

# RULES OF THE CITY COUNCIL, ADOPTED DECEMBER 11, 2025

## Meetings

Rule 1. Regular meetings of the city council shall be held at such time and place as the city council may establish by ordinance pursuant to section 2-5(d) of the City Charter. Special meetings of the city council may be convened by the mayor, by the president of the city council, or by six members of the city council as provided by sections 2-5(e) and 3-10(b) of the City Charter.

Rule 2. The city clerk shall schedule an annual caucus at 6:30 pm on the Tuesday preceding Thanksgiving to conduct a poll of the members and members-elect, as the case may be, to express their preference as to the election of the president and vice president of the city council for the upcoming year.

Rule 3. The seats of the members of the city council shall be numbered and assigned by drawing the names of the members and the numbers of the seats simultaneously, annually, at the first meeting of the city council. The president and vice president shall sit in the last two seats, respectively.

Rule 4. The city clerk shall prepare the agenda for a meeting, post it, and distribute it to all members in accordance with MGL c. 30A §§ 18-25 as amended, with regulations promulgated thereunder, hereinafter called the open meeting law. Any matter submitted by a non-member shall only appear on the agenda if it is in the hands of the city clerk by the close of business four workdays before the meeting (Friday by 12:30 pm for a regular Thursday meeting). Any matter submitted by a member shall only appear on the agenda if it is in the hands of the city clerk by the close-start of business three-two workdays before the meeting (Monday Tuesday by 8:30 am for a regular Thursday meeting). Any item submitted after these times may-but-by-the close-of-business-one-workday-before-the-meeting (Wednesday for a regular Thursday meeting) shall be added to the agenda as a supplemental item if the city council president, in consultation with the city clerk, determines that the item could not have been reasonably anticipated and the nature of the item requires immediate action by the city council, subject to the requirements of the open meeting law. The agenda and supplement shall be made available to all members of the city council by 3 pm on the day of the meeting. Any additional item not included in the agenda or supplement that the city clerk presents, if challenged, shall be accepted only by a two-thirds vote of the city council.

Rule 5. A majority of the entire membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. A member participating remotely must be visible on camera, or, if video is not reasonably practicable, able to be clearly and identifiably heard to be recognized as present for the purpose of establishing quorum. The presiding officer shall take the chair at the hour fixed or to which the city council has recessed, and shall convene the meeting. If a quorum is not present at such time, then the presiding officer shall recess such meeting until a quorum is in attendance, but if a quorum fails to materialize within thirty minutes of the time originally set forth, then the presiding officer shall adjourn such meeting forthwith.

Rule 6. No employee of the city government, except the city attorney, shall be required to appear before the city council unless fourteen day's written notice shall have been given to the employee, following approval by a majority vote of the city council. Such notice shall be prepared by the city clerk and shall describe the matter that the city council is interested in discussing.

Rule 7. Written minutes of the city council meeting, which shall include a record of the proceedings, describing the disposition of each agenda item and any votes taken, and a synopsis of the discussion, shall be maintained by the city clerk and approved by the city council, as prescribed by the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order and the requirements of the open meeting law.

Rule 8. Each meeting of the city council or any of its committees shall be video recorded whenever video recording equipment is available and operable. In the absence of video recording equipment, an audio recording shall be made whenever audio recording equipment is available and operable. The city clerk shall ensure that the recording is made available for public review on the city council's web portal. Subject to direction from the city attorney, executive session meetings shall not be recorded by video or audio, but minutes for such meetings shall be kept by the city clerk.

Rule 9. Minutes of executive sessions shall be recorded by a recorder of the city council's choosing and presented to the chair for approval. Members shall have seven days from adjournment of the executive session to request a review by the committee, and if such request is made, the chair shall schedule a meeting to facilitate such review in accordance with the open meeting law as soon as reasonably practicable. Once approved, the minutes shall be sealed and presented to the city clerk, who shall thereafter maintain them. All executive session minutes shall remain confidential until the city council votes in open session to release them. The city clerk and city attorney shall, at least every six months, prepare a recommendation to the city council as to which minutes should be released pursuant to the open meeting law.

### **Presiding Officer**

Rule 10. The president of the city council or, in their absence, the vice president, shall take the chair and preside at the meeting. At any meeting of the city council, in the absence of the president and vice president the member with the most years of service present shall preside until a president pro tempore is elected.

Rule 11. The presiding officer shall preserve decorum and order and may speak to points of order in preference to other members. The presiding officer shall be entitled to call a recess of up to five minutes in duration when deemed appropriate. The presiding officer shall decide all questions of order and shall be the determinant on all interpretations of these rules. If any member wishes to appeal such decision or determination, that member shall make a motion, and if it is seconded, then no other business shall be in order until the question on appeal is decided by a majority vote of the city council.

Rule 12. The presiding officer may refuse to allow any items which in their opinion do not have a direct bearing on the business of the city council. These items shall be placed on file and shall not be further considered.

Rule 13. The president may express an opinion on any subject under debate, but in such case shall leave the chair and the vice president shall preside. The president may state facts and give opinions on questions of order without leaving the chair.

Rule 14. The presiding officer shall declare all votes, but if any member doubts the vote, the chair, without further debate, shall require the members to vote in the affirmative or negative by roll call, and shall declare the result only after all members present have voted. No member shall be recorded on any vote unless they are visible on camera, or, if video is not reasonably practicable, able to be clearly and identifiably heard if participating remotely, or voicing their vote into the microphone at their assigned seat if physically present.

Rule 15. The presiding officer shall name the member who shall first be heard, whenever two or more members address the chair at the same time.

Rule 16. When a question is under debate before the city council or a committee of the city council, the presiding officer shall entertain no motion but:

- (1) to adjourn,
- (2) to lay on the table,

- (3) for the previous question,
- (4) to postpone to a day certain,
- (5) to refer to a committee,
- (6) to amend,
- (7) to postpone indefinitely, or
- (8) to recess.

These motions shall be decided by a majority vote of those present and shall take precedence in the order in which they are arranged, and the first two shall be decided without debate. On a motion for the previous question no more than five minutes shall be allowed for debate and no member shall speak except in opposition to the motion or for more than two minutes. All questions of order arising after a motion for the previous question shall be decided without debate, except on appeal, and on appeal no member shall speak more than two minutes or more than once. The adoption of the previous question shall put an end to all debate and bring the city council to a direct vote upon pending amendments, if any, and then upon the main question.

### **Rights and Duties of Members**

Rule 17. Members shall not act in a disrespectful, abusive or threatening manner towards members of the community, other elected or appointed officials, and city employees. Members shall participate and interact in city council and committee meetings with dignity and decorum fitting those who hold a position of public trust.

Rule 18. Every member when about to speak, shall address the president or committee chair, as the case may be, and shall confine themselves to the question under debate, avoiding personal remarks at all times.

Rule 19. Any member may sponsor an employee of city government to address the city council on any matter properly before the city council, or request the reading of any item in full, unless such sponsorship or reading is objected to by any member. Upon such objection, the address or reading shall occur only by majority vote of the city council.

Rule 20. Any member of the city council, or a committee of the city council, may sponsor a member of the public to address the city council, or committee, on any matter properly before the city council, or committee, as the case may be, unless such sponsorship is objected to by any member. Upon such objection, the address shall occur only by a two-thirds vote of the entire membership of the city council, or by a majority vote of the committee members present.

Rule 21. In accordance with the provisions of MGL c. 233, § 8, the city council is hereby authorized to issue subpoenas for the attendance of witnesses and/or the production of books and papers as to matters within their authority at a hearing of the city council or any committee thereof. If any member of the city council wishes to have such a subpoena issued to compel the appearance of a witness and/or the production of books and papers to a meeting of the city council, or a committee thereof, the member shall move to have such a subpoena issued. Upon the approval of a majority of the members of the city council, the city clerk shall issue such subpoena.

Rule 22. No member shall speak on the same question more than once unless all other members who wish to speak have already spoken. No member shall speak on any subject for more than five consecutive minutes without having first relinquished the floor to any other member who wishes to speak on the subject. No member shall interrupt another, except on a point of order, a request for information, or a question of personal privilege.

Rule 23. No member shall vote or serve on any committee where the subject under debate concerns their private interest, as opposed to the public interest. Otherwise, every member who is present when a question is put shall vote in the affirmative or negative unless excused from doing so by the city council. Application to be so excused shall be made before the vote is taken.

Rule 24. No member shall represent the city council unless appointed to do so by the president.

## **Committees**

Rule 25. The president shall annually, as soon after the organization of the city council as may be convenient, appoint the members to the following standing committees, and any special committees they may choose to create. The president may, at any time, and for any reason, change the membership of any committee. The president shall not serve as chair or vice chair of any standing committee.

- (1) Confirmation of Appointments and Personnel Matters (five members)
- (2) Finance (five members)
- (3) Housing, Community Development and Equity (three members)
- (4) Land Use (five members)
- (5) Legislative Matters (five members)
- (6) Licenses and Permits (three members)
- (7) Public Health and Public Safety (three members)
- (8) School Building Facilities and Maintenance (three members)
- (9) Sustainability and Infrastructure (three members)
- (10) Traffic and Parking (three members)

Rule 26. The member first named on each committee shall be its chair. In the case of the chair's resignation, inability to serve or absence, the other members in the order in which they are named shall call meetings of the committee and act as chair, subject to the provisions of Rule 25. The most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall be the authority on all questions of debate in committee wherever they do not conflict with the several rules of the city council that apply to committees.

Rule 27. A majority of a committee shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. A member participating remotely must be visible on camera, or, if video is not reasonably practicable, able to be clearly and identifiably heard to be recognized as present for the purpose of establishing quorum. The chair shall take the chair at the hour fixed or to which the committee has recessed, and shall convene the meeting. The chair shall preserve decorum and order. If a quorum is not present at such time, then the chair shall recess such meeting until a quorum is in attendance, but if a quorum fails to materialize within thirty minutes of the time originally set forth, then the chair shall adjourn such meeting forthwith, and shall prepare a report of the committee indicating such.

Rule 28. The chair of any committee may call and preside at a meeting of the committee of the whole, to include all members of the city council, pursuant to the notice requirements of the open meeting law, whenever they determine that such a meeting shall facilitate the consideration of an item before the committee. In such case, a majority of the entire membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. In other respects, the provisions of Rule 27 shall apply to these meetings.

Rule 29. The chair of each committee shall determine the agenda for each committee meeting, and shall include in said agenda any items that the committee previously voted to include on the agenda for the meeting in question. The clerk of committees shall prepare the agenda and the report of the meeting, which shall include the disposition of each agenda item and any roll call votes taken. Any document submitted to the members of the committee in connection with the main item under discussion during the committee

meeting shall be identified in the report. The clerk shall insure that all such items are readily available for viewing during searches of the main item on the web portal for the city council. The report shall be approved by the chair and submitted to the city council for action at its next meeting. In no case shall this preclude a member not in agreement from submitting a minority report. The clerk shall also prepare the minutes of the meeting, which shall consist of the committee's actions, decisions, and votes, with a summary of any discussions, as prescribed by the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order and the requirements of the open meeting law. The minutes shall be approved by the committee at a subsequent meeting. No committee shall act by separate consultation and no report shall be received by the city council unless the subject thereof shall have been considered in committee actually assembled.

Rule 30. All items of business reported adversely by a committee shall contain the endorsement, "recommended to be not approved" on such order, ordinance, resolution, petition or other matter, and if the report is accepted, the matter shall be disposed of.

Rule 31. Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, if less than a quorum of the full city council attends a committee meeting, the visiting members may participate in full discussion. However, if a quorum of the full city council is present at the committee meeting, the visiting members must sit in the audience and participate as members of the public and may not deliberate.

### **Order of Business**

Rule 32. At every meeting of the city council the order of business shall be as follows:

- (1) Opening ceremonies, including roll call, a salute to the Flag of the United States of America, and the approval of the minutes.
- (2) Citations.
- (3) Public hearings.
- (4) Ordinances, orders, resolutions and motions of members.
- (5) Unfinished business.
- (6) Reports of committees.
- (7) Communications of the mayor.
- (8) Communications of city officers.
- (9) New business.
- (10) Supplemental items.

Rule 33. All items on the agenda shall be acted upon in the order in which they are read by the city clerk, unless the city council shall otherwise direct by majority vote of the members present. All items shall be read by their titles only, unless any member requests a reading pursuant to Rule 19.

Rule 34. No report of a committee shall be acted upon by the city council unless it is printed on the agenda of a meeting.

Rule 35. After a motion or item is stated or read before the city council it shall be deemed to be in possession of the city council and shall be disposed of by vote, but the mover may withdraw it at any time before a decision or amendment if no objection is made.

Rule 36. Every motion shall be reduced to writing if the presiding officer so directs or if any member so requests. A motion need not be seconded, either before the city council or a committee of the city council, except as provided in Rule 11.

Rule 37. A question containing two or more propositions may be divided whenever such division can clearly be made, and such division shall be determined by a majority vote of the members present. A member may sever an item from a committee report in order to separately vote on that item from the remainder of the report if determined favorably by a majority vote of the members present.

Rule 38. Every item shall, after its passage, remain in the possession of the city clerk until 12 noon of the second weekday (Saturdays and holidays excepted) following the day of the meeting at which final action was taken. If, during that time, notice of intent to move for reconsideration is filed with the city clerk, then such item shall be considered unfinished business before the city council. If, during that time, no notice of intent to move for reconsideration is filed with the city clerk, then such item shall be considered as having passed out of the custody of the city council.

Rule 39. A motion for reconsideration shall only be made by a member on the prevailing side. No motion for reconsideration shall be made upon any of the following motions: to adjourn, for a roll call vote, to lay on the table, or for the previous question. On a motion for reconsideration no more than twenty minutes shall be allowed for debate, and no member shall speak more than two minutes. No motion for reconsideration shall be made during a meeting at which final action on a matter has been taken except by two-thirds vote of the entire membership. No motion shall be twice reconsidered, but this shall not prevent the city council from reconsideration of any matter vetoed by the mayor.

Rule 40. Petitions for licenses or permits shall, upon their receipt by the city council, be referred to the committee on licenses and permits unless a motion to approve without referral to committee is approved by two-thirds of the entire membership.

Rule 41. Appointments and reappointments subject to confirmation and personnel matters shall, upon receipt by the city council, be referred to the committee on confirmation of appointments and personnel matters unless a motion to approve without referral to committee is approved by two-thirds of the entire membership.

Rule 42. Mayor's requests for direct appropriations, transfers, tax levies or loans shall, upon receipt by the city council, be referred to the committee on finance unless a motion to approve without referral to committee is approved by two-thirds of the entire membership.

Rule 43. Proposed ordinances relating to zoning shall, upon receipt by the city council, be referred to the committee on land use and to the planning board.

Rule 44. Proposed ordinances not above described shall, upon receipt by the city council, be referred to the committee on legislative matters.

Rule 45. On all matters not described in Rule 40 through Rule 44, the presiding officer shall determine how the matter shall be disposed of, unless a majority of members present shall vote otherwise.

Rule 46. No endorsement of any kind, except reports of committees, shall be made upon any items referred to committee.

Rule 47. Any item referred to a committee and not acted on within sixty days of such referral may be ordered for discharge from that committee by any member upon a vote of a majority of the entire membership.

## **Orders, Ordinances and Resolutions**

Rule 48. All orders, ordinances and resolutions shall be submitted by the member who presents them, or by an authorized representative. Any member may solicit more than a quorum of the city council to co-sponsor an order, ordinance, resolution, or citation, but any discussion or deliberation which reaches a quorum of the members must occur in open session. The solicitation should instruct that questions or discussions be withheld until the city council next meets in open session.

Rule 49. Up to a subquorum of the city council (one to no more than five members) may sponsor an order, resolution or ordinance and request the clerk of committees to email the remaining members as to whether they wish to co-sponsor that item. The names of the members who originally sponsor the item may be identified in that communication from the clerk of committees. The remaining members may only respond to the clerk of committees directly as to whether they wish to co-sponsor the item, and may not notify any members of their decision. Any agendas published for the meeting at which the item will appear shall only reveal the names of the original member(s) who sponsored the item. The names of any additional co-sponsors who favorably responded to the communication from the clerk of committees shall only be disclosed when the city clerk reads the item at the meeting at which the item is on the agenda. The sponsorship of an item does not commit a member to ultimately vote in favor of the item.

Rule 50. In all votes, when the city council expresses an action by way of command the form of expression shall be, "ordered"; and when the city council expresses an opinion, principles, facts or request, the form shall be "resolved."

Rule 51. Every order and resolution shall be read a single time before the question on final adoption is taken, unless it is referred to a committee.

Rule 52. A copy of every proposed ordinance and home rule petition shall be made available to each member at the start of the meeting at which its approval is expected to be under consideration.

Rule 53. A copy of every ordinance, before being enrolled, shall be made available to each member. No ordinance once enrolled shall be amended. No ordinance shall be passed through all its stages of legislation at the same session, except by a two-thirds vote of the entire membership taken by roll call.

Rule 54. On the first occasion that the question on adoption of a measure is put to the city council, a single member may object to the taking of the vote and postpone the vote until the next meeting of the city council, whether regular or special. If 2 or more members object, the vote shall be postponed until the next regular meeting. This procedure shall not be used more than once for any specific matter regardless of whether it has been amended. The invocation of a member's rights under this rule or under section 2-9(b) of the City Charter shall have privilege over all motions; provided, however, that it shall be raised prior to or at the call for a vote by the presiding officer and at that time all debate pertaining to the item shall cease. Any matter postponed under this rule shall be considered unfinished business at subsequent meetings, but shall remain on the table until removed by a majority vote of the city council.

Rule 55. Every ordinance or other measure as required by law adopted or passed by the city council, except any matters relating to the internal affairs of the city council, shall be presented to the mayor for approval. If the mayor approves the measure, the mayor shall sign it. If the mayor disapproves the measure, the mayor shall return it to the city council with the specific reason for disapproval attached in writing. The city council shall enter the objections of the mayor on its records and reconsider the measure at its subsequent regular meeting. If the city council, regardless of the disapproval by the mayor, again passes the identical measure by affirmative vote of not less than 8 members of the city council, the measure shall then be deemed in force. If the mayor has neither signed a measure nor returned it to the city council within 10 days following the date it was presented to the mayor, the measure shall be deemed approved and in force.

Rule 56. After an order or resolution is adopted by the city council, the presiding officer may refer such item to a committee of the city council unless the majority of members present shall vote otherwise. In that event, the clerk shall note on the item that it was adopted by the city council and referred to a committee for further action. Whenever the committee discusses such item at a committee meeting, the committee report shall report on the action. When the committee, by a majority vote at a committee meeting, has determined that it has completed its work on the item, the committee report shall note that it is the recommendation of the committee that the item be returned to the full city council. If the committee's recommendation is accepted by the city council, then the clerk shall note on the item that it was returned by the committee to the city council with the date. No item shall be referred by the presiding officer to more than one committee.

Rule 57. Whenever any order, ordinance, resolution or other matter shall have been finally rejected by vote of the city council, no measure embodying substantially the same subject matter shall be acted upon by the city council, by any committee or member within six months of the date of its rejection.

### **Duties of the Clerks**

Rule 58. The city clerk shall have charge of all journals, records and documents of the city council and shall attest all warrants. They may make changes to correct the form of an item once acted on by the city council but prior to its presentation to the mayor, provided that its substance is not thereby affected. They shall maintain the papers and all documents for which no other provision has been made by law or ordinance. They shall keep and submit minutes of every meeting of the city council, which shall become the official record of the city council's actions upon acceptance by the city council. The city clerk shall be the clerk of the city council, and they or their designee shall attend all meetings, shall record the names of the members present and shall keep a record of all votes and proceedings.

Rule 59. The clerk of committees or in their absence the assistant clerk of committees shall keep a list of committees and their respective memberships posted in a convenient place in the committee room of the city council. They shall prepare correspondence for each committee, and keep a record of every item of business before each committee. They shall notify every member of the city council of all committee meetings and shall prepare the agenda and minutes of each committee meeting. They shall prepare and deliver to the city clerk all orders, ordinances and resolutions. They shall conduct research, prepare reports and perform such other functions and have such other duties as the president or any committee, by majority vote, shall from time to time direct. The clerk of committees and assistant clerks of committees shall be directly responsible to the president of the city council.

Rule 60. The city clerk shall schedule usage of the council chambers and committee room for the city council or other city boards, committees, commissions, or departments. The committee room, however, shall only be scheduled business days between the hours of 8:30 am and 4:30 pm. The city council reserves the right to use the rooms at any time, even if they had previously been scheduled by another entity. The rooms may not be used by other entities without the expressed consent of the president. Use of the rooms may be withheld from any group that, in the opinion of the president or city clerk, does not leave them in a clean and orderly condition.

### **Suspension or Alteration of the Rules, Parliamentary Authority**

Rule 61. No standing rule of the city council shall be suspended unless either two-thirds of the entire membership consents or the rule to be suspended specifies otherwise. No objection to suspension of the rules shall be deemed as an objection under Rule 54 or section 2-9(b) of the City Charter.

Rule 62. Every amendment to a rule, proposed new rule or repeal of a rule shall be forwarded to each member of the city council and shall be referred to the committee on legislative matters, or any appropriate special committee, which shall recommend its adoption or rejection. Two-thirds vote of the entire membership shall be required to amend, add or repeal a rule of the city council.

Rule 63. The rules of parliamentary procedure, as contained in the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order and interpreted by the city clerk, shall be the authority on all questions of debate or parliamentary usage wherever they do not conflict with the rules of the city council.