

Meeting Processes and the Simplified Rules of Procedure

City Clerk's Office

November 22, 2023



Principles of the Rules of Procedure: the Rights of Members

- The majority of members have the right to decide
- The minority of members have the right to be heard
- All members have the right to the same information to help make decisions
- Members have a right to an efficient meeting
- All members have the right to be treated with respect and courtesy
- All members have equal rights, privileges and obligations

Open Meetings

- All meetings are open to the public
- Advance notice of the meeting and all agenda items must be given
- All consideration and debate of agenda items takes place at the meeting
- Meetings are streamed on-line with closed captioning, during regular business hours
- The Committee may close a meeting to the public if the subject of debate falls under one of the exceptions to the open meeting rules in the City of Toronto Act
- Examples:
 - Personal matters about an identifiable individual, including a city employee or a local board employee
 - Litigation or potential litigation affecting the city

Role of the Chair

- Presides at the meetings
- Maintains order and decorum in the meeting
- Makes procedural rulings
- Determines the order of questioning or speaking
- Rules on whether motions are in order
- Determines when all Members who wish to speak have spoken and are ready to vote, and ensures Members understand what they are voting on
- May call, cancel or reschedule meetings

The Vice Chairs have all the powers and performs all the duties of the Chair in the Chair's absence

Responsibilities of Members

- Attend scheduled meetings
- Carefully consider and make decisions about meeting business
- Vote on motions put to a vote
- Speak respectfully, listen attentively, and not interrupt the proceedings
- Refrain from using any offensive, disrespectful or unparliamentary language about any member, City Officials or other City employee, or City Council
- Speak only on the matter or motions under discussion
- Respect the confidentiality of matters discussed in closed session and not disclose the subject or substance of these discussions
- Obey the Chair's rulings and Council's decisions

Order of Business at a Meeting

- The Chair calls the meeting to order once quorum is present
- Confirmation of Minutes
- The Committee considers each Item one at a time
- Once the agenda is complete, the Chair adjourns the meeting – no motion required

A meeting agenda

- Prepared by the Committee Secretary
- Closes ten business days before meeting
- Published five business days before meeting, and distributed to members (via weblink)
- Is a “live” document once published – revisions are updated in real time

Agenda Items

- Items must be within the Committee's Terms of Reference, and submitted to the Secretary by the agenda closing
- Staff from the Clerk's Office and the People and Equity Accessibility Unit, are able to assist you, if you wish to put an item on the agenda

Who can add Items to an Agenda?

- A member of the Advisory Committee
- City Council
- A Council Committee
- A local board of the City
- A City official

- Every item has a unique identifier
- Some items are Ward-specific
- Some items originate with a report or letter
- Some items have recommendations for the Committee to consider

On Each Item

- Chair identifies the Item
- Staff presentation (if there is one)
- Public Speakers – Members may ask questions of public speakers
- Members may ask questions of Staff
- Members may make remarks and move motions
- Members vote on motions

How do Council Advisory Bodies give advice?

- The Advisory Committee may:
 - Make recommendations to City Officials on matters within their jurisdiction
 - Make recommendations to a Council Committee
 - Make recommendations to City Council on a matter on the Council agenda
- The Advisory Committee must make a decision on every agenda item
- Through its decisions, the Committee fulfills its role as a Council Advisory Body
- A recommendation that requires action by City Officials or City Council must first be considered by the appropriate Council Committee and, when necessary, approved by City Council.

Motions

- A decision is made by voting on a proposal contained in a motion
- The Committee may, by motion, decide to:
 - **Receive** the Item for information
 - **Defer** the item to a future meeting
 - **Adopt** the recommendation(s)
 - **Amend** or add new recommendation(s)
- City Clerk's Office staff will assist members with preparing their motions
- Motions are typed and displayed and should be read aloud so that all Members hear and understand the proposal.
- Motions do not need to be seconded
- The Chair will rule motions which are not within the mandate of the Committee out of order.

Voting

- All Members present must vote (unless prevented by law)
- Majority vote is required to pass a motion
- Motion fails if the vote is tied
- Members may vote by a show of hands or may ask to have the vote recorded in the minutes

Other Meeting Matters

- Quorum
 - The minimum number of members required to be present to conduct business at the meeting
 - In our case: a majority of the total membership
 - Quorum must be present within 30 minutes of the scheduled start time of the meeting
 - If no quorum present, the meeting cannot take place
- Absence
 - Let the Clerk and the Chair know in advance
 - Chair will move to excuse absent members at the end of the meeting
 - If you are absent from 3 meetings in a row, without being excused by motion, your seat becomes vacant and you are no longer a member

Minutes & How to Follow Decisions

- Minutes are prepared without note and comment, they include motions, votes, decisions and attendance
- Agendas, Minutes and all meeting information are posted online <http://www.toronto.ca/council>
- Subscribe to e-updates to receive notification about any Council, Committee or Board agendas and minutes <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/e-updates/subscribe.htm>

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