall unless a specific alternate location is established by the Chair with the concurrence of a majority of the regular members of the committee, and appropriate public notice and access are provided.
2. The Council sets regular meeting dates and times by Resolution. The committee Chair may cancel a meeting at any time.

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 4.

3. A regularly scheduled meeting will be moved to the following Friday if:
  - a. The regular schedule places that meeting on a legal holiday; or
  - b. A legal holiday moves a City Council meeting to a day on which that meeting is regularly scheduled.
4. Regular meetings are not held in weeks when the Council does not hold a regular City Council or Council Briefing meeting under Rule II.A.1.b or IX.C.2.
5. Meetings shall be noticed both as committee meetings and as City Council meetings, with the agenda limited to committee business and only rules and procedures applicable to committees in effect.
6. Preliminary agendas for upcoming regular meetings shall list items for which discussion, amendments, and/or recommendation is expected. Items where only amendments will be considered shall be listed as possible amendments, and items where amendments and/or a final recommendation is expected shall be listed as possible vote for proper notification, except upon passage of a motion by the Chair to suspend this Rule.
7. All reasonable effort shall be made to publish the preliminary agenda online at least two business days prior to the meeting.
8. All reasonable effort shall be made to make materials that are to be presented in a regular meeting available online at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.
9. In accordance with 42.30.035 RCW, meeting minutes shall be promptly produced after each meeting and made available for public review.
10. Each Committee Chair may authorize Seattle Channel to broadcast video images of the Council Chamber at Seattle City Hall during the public comment period in their committee meetings. Authorization should be given for one-year time periods and may be subsequently renewed with notice provided to Seattle Channel and Legislative Department IT.

**D. Special Meetings.**

A special meeting is a meeting held at a time, date, or location that differs from a regular meeting.

1. Special meetings may be scheduled by the committee Chair.
2. Notices of special meetings shall be in accordance with RCW 42.30.080. All reasonable effort shall be made to publish the preliminary agenda online at least two business days prior to the meeting.
3. The only items of business for which final action may be taken at a special meeting are those items listed on the written notice.

**E. Attendance – Requirements; Excused Absences.**

1. It is the duty of each member of a committee to attend its meetings.
2. Committee Member Notification Duties.



- a. For a committee with an alternate, if, at least three business days before a committee meeting, a committee member can notify the Chair and alternate of an expected absence from the entire meeting, the committee member shall do so, after which the alternate shall inform the Chair of the alternate's availability. Otherwise, the committee member shall notify the Chair, the Chair shall contact the alternate, and the alternate shall inform the Chair of the alternate's availability, all as soon as practical. Once these conditions are met, the alternate assumes the rights of the absent committee member for the actual duration of the absence.
  - b. For a committee without an alternate, if, at least three business days before a committee meeting, a committee member can notify the Chair of an expected absence from the entire meeting, the committee member shall do so. Otherwise, the committee member shall notify the Chair as soon as practical.
3. A committee member may be excused with the consent of the Chair.

**F. Duties of the Chair.**

The committee Chair shall:

1. Provide at each meeting a public comment period pursuant to Rule XI.C.3.a.
2. Act as presiding officer and call the meetings to order at the appointed times.
3. State the amount of time allowed for speakers and announce instructions to the speakers at the start of each meeting. The Chair may allow additional time for the submission of written comment from the public.
4. Announce CMs in attendance at the call to order and as they join the meeting.
5. Recognize CMs and, in accordance with these General Rules and Procedures, others who wish to speak.
6. Set the committee's agenda consistent with the committee's assigned scope of work and the City Council Work Program, and publish such agenda in accordance with Rule VI.C.6, VI.C.7, and VI.C.8.
7. Run meetings expeditiously.
8. Preserve order and decorum.

**G. Duties and Responsibilities of Members.**

Committee members shall acquaint themselves with the interests of the City specifically represented by that committee, and shall make recommendations to the City Council on Council Bills, Resolutions, Clerk Files, and Appointments, and such other reports as in their judgment(s) shall advance the interests and promote the welfare of the people of the City.

**H. Voting, Referral, and Reporting.**

1. Only members of a standing committee (or the alternate if serving as a member) may vote, or abstain from voting, on issues before the committee.
2. Committee action on any Council Bill, Resolution, Clerk File, or Appointment shall be limited to recommendations for the City Council to consider when voting on final action for that item.
3. Committees shall not vote on a final recommendation on any Bill, Resolution, Clerk File, or Appointment on the same day that a public hearing was held on that item, except upon passage of a motion by the Chair to suspend this Rule.
4. The deadline for a committee to vote to refer legislation to the next regular City Council meeting is 1 p.m. on the Thursday before that meeting, except upon passage of a motion by the Chair to suspend this Rule. If the motion is adopted, whether the legislation is referred to the next regular City Council meeting is at the discretion of the President.
5. Committee Reports.

Committees shall report their final recommendations on legislation to the City Council. Reports shall include the committee recommendation, the names of CMs in attendance and the decision of each CM on the final recommendation whether voting in favor, voting opposed, or abstaining from voting. Reports of standing committees shall be entered in the Journal of the Proceedings.

  - a. If a committee recommendation is not unanimous, unless otherwise authorized by the President and the committee Chair, the committee report shall be reported to the second regular City Council meeting after the date of the recommendation.
  - b. A CM abstaining from voting does not make the vote non-unanimous.
6. Divided Votes.

A report may accompany any non-unanimous committee recommendation, including an indication of how each CM voted and a statement describing the rationale for each voting CM's position.

  - a. Such reports shall only be presented to the City Council if a CM who voted against the committee recommendation submits a request to the President, the Central Staff Director, and the City Clerk at least four calendar days before presentation of the recommendation to the City Council. If a report is made, it shall be distributed to all CMs by noon the day presentation of the recommendation is scheduled to be made to the City Council.
  - b. When the City Council receives such report, the first position considered shall be the majority position (or the Chair's position if there is no majority).

**I. Finance Committee.**

The City Council shall have a Finance Committee of not less than three members.<sup>i</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 5.

## VII. SELECT COMMITTEES

### A. Formation.

The President may create, amend, or abolish select committees and shall appoint the Chair, Vice-Chair, and membership to select or other non-standing committees as required, or as deemed necessary to efficiently conduct the business of the Council. When creating the committee, the President shall specify at least three CMs as a quorum. Any committee created under this Rule may be of limited duration or focus.

### B. Meetings.

1. Meetings are held in the Council Chamber in Seattle City Hall unless a specific alternate location is established by the Chair with the concurrence of a majority of the regular members of the committee, and appropriate public notice and access are provided.
2. Regular meeting dates, times, and locations may be determined in advance and filed in a Clerk File by the President upon creation of the select committee. The committee Chair may cancel a meeting at any time.
3. Meetings shall be noticed both as committee meetings and as City Council meetings, with the agenda limited to committee business and only rules and procedures applicable to committees in effect.
4. Preliminary agendas for upcoming regular meetings shall list items for which discussion, amendments, and/or recommendation is expected. Items where only amendments will be considered shall be listed as possible amendments, and items where amendments and/or a final recommendation is expected shall be listed as possible vote for public notification, except upon passage of a motion by the Chair to suspend this Rule.
5. All reasonable effort shall be made to provide the preliminary agenda online at least two business days prior to the meeting, with the exception of the Budget Committee, which shall publish agendas pursuant to Rule VII.H.5.
6. All reasonable effort shall be made to make materials that are to be presented in the meeting available online at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting, with the exception of the Budget Committee, which shall publish agendas pursuant to Rule VII.H.5.
7. In accordance with 42.30.035 RCW, meeting minutes shall be promptly produced after each meeting and made available for public review.

### C. Special Meetings.

A special meeting is a meeting held at a time, date, or location that differs from a regular

meeting.

VII. Select Committees

1. Special meetings may be scheduled by the committee Chair.
2. Notices of special meetings shall be in accordance with RCW 42.30.080. All reasonable effort shall be made to publish the preliminary agenda online at least two business days prior to the meeting.
3. The only items of business for which final action may be taken at a special meeting are those items listed on the written notice.

**D. Attendance – Requirements; Excused Absences.**

1. Each committee member shall attend its meetings.
2. Committee Member Notification Duties.
  - a. For a committee with an alternate, if, at least three business days before a committee meeting, a committee member can notify the Chair and alternate of an expected absence from the entire meeting, the committee member shall do so, after which the alternate shall inform the Chair of the alternate's availability. Otherwise, the committee member shall notify the Chair, the Chair shall contact the alternate, and the alternate shall inform the Chair of the alternate's availability, all as soon as practical. Once these conditions are met, the alternate assumes the rights of the absent committee member for the actual duration of the absence.
  - b. For a committee without an alternate, if, at least three business days before a committee meeting, a committee member can notify the Chair of an expected absence from the entire meeting, the committee member shall do so. Otherwise, the committee member shall notify the Chair as soon as practical.<sup>3</sup> A committee member may be excused with the consent of the Chair.

**E. Duties of the Chair.**

The committee Chair shall:

1. Provide at each meeting a public comment period pursuant to Rule XI.C.3.a.
2. Act as presiding officer and call the meetings to order at the appointed times.
3. State the amount of time allowed for speakers and announce instructions to the speakers at the start of each meeting. The Chair may allow additional time for the submission of written comment from the public.
4. Announce CMs in attendance at the call to order and as they join the meeting.
5. Recognize CMs and, in accordance with these General Rules and Procedures, others who wish to speak.

6. Set the committee's agenda consistent with the committee's assigned scope of work and publish such agenda in accordance with Rule VII.B.4, VII.B.5, and VII.B.6.
7. Run meetings expeditiously.
8. Preserve order and decorum.

**F. Duties and Responsibilities of Members.**

Committee members shall acquaint themselves with the interests of the City specifically represented by that committee, and shall make recommendations to the City Council on Council Bills, Resolutions, and Clerk Files, and such other reports as in their judgment(s) shall advance the interests and promote the welfare of the people of the City.

**G. Voting, Referral, and Reporting.**

1. Only members of a select committee meeting may vote, or abstain from voting, on issues before the committee.
2. Committee action on any Council Bill, Resolution, Clerk File, or Appointment, is limited to recommendations for the City Council to consider when voting on final action for that item.
3. Committees shall not vote on a final recommendation on any Bill, Resolution, Clerk File, or Appointment on the same day that a public hearing was held on that item, except upon passage of a motion by the Chair to suspend this Rule.
4. The deadline for a committee to vote to refer legislation to the next regular City Council meeting is 1 p.m. on the Thursday before that meeting, except upon passage of a motion by the Chair to suspend this Rule. If the motion is adopted, whether the legislation is referred to the next regular City Council meeting is at the discretion of the President.
5. Committee Reports:  
Committees shall report their final recommendations on legislation reported to the City Council. Reports shall include committee recommendation, the names of CMs in attendance and the decision of each CMs on the final recommendation whether voting in favor, voting opposed, or abstaining from voting. Reports of select committees shall be entered in the Journal of the Proceedings.
  - a. If a committee recommendation is not unanimous, unless otherwise authorized by the President and the committee Chair, the committee report shall be reported to the second regular City Council meeting after the date of the recommendation.
  - b. A CM abstaining from voting does not make the vote non-unanimous.
6. Divided Votes.  
A report may accompany any non-unanimous committee recommendation, including

an indication of how each CM voted and a statement describing the rationale for each voting CM's position.

- a. Such reports shall only be presented to the City Council if a CM who voted against the committee recommendation submits a request to the President, the Central Staff Director, and the City Clerk at least four calendar days before presentation of the recommendation to the City Council. If a report is made, it shall be distributed to all CMs by noon the day presentation of the recommendation is scheduled to be made to the City Council.
- b. When the City Council receives such report, the first position considered shall be the majority position (or the Chair's position if there is no majority).

#### **H. Budget Committee.**

1. The Budget Committee is a select committee comprised of all CMs, chaired by the Chair of the Finance Committee.
2. The Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee shall serve as Vice-Chair of the Budget Committee.
3. The primary purpose of the Budget Committee is to review the Mayor's proposed budget and proposed capital improvement program (CIP), amend as appropriate, and adopt a balanced budget and CIP. The Budget Committee shall review and take action on other budget issues during the year as may be assigned.
4. From the time the Budget Committee receives the Mayor's proposed budget (typically the end of September) to the time the Council adopts a budget (typically the third week of November), regular standing and select committee meetings shall be suspended. Special standing and select committee meetings may be called:
  - a. If legislative action is required within a set time (e.g., quasi-judicial actions with 90-day deadlines for Council review); or
  - b. Upon the approval of the President and the Chair of the Budget Committee, after consultation with the Central Staff Director.
5. Preliminary agendas of Budget Committee meetings are required to list only general topics for discussion and/or recommendation. All reasonable effort shall be made to publish preliminary agendas online at least two business days before the meeting. Final agendas of Budget Committee meetings shall be issued no later than the morning of the scheduled meeting and shall include all items to be discussed.
6. A Budget Amendment is a proposed change to the Mayor's proposed budget and accompanying legislation. Budget Amendments are developed in accordance with these Rules and include: amendments to budget legislation; development of new Council Bills or Resolutions; Council Budget Actions (CBAs); and Statements of Legislative Intent (SLIs).



- a. Budget Amendments that meet established deadlines on the Budget Committee schedule may be published on the appropriate meeting agenda.
  - b. Budget Amendments that are not included on a final published agenda shall not be presented at a Budget Committee meeting unless circulated via email to all CMs, the Central Staff Director, and the City Clerk by 5:00 p.m. on the preceding business day. This rule may only be suspended by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of CMs present and voting at a Budget Committee meeting.
7. In accordance with 42.30.035 RCW, meeting minutes shall be promptly produced after each meeting and made available for public review.
  8. The quorum for the Budget Committee is at least three CMs.
  9. Adoption of a Balanced Budget Package:
    - a. This Rule VII.H.9 implements biennial aspects of the City’s budget process that are established by City law.
    - b. Year One of a Biennial Budget Process.
      - i. The Chair may prepare a group of budget revisions (Chair’s Initial Balancing Package) that if adopted would amend the Mayor’s proposed budget to produce a final budget for Year One and an endorsed budget for Year Two in which expenditures do not exceed revenues.
      - ii. Following Committee discussion of the Chair’s Initial Balancing Package, the Chair may prepare a Revised Balancing Package, subject to the same requirements under Rule VII.H.9.b.i. The Chair shall endeavor to inform CMs of any changes made to the Chair’s Initial Balancing Package prior to the scheduled vote on the Revised Balancing Package in the Budget Committee.
    - c. Year Two of a Biennial Budget Process.
      - i. Council Budget Amendments to increase appropriations shall be self-balanced. A self-balanced amendment means that any proposal to increase appropriations in one area of the budget is balanced by: reducing appropriations elsewhere; or a proposal to increase City resources through a new tax or fee, or other changes in policy related to City resources.
      - ii. The Chair may prepare a group of budget revisions (Chair’s Revised Balancing Package) in Year Two if necessary to address changes in the City’s revenue forecast or other information that impacts assumptions about available resources to balance the Year Two budget.
  10. Other rules and procedures for the Budget Committee, and the meeting dates and times for regular meetings, shall be established by the President in consultation with the Budget Committee Chair. Any rules and procedures regarding meeting times,

dates, locations, attendance, and quorum supersede provisions in this Rule VII on those topics, except that a quorum may not be fewer than three CMs.

**I. Labor Committee.**

1. The Labor Committee is a select committee comprised of the President, the Chair of the Council Budget Committee, and three CMs selected by the President. The list of members shall be filed in a Clerk File.
2. The primary purpose of the Labor Committee is to serve on the Labor Relations Policy Committee and perform the functions established by SMC Section 4.04.120.

## **VIII. EXTERNAL COMMITTEES**

### **A. Appointment.**

1. CM participation on an external committee (a governing or advisory body on which CMs serve that is not a Council committee) is typically established by Resolution.
2. If the vacancy of a City Council position requires the appointment and/or election of a replacement CM, the replacement CM shall assume the replaced CM's external committee duties and responsibilities unless stated otherwise, whether by Resolution or appropriate action of another body responsible for appointments to the committee.

### **B. Attendance.**

CMs serving on an external committee shall attend its meetings unless the CM is unavailable.

### **C. Notification If Unable to Attend.**

If a CM is unable to attend an external committee meeting, the CM's office shall inform the committee alternate(s) as soon as practical. When an alternate is notified of the absence, the alternate shall attend the meeting unless the alternate is also unavailable. If the alternate is unable to attend, the alternate's office shall notify other members or alternates (if there are any).

## IX. COUNCIL BRIEFING MEETINGS

### A. Purpose, Procedure, and Scope.

The Council may, at the discretion of the Council President, hold Council Briefing meetings, chaired by the President, to discuss and receive briefings on issues of general interest. The President shall be Chair of the meetings. A quorum of three CMs is required at any Council Briefing meeting. The Council shall take no vote or other final action at any Council Briefing meeting, other than approving Council Briefing minutes or collectively signing documents.

### B. Attendance.

1. All CMs are expected to attend.
2. A CM should notify the Chair of an expected absence from the entire meeting at least one business day in advance. Otherwise, the CM shall notify the Chair as soon as practical.

### C. Location and Frequency.

1. Council Briefing meetings shall be held in the Council Chamber in Seattle City Hall, unless a specific alternate location is established by the President and appropriate public notice and access are provided.
2. Regular Council Briefing meetings shall be held at 2:00 p.m. each Monday, provided however that there shall be no regular Council Briefing meetings if Monday is a holiday. Regular meetings shall not be held on the last two Mondays in August nor on the last two Mondays in December. Council Briefing meetings may be canceled by the President at any time.
3. A special meeting is a meeting held at a time, date, or location that differs from a regular meeting. Special meetings may be scheduled by the committee Chair. Notices of special meetings shall be in accordance with RCW 42.30.080.

### D. Preliminary Agendas.

1. Preliminary agendas of upcoming regular Council Briefing meetings shall list items for which discussion is expected and shall be made available to the public. All reasonable effort shall be made to publish the preliminary agenda online at least two business days prior to the meeting.
2. For special Council Briefing meetings, all reasonable effort shall be made to publish the preliminary agenda online at least two business days prior to the meeting.
3. In accordance with 42.30.035 RCW, meeting minutes shall be promptly produced after each meeting and made available for public review.

## **X. EXECUTIVE SESSIONS**

### **A. When Sessions May Be Held.**

Executive sessions may be held during City Council meetings, Council Briefing meetings, standing or select committee meetings, whether regular or special meetings, and at other times as allowed by RCW 42.30.110 and 42.30.140 and SMC 5.24.020 and 5.24.030.

### **B. How Sessions May Be Convened.**

The presiding officer or a majority of those CMs in attendance may decide to convene an executive session during a particular meeting. An executive session may be ended by the presiding officer or by a majority vote of those CMs in attendance.

### **C. Purpose of Session.**

Before convening an executive session, the presiding officer shall announce the purpose of the executive session, and the time when the executive session is expected to conclude.

### **D. Attorney to be Present.**

1. An attorney from the Law Department, or outside counsel if appropriate, shall be present during all executive sessions to advise CMs on compliance with RCW 42.30.
2. The Council may choose to waive the attorney-client privilege regarding legal matters discussed with counsel at an executive session only if all nine CMs are in attendance and unanimously agree to waive the privilege. Legislative Department staff shall not waive the privilege. Executive session is the only forum in which the Council may waive attorney-client privilege for any attorney-client privileged documents presented to the Council in or out of executive session.

### **E. Attendees.**

Attendance at an executive session is limited to:

1. CMs;
2. Assistants to CMs representing their CM in absentia, and any assistant to the Chair of the committee with subject-matter jurisdiction of the matter at issue (assistants may be present but may not participate);
3. The City Clerk or designee;
4. Legal counsel assigned to the matter at issue;
5. Legal counsel for the Council;

6. The City Council's Central Staff Director and/or designees; and
7. Designated city staff members and others representing the City (e.g., consultants) who are directly involved in the issue and who have been invited by the presiding officer to attend.

**F. Confidentiality.**

Executive session attendees shall not disclose the contents of discussions held within the session. It is a virtual attendee's responsibility to ensure that unauthorized individuals do not have access to the attorney-client privileged contents of discussions.

**G. Issues.**

Issues that may be considered in executive session include, but are not limited to:

1. Consideration of the selection of a site or the acquisition of real estate by lease or purchase when public knowledge regarding such consideration would cause a likelihood of increased price;
2. Consideration of the minimum price at which real estate will be offered for sale or lease when public knowledge regarding such consideration would cause a likelihood of decreased price;
3. Evaluation of complaints against a public officer or employee;
4. Evaluation of qualifications of candidate for appointment to elective office;
5. Evaluation of qualifications of an applicant for public employment or to review the performance of a public employee;
6. Discussion with legal counsel regarding litigation or potential litigation to which the City or a CM acting in an official capacity is, or is likely to become, a party when public knowledge regarding the discussion is likely to result in an adverse legal or financial consequence; and
7. Planning or adopting the strategy or position to be taken during the course of collective bargaining or reviewing the proposals made in labor negotiations while in progress.

## **XI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS**

### **A. Public Sessions – Open to Public; Location.**

1. All meetings of the Council, and all meetings of standing and select committees (except executive sessions or as otherwise permitted by law), shall be open to the public and shall be conducted in a manner that provides the opportunity for attendees to hear and see the proceedings of CMs physically present and to hear any CMs attending by electronic means.  
(See Rule XI.J Inclusive Access and Participation – Requests for Reasonable Accommodation.)
2. The Council shall not adjourn its regular City Council meetings to any place other than its regular meeting place, which is the Council Chamber in Seattle City Hall, except as provided by law.<sup>i</sup>  
(See Rule II.A.2 City Council Meetings; and Rule XI.D.3 Disruptions of Council Meetings and Committee Meetings.)
3. Meetings of standing committees shall not convene in or adjourn to any place other than that committee’s regular meeting place, which is the Council Chamber in Seattle City Hall, unless a specific alternate location is established by the Chair with the concurrence of a majority of the committee’s regular CMs and appropriate public notice and access are provided.
4. Meetings of select committees may be held in the Council Chamber in Seattle City Hall, or an alternate location as established by the committee Chair so long as appropriate public notice and access are provided.

### **B. Public Hearings – Purpose; Duties of Chair.**

Public Hearings are opportunities for members of the public to speak on a particular proposed Ordinance, Resolution, Clerk File, Appointment, or other legislative action. If a Public Hearing is scheduled for a particular meeting, the agenda for the meeting shall specify the proposed Ordinance, Resolution, Clerk File, other legislative action, or other subject to be discussed at the public hearing.

(See Rule VI.F Duties of the Chair.)

1. Public hearings may be held as part of a scheduled City Council, select, or standing committee meeting, but the public hearing shall be conducted as a separate agenda item.
2. The Chair of the body conducting the public hearing shall:
  - a. Announce at the beginning of the public hearing the rules, guidelines, and time limits for individual speakers; and
  - b. Require all speakers to sign in on registers, when provided by Legislative Department staff.

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<sup>i</sup> Charter, Art. IV, § 6.

3. Members of the public who wish to speak at public hearings shall comply with Rule XI.D and XI.E.

**C. Public Comment at City Council Meetings and Committee Meetings.**

Public comment periods are opportunities for members of the public to comment on items on the meeting's agenda, or in the case of a committee meeting, on matters within the purview of the committee. The agenda for a particular Council meeting will specify the type of public comment accepted, and it may specify the total time allotted for the public comment period and time limits for individual comments.

(See Rule XI.B Public Hearings.)

1. The Council shall not accept oral public comment at special City Council meetings.
2. The Council shall accept oral and/or written public comment at regular City Council meetings.
  - a. Public comment at City Council meetings shall be limited to matters on the Introduction and Referral Calendar, Committee Reports on that day's regular City Council meeting agenda, and other matters directly related to the City Council Work Program.
  - b. The President shall ensure that all public comment is in accordance with Rule XI.C.2.a.
3. Council committees shall accept oral and/or written public comment at standing and select committee meetings.
  - a. Public comment at a committee meeting shall be limited to items listed on that day's agenda as well as matters within the purview of the committee.
  - b. The presiding officer at a committee meeting shall ensure that all public comment is in accordance with Rule XI.C.3.a.
4. Total public comment periods shall not exceed 20 minutes unless extended at the discretion of the presiding officer.
5. Individual speakers shall be provided up to two minutes total speaking time. Individuals who wish to speak shall sign up for public comment on registers, when provided by Legislative Department staff.  
(See Rule XI.J Inclusive Access and Participation – Requests for Reasonable Accommodation.)
6. When recognized by the presiding officer, the individual shall address the members in the form prescribed, state the individual's name for the record, and identify the item to which the individual shall speak. At the presiding officer's discretion, this Rule may be waived in the interest of personal safety of the person speaking.



7. Council and committee proceedings are electronically recorded; therefore, speakers wishing to address the Council or committee during the established public comment period shall speak only from the audio source prescribed.
8. If no speakers sign up to address the Council or the committee, or if the public comments conclude before the 20-minute time period has elapsed, the comment period shall be closed, and the Council or committee shall resume its business, with no further opportunity for public comment at that meeting.
9. The Council shall accept written public comment at Council Briefing meetings.
10. No public comments addressing the merits of a quasi-judicial action shall be permitted at any Council or committee meeting.
11. The Council President shall, in consultation with the Office of the City Clerk and in compliance with chapter 42.30 RCW, issue guidelines for the procedure by which public comment will be received in a hybrid meeting (such as those with both in-person and electronic participation).

**D. Disruptions of City Council Meetings and Committee Meetings.**

1. Disruptions of City Council and committee meetings are prohibited. Disruptions include but are not limited to the following:
  - a. Failure of a speaker to comply with the allotted time established for the individual speaker's public comment;
  - b. Outbursts from members of the public who have not been recognized by the presiding officer for public comment;
  - c. Comments that are not in compliance with Rule XI.C.2.a or XI.C.3.a, or that are unrelated to the particular proposed Ordinance, Resolution, Appointment, Clerk File, or other legislative action on which a public hearing is being held;
  - d. Delaying the orderly conduct or progress of the public comment period, including a failure to respect the process of accommodating individuals who wish to provide public comment;
  - e. Use of an allotted individual comment period for purposeful delay, including remaining silent or engaging in other activity without conveying a discernible message;
  - f. Standing in the center aisle or front row of the audience unless speaking as recognized by the presiding officer, waiting to speak during the public comment period, or gathering meeting materials distributed by Legislative Department staff;

- g. Holding or placement of a banner or sign in the Council Chamber in a way that endangers others or obstructs the free flow of pedestrians or the view of others attending a Council or Committee meeting;
  - h. Behavior, such as threats, personal attacks, or the use of racial, misogynistic, or gender-related slurs, or abusive language or other disorderly conduct, that intentionally disrupts, disturbs, or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of, or attendance or participation at, a Council or Committee meeting; or
  - i. Failure to follow the direction of a Presiding Officer or security official related to disruptions described in Rule XI.D.1.a-h.
2. Signs may be displayed during Council and committee meetings in a manner consistent with these Rules. Any written communication intended for a CM may be submitted to the City Clerk for distribution to the intended recipient.
  3. The presiding officer shall preserve the order and decorum of a Council or committee meeting at all times and has discretion to determine whether a disruption under this Rule XI.D has occurred. If an individual fails to comply with Rule XI.D.1, the presiding officer may issue an oral or written warning to the individual that the individual's behavior is out of order. An oral or written warning may be issued based on an individual's prior conduct at a Council or committee meeting. If the individual continues to engage in activity that violates Rule XI.D.1, the presiding officer may:
    - a. Terminate the individual's comment period;
    - b. Direct security staff of the prescribed forum to assist an individual to the individual's seat; or
    - c. Direct security staff of the prescribed forum to remove the individual from the meeting.
  4. Any individual ordered to be removed from a meeting pursuant to Rule XI.D.3.c shall be excluded from returning to that same meeting from which the individual was removed. If the individual has already been excluded from a prior meeting within the last year and disrupts a meeting again through the same or similar conduct that has been held to be a disruption under Rule XI.D.1, the presiding officer may take any of the actions available in Rule XI.D.3.a-c as an accompaniment to the oral or written warning.
  5. If an individual fails to comply with the requirements of Rule XI.D.1 over the course of multiple meetings, the presiding officer may exclude the individual from participation in future public comment periods before the Council and/or committee meetings, or exclude the individual from attendance at future Council and/or committee meetings.

- a. The presiding officer imposing the exclusion shall inform the individual of the specific reason for, and the specific terms of, the exclusion.
- b. An initial exclusion of an individual from future participation in public comment periods or future attendance at Council and/or committee meetings may be issued for up to 28 calendar days.
- c. If an individual is subject to an exclusion from future attendance at Council and/or committee meetings for a period of 28 calendar days, and further engages in activity that violates Rule XI.D.1, other than subsection c, within 90 days after the termination of the exclusion period, an additional exclusion from future attendance at Council and/or committee meetings may be issued for up to 180 calendar days.
- d. If an individual is subject to an exclusion from future attendance at Council and/or committee meetings for a period of 90 or more calendar days, and further engages in activity that violates Rule XI.D.1, other than subsection c, within 180 days after the termination of the exclusion period, an additional exclusion from future attendance at Council and/or committee meetings may be issued for up to 180 calendar days.
- e. The length of the period of any exclusion may depend upon the seriousness of the disruption, the number of disruptions, and the individual's prior record with conduct at Council or committee meetings.
- f. When issuing an exclusion from future public comment periods, or from future attendance at Council or committee meetings, the CM shall include specific notification that the individual may submit written comments to the City Clerk for distribution to the Council at future public comment periods.

**E. Abusive and Harassing Behavior During City Council Meetings and Committee Meetings.**

1. Engaging in abusive or harassing behavior may subject an individual to immediate removal from a meeting and an exclusion from future attendance at Council and/or committee meetings for a period of up to one year.
2. Abusive and harassing behavior means actions that purposefully or recklessly alarm other individuals and serve no legitimate advocacy purpose. Abusive and harassing behavior includes but is not limited to the following:
  - a. The use of obscene language and gestures;
  - b. Assaults or threatening behavior; or
  - c. Sexual misconduct, such as indecent exposure, offensive touching, or sexual harassment, including threats of such behavior.

3. Engaging in abusive or harassing behavior may subject an individual to criminal sanctions in addition to enforcement of the Council Rules.

**F. Appeals of Meeting Exclusions; Other Authority.**

1. The decision of any CM to impose a sanction or exclusion for disruptive activity may be overruled by a majority vote of those CMs in attendance either at the meeting where the disruption took place or at the next regularly scheduled City Council meeting.
2. Any individual excluded from participation in future public comment periods or from attendance at future Council or committee meetings for a period of more than two calendar days may appeal the exclusion by submitting a written appeal to the City Council within five business days after receiving notice of the exclusion. Upon receipt of a written appeal, the City Council shall consider the appeal at its next regularly scheduled open public meeting. The individual's exclusion from public comment periods or from attendance at Council or committee meetings shall remain in effect during the Council's consideration of the appeal.
3. The enforcement provisions of these rules are in addition to the authority of the Department of Finance and Administrative Services to enforce Rules of Conduct in City Hall pursuant to Rule 05-02, and Rules regarding City Buildings and Premises pursuant to Rule 06-03. Disruptions of a Council or committee meeting, including interference with City officials or City staff's preparation for a meeting, may be addressed under Rule 05-02 or Rule 06-03.

**G. Interruption(s) to City Council Meetings and Committee Meetings.**

1. It is the responsibility of the presiding officer to maintain order and adjourn any meeting as the presiding officer deems necessary.
2. If a meeting is interrupted by any person or by a group or groups of persons so as to render the orderly conduct of the meeting not feasible, and order cannot be restored by the removal of individuals who are interrupting the meeting, the members of the Council or the committee conducting the meeting may order the meeting room cleared and continue in session, or may adjourn the meeting and re-convene at another location selected by a majority vote of CMs present and voting. In such a session, final disposition may be taken only on matters appearing on the agenda. Representatives of the press or other news media, except those participating in the disturbance, shall be allowed to attend any session held pursuant to this Rule XI.G.
3. The Council or the committees may establish procedures for re-admitting an individual or individuals not responsible for disturbing the orderly conduct of the meeting.
4. If a meeting is adjourned due to an interruption, CMs and staff may leave the meeting room until the meeting is reconvened.  
(See RCW 42.30.050 Interruptions – Procedures.)

**H. Public Access to CMs and Offices.**

1. No individual other than the Legislative Department staff may approach the CMs or the Clerks while the Council or a committee is in session, unless permitted to do so by the President or Chair.
2. During committee meetings and Council Briefing meetings, no persons other than Legislative Department staff shall join the prescribed forum, unless specifically invited by the committee Chair to provide information necessary to committee business.
3. Physical access to CM office areas is limited and provided only in accordance with established policies and procedures of the Legislative Department.
4. Individuals desiring to electronically tape (audio, video, etc.) or photograph a CM or CMs within the CM office area(s) may only do so with the permission of the respective CM(s) or their respective staff members, when so delegated.
5. Access by media shall be in accordance with Legislative Department policy.
6. The presiding officer or designee may temporarily suspend or modify this Rule XI.H to protect the safe and responsible functioning of the Council.

**I. Digital Recording of Meetings.**

1. Public meetings of the Council shall be electronically recorded whenever feasible. The presiding officer or designee may temporarily suspend or modify this Rule XI.I.1 to protect the safe and responsible functioning of the Council.
2. Executive sessions and those meetings exempted from chapter 42.30 RCW shall not be recorded.
3. The City Clerk shall maintain custody of recordings made pursuant to Rule XI.I.1.

**J. Inclusive Access and Participation – Requests for Reasonable Accommodation and Requests for Translation or Interpretation Services.**

1. Assistive listening devices shall be available in the Council Chamber during all meetings of the Council and its committees, and in other rooms or places where the Council meets and where Council proceedings are broadcast.
2. Upon request, reasonable efforts to provide accommodations shall be made to enable persons with disabilities to attend and participate in all public Council meetings.
3. Upon request, reasonable efforts to provide translation or interpretation services shall be made for individuals attending Council meetings.
4. Because a request for an accommodation, translation, or interpretation services may require sufficient lead time to respond, the request should be made at the earliest

possible opportunity to the Office of the City Clerk at 206-684-8888 or TYY Relay 7-1-1.

5. The Office of the City Clerk shall evaluate all requests and provide reasonable accommodations and translation and interpretation services.
6. The Council shall adopt a Language Access plan that includes: goals for improving language access at the City Council; a timeline, resources, and communication strategy to achieve those goals; the scope of currently available interpreting services in both virtual and hybrid formats; the scope of translation services; and the process for requesting and receiving notice of arranged services.

**K. Use of the Council Chamber.**

1. Council business shall have priority over other uses of the Council Chamber.
2. Other uses of the Council Chamber shall be in accordance with Legislative Department policy.

## **XII. ALTERATION OF GENERAL RULES AND PROCEDURES**

### **A. Suspension.**

1. A rule or procedure not listed in Rule XII.A.2 may be temporarily suspended:
  - a. If a CM requests suspension and no objection is offered; or
  - b. In open session upon a two-thirds vote.

Any rule or procedure so suspended shall be announced by the presiding officer, after which the Council or committee shall proceed accordingly.

2. The following rules or procedures established by this document shall not be suspended:
  - a. This Rule XII.A;
  - b. Rule XII.B;
  - c. Rule V.G.1.b;
  - d. Rule X.F;
  - e. Those required by the Charter, the Seattle Municipal Code, or state law; and
  - f. Any part of a Rule that establishes a quorum.
3. The City Clerk shall provide a guide for compliance with this Rule XII.A, which guide is attached as Appendix A to these Rules.

### **B. Biennial Review.**

The President and City Clerk shall conduct and coordinate biennial reviews of the General Rules and Procedures of the Seattle City Council.

### **C. Amendment.**

Amendments of these General Rules and Procedures shall be by a majority vote of CMs and, if applicable, pursuant to SMC 3.02.030.