



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL
CENTRAL STAFF

Proposed Changes to Council Rules

Resolution 32096

ESTHER HANDY, DIRECTOR

GOVERNANCE, NATIVE COMMUNITIES AND TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS COMMITTEE

JULY 20, 2023

Background and Process

Section XII.B. of the Rules provides for the conduct of a biennial review of the Rules by the Council President and City Clerk.

The 2023 Council Rules Review Working Group is comprised of:

- Council President Debora Juarez (and/or designee);
- BrynDel Swift, Office of Council President Debora Juarez;
- Interim City Clerk Anne Frantilla;
- Interim Deputy Director of the Office of the City Clerk Ian Smith;
- Deputy City Clerks Linda Barron, Emilia M. Sanchez, and Jodee Schwinn;
- Central Staff Director Esther Handy;
- Legislative Legal Counsel Lauren Henry;
- Assistant City Attorney Gary Smith;
- and Code Revisor Brandon Isleib.

This group convened between April and July 2023 to review proposed changes to the Rules and make recommendations to the City Council.

Public Comment

1. Agendas must specify type of public comment (oral and/or written) accepted and requires the Council to accept written public comment for Council Briefings (XI.C).
2. Clarifies that the public may comment only upon agenda items during committee meetings with flexibility for Committee Chairs to expand scope to matters in the purview of the committee if published on the agenda (XI.C).
3. Requires the Council President, in consultation with the City Clerk and in compliance with [RCW 42.30](#), to issue guidelines for public comment in hybrid meetings. (XI.C.10).

Disruption & Accessibility

4. Increases specificity of language defining disrupting behavior in City Council meetings to
 - “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 interferes with the orderly conduct of meetings; and
 - extends the timelines in which those repeatedly violating the Council’s disruption rules may face exclusion from future meetings. A second offense within 90 days may receive up to 180 days exclusion; a subsequent offense within 180 days may also receive up to 180 days exclusion. (XI.D.- various subsections).

5. Creates a new requirement that the Council create and adopt a Language Access Plan (XI.J.6).

Participation in Hybrid Meetings

6. Removes language that requires Councilmembers to notify the Council President of their intent to participate and vote electronically at City Council meetings. (II.A.6, II.B.3, II.C.5).
7. Continues current practice of doing roll-call votes in a hybrid format; voice votes may only be used when all members are present in-person (V.C).
8. Requires virtual attendees of Executive sessions to ensure confidentiality of their virtual space, and attorney-client privileged contents of discussion (X.F).

Budget Committee Rules

9. Establishes the Mid-Biennial Review framework in the Rules (VII.H.3 & 9)
 - Budget Chair may (rather than shall) prepare a balancing package during the first year of a Biennial Budget, and will only do so during the Mid-Biennial Review if needed to respond to revenue forecast or significant change in budget assumptions; and
 - requires all Councilmember amendments in a Mid-Biennial review to be self-balancing

Committee Motions, Consent Calendar & Select Committees

10. Clarifies that committee members have the power to make, second, amend and vote on all motions in committee (VI.B.3).
11. Committee Chairs may recommend to the Council President agenda items from their committee to be placed on a consent calendar at City Council meetings if the matter received a unanimous vote and no abstentions (III.E).
12. Removes an outdated requirement that committee clerks provide notification to all Councilmembers of a divided vote in committee immediately after a meeting (VI.H.5a).
13. Changes the deadline for a committee to refer legislation to the next regular City Council meeting from Thursday at noon to 1pm (VI.H.4).
14. Select committee shall have a Vice Chair (VII.A).
15. When the Select Labor Committee is established, the list of members shall be filed in a Clerk File (VII.I).
16. Councilmembers are expected to attend Council Briefings and give one business day notice of expected absence (IX.B).

Primary Sponsor, Abstentions, Attendance & Executive Sessions

17. Requires legislation sponsored by Councilmembers to have a single primary sponsor and optional co-sponsors (III.A.1d & IV.A.2).
18. Councilmembers may abstain on all procedural, amending, and final votes on Resolutions at City Council meetings (V.A.2).
19. Clarifies that a motion to reconsider may be made at both Committee and City Council meetings, by a motion of a Councilmember who voted on the prevailing side; and clarifies when a motion to reconsider is made on a bill that has failed to pass at City Council, that reconsideration shall not be voted on before the next meeting of the City Council (V.G.1).
20. Clarifies that during debate, Councilmembers can speak for ten minutes at one time, rather than ten minutes total (IV.A.4).
21. Unexcused or on-call Councilmembers can be compelled to attend a meeting where there is not quorum; excused members cannot be compelled to attend (II.D.3).
22. Authorized attendees for Executive Session updated to include the Council's new Legislative Legal Counsel, any assistant to the Chair of the committee with subject-matter jurisdiction of the matter at issue who may observe, and to allow the Central Staff Director to designate multiple attendees (X.E).

Other Policy Considerations

Proposals not included Resolution 32096

Increase In-Person participation for City Council and Committee meetings

Add in-person attendance requirements for Council and Committee meetings with the following listed exceptions and notice requirements for remote participation (II.D).

- a. Traveling for work-related business.
- b. Working off-site to attend to the needs of a family member or friend.
- c. Working from home to prevent the spread of infectious disease.
- d. The meeting is held offsite, such as a public hearing at a community center.
- e. The meeting is scheduled to occur after normal business hours when family obligations may require that Councilmembers work from home.

When attending meetings remotely, Councilmembers must have their video on for roll call and when voting (in alignment with protocol at the State Legislature).

Notice of remote attendance at Council Briefings and City Council meetings must be provided to the Council President by 9:00 a.m. on Monday and Tuesday morning, respectively. Notice of remote attendance at committee meetings must be provided to the Chair by 5:00 p.m. on the day prior to the scheduled meeting.

Presentations delivered to a standing or select committee by a department director, a division manager, or a member of Central Staff should be given in-person, except where not practicable.

Other Policy Considerations

Proposals not included Resolution 32096

Increase Finance Committee Oversight of Fiscal Impact of Legislation

- Include a provision to either allow or require any bill that involves a financial obligation to go to the Finance Committee AND subject matter committee (III.A.1.c).

Proposals Not Advanced by the Working Group

The proposals which the Working Group declined to recommend include:

1. A proposal requiring the Seattle Channel to broadcast the images of public commenters. The Working Group declined to recommend this amendment, citing equity concerns to place all public commenters, including those appearing by phone rather than in person, on equal footing when testifying to the Council. The workgroup instead advanced a rule that requires the Council President to set the protocols for how public comment will be accepted in consultation with the City Clerk.
2. A proposal clarifying that an amendment can be re-introduced if it failed in committee. The working group determined that this principle is already memorialized in the existing rules and no further edits were needed. (See Rule V.G.4)
3. A proposal clarifying whether a Chair has the authority to prevent an amendment from being heard. The Working Group determined that the Rules sufficiently articulate that the Chair cannot prevent an amendment from being heard. Therefore, no further edits were needed. (See Rule IV.C.)

Next Steps

- Councilmembers should submit any amendment requests to Central Staff Director Esther Handy by **Friday, July 21, 2023**.
- Next committee discussion and possible vote: **August 3, 2023**.

Questions?