



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – January 23, 2019 Agenda Item 4

Work Session

Review of City Council Meeting Procedures

Recommended Council Action

Review and discuss the procedures in preparation for adoption by resolution.

Context with Key Issues

The City Council reviews and adopts meeting procedures annually to enable meetings to run smoothly and to make the meeting process transparent for residents. The current procedures were adopted on January 24, 2018.

The new draft procedures reflect the change to the normal order of business that was implemented last fall. Presentations or reports are heard before public comments. The Voting Session follows public comments on voting items. Other public comments are heard after the Voting Session.

The draft also provides more detail about how public hearings are held. Brief descriptions of Special Meetings and alternative meeting structures have been added.

Council Priority

Engaged, Responsive & Service-oriented Government

Environmental Considerations

Not applicable.

Fiscal Considerations

Adoption of the procedures is not anticipated to have a fiscal impact.

Racial Equity Considerations

Providing clear guidelines for Council meeting procedures, including public participation at meetings and public hearings, helps ensure that those who wish to participate may do so and facilitates engagement by residents in the City. The Council strives to identify and address barriers to participation in public meetings, especially for historically underserved and underrepresented populations in the City, and for this reason reviews and updates these procedures yearly.

Attachments and Links

- Draft City Council Meeting Procedures
- [Takoma Park Code, Ch. 2.04, Meetings and Procedures of the Council](#)

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
CITY COUNCIL MEETING PROCEDURES
DRAFT (January 17, 2019)**

1. Meeting Day and Time

Regular City Council meetings will commence at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays unless otherwise advertised.

2. Meeting Notices

City Council meeting dates are regularly listed in the City Newsletter. At a minimum, meeting agendas are posted on the Community Center bulletin board, on the City website, and are sent out weekly by email to those who sign up to receive them.

3. Parliamentary Authority

Robert's Rules of Order is the recognized authority as to any matter of procedure not covered by the Takoma Park Code or these procedures.

4. Quorum

A majority of the Council shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of transacting business except as otherwise provided in the City Charter. A member of the City Council may attend a meeting of the Council (and be present for voting) through electronic communication pursuant to the Special Rules for Electronic Participation (see No. 18).

5. Voting

Pursuant to the City Code, the affirmative vote of a majority of Councilmembers present at a meeting shall be required for adoption of an ordinance or resolution. Unless stated otherwise, a majority vote is more than one-half the votes cast by the Councilmembers present at a meeting. There are some circumstances that expressly require a vote by a majority of all members of the Council or a vote of two-thirds of the entire Council. For example, actions involving spending funds that were not appropriated in the budget or spending funds for other than the budgeted purpose require an affirmative vote of two-thirds of the entire Council.

6. Regular Order of Business

The normal order of business at Regular Meetings is as follows:

- a. Call to Order / Roll Call
- b. Additional Agenda Items/Agenda Scheduling Update
- c. Public Hearings (if any)

- d. Adoption of Minutes
- e. For the Record (reading of proclamations, awards, etc.)
- f. Presentations or Reports (if any)
- g. Public Comments on Voting Items (if there is a voting session)
- h. Voting Session
- i. General Public Comments
- j. Council Comments
- k. City Manager Comments
- l. Work Session

7. Public Comments

The public is invited to comment at each Regular City Council Meeting. Advance sign up is not required unless noted on the meeting agenda.

a. Public Comments on Voting Items

When there is a voting session, public comments on voting items are called just before the voting session begins.

b. General Public Comments

After a voting session and before Council Comments, the public is invited to comment on any topic.

When the time for public comment is announced, speakers who wish to address the Council should come to the podium and state their name and street for the record. For speakers who are unable to stand at the podium, they will be recognized by the Mayor and provided a microphone to speak. In addition, hearing assistance devices are available upon request.

Comments are limited to three minutes each. Speakers may not cede their time to others.

If a speaker believes that their comments need to extend more than three minutes and that the additional information cannot be provided in written form, the commenter should contact the Mayor at least 24 hours before the meeting to request permission for an additional one to two minutes. Comments by members of the public that would last more than five minutes may be allowed in exceptional circumstances, but must be approved by the Mayor and scheduled so that they can be added to the agenda.

To ensure that everyone who wants to comment has the time to do so, members of the public are expected to only speak once during general public comments. However, a speaker representing a committee or an organization may speak twice in order to present their personal comment if different from the position of the committee or organization.

All those present at Council meetings shall respectfully permit speakers to express their opinions without interruption.

When a speaker asks questions during public comments, to the extent possible responses are typically provided later in the meeting during Council Comments or City Manager Comments, or information may be provided at a future meeting in City Manager Comments.

a. Visual or Audiovisual Materials

Requests to show visual or audiovisual materials during public comments or hearings must be submitted to the Mayor at least 24 hours in advance. If the request is approved, the digital file or link to the file must be emailed to the City Clerk (clerk@takomaparkmd.gov) no later than noon the day of the meeting or hearing. Flash drives (thumb drives) are not permitted for use at the meeting.

b. Written or Audio Testimony

Written comments and testimony are always welcome, either in lieu of or in addition to spoken testimony. The written material should be submitted to the City Clerk (preferably in electronic form). Written testimony will be copied to the Council, included in the official record of the meeting or hearing, and appended to the minutes. Audio testimony is also welcome.

8. Public Hearings

The City Council may hold scheduled formal public hearings on Regular Meeting nights or at another time in order to accept testimony on an issue.

In certain circumstances, formal public hearings may be required by federal or State law, or by the City Charter or Code. At a minimum, hearing notices are posted on the City website. If time permits, notice of a public hearing is included in the City Newsletter. For more complex matters, the notice may be accompanied by background information on the topic.

A public hearing is more structured than other public comment periods. Speakers are asked to sign up at the beginning of the meeting. When a large number of people are expected to address the Council on an issue, speakers may be asked to sign up in advance of the meeting.

When the speaker's name is called, the speaker should come to the podium and state their name and street for the record.

Comments are limited to three minutes each. Speakers may not cede their time to others. To ensure that everyone who wants to comment has the time to do so, members of the public are expected to only speak once during a public hearing. However, a speaker representing a committee or an organization may speak twice in order to present their personal comment if different from the position of the committee.

All those present at public hearings shall respectfully permit speakers to express their opinions without interruption.

9. Special Meetings

Meetings outside of Regular Meetings of the Council, for example, Budget Work Sessions or Work Sessions on special topics, may not have time allotted for public comments, or in some instances, may require sign up ahead of time.

10. Alternative Meeting Structures

In addition to Regular or Special Meetings, the Council seeks other ways to engage with residents, such as open houses, public forums, and community conversations. These can provide a more flexible opportunity to listen and discuss issues of interest. In addition, the Council and staff will continue to hold events in various parts of the city to facilitate participation by residents across the community.

11. Announcement by Councilmembers of Proposed Introduction of Ordinances or Resolutions

When a member of the City Council wishes to publicly announce the proposed introduction of an ordinance or resolution for consideration at a future meeting, the Councilmember may announce it during Council Comments. The Councilmember may then request that the Mayor schedule a work session to discuss the item or request that the Mayor schedule the ordinance or resolution for a vote at a future legislative meeting. However, this is not intended to supersede the Mayor's authority to set the agenda pursuant to Section 303(b) of the City Charter.

12. Voting Sessions

At Voting Sessions, the Council votes on ordinances and resolutions after they are moved and duly seconded. With the exception of consent agenda items, any time the Council votes on legislation there is time for Council discussion before the vote.

Councilmembers are encouraged to provide text of proposed amendments in writing in advance of the meeting or at the meeting, and to work with City staff before Council meetings to make editorial changes to ordinances or resolutions. During Council meetings, Councilmembers shall keep editorial changes to a minimum.

For all but very routine items, Work Sessions are often scheduled at a meeting at least one week before an ordinance or resolution is to be voted on. This enables the public to hear a discussion and learn about an issue before commenting on a voting item.

13. Consent Agenda

At the discretion of the Mayor, resolutions or single reading ordinances may be voted on as part of a consent agenda without Council comment or discussion. At the request of any Councilmember, an item on the consent agenda shall be removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda for that meeting.

14. Work Sessions

At Work Sessions, the Council discusses issues that may become future legislation, but does not vote on legislation. A Special Voting Session may be added after the Work Session if the legislation is time-sensitive. Work Sessions allow members of the Council to discuss issues among themselves and with City staff. Members of the public are not permitted to speak during Work Sessions, unless invited to do so during the Work Session by the Mayor or by prior arrangement with their Councilmember. Comments on Work Session topics are welcome during the public comment period.

15. Motions or Hand Votes Outside of Voting Sessions

During any meeting or work session at which a quorum is present, the Mayor may call for hand votes or motions may be made by Councilmembers: a) to request the Mayor to schedule an item on a future agenda; b) to make requests of or clearly articulate direction being provided to the City Manager; or c) to clarify whether the Council wishes to move forward with an issue under discussion. After discussion of a motion that has been made and duly seconded, the Council may vote on the matter.

16. Video Recording

Council meetings will ordinarily be recorded by City TV. These recordings may become part of the permanent record of Council proceedings. Meetings will be simultaneously cablecast on the Takoma Park cable channel and streamed and archived online. Copies are available upon request from City TV if costs are paid by the recipient.

17. ADA Notice

The City of Takoma Park is committed to ensuring that individuals with disabilities are able to fully participate in public meetings. Anyone with a disability who 1) wishes to receive auxiliary aids, services, or accommodations at a City of Takoma Park public meeting or public hearing; or 2) cannot attend a public meeting but would like to record an audio comment to be played during the public comment period of the meeting, is invited to contact Jason Damweber, Deputy City Manager, at jasond@takomaparkmd.gov or 301-891-7202 at least 48 hours in advance.

18. Special Rules for Electronic Participation by Members of the City Council

A member of the City Council may attend a meeting of the Council through electronic communication as follows.

a. Prior to the Meeting

The Councilmember shall give notice to the Mayor and City Clerk of their desire to attend a meeting from a remote location and indicate from where the member will participate. Notice should be provided one week in advance when practicable.

Upon receipt of notice, the City Clerk will confirm that the City TV staff is able to manage the request. Once confirmation has been received, the City Clerk will note the remote participation on the City Council agenda.

Emergency requests due to illness, unexpected travel for work, or similar unforeseen circumstances will be accommodated when possible.

b. During the Meeting

The Mayor will announce the member's remote participation at the beginning of the meeting.

During roll call, the Councilmember shall respond that they are present.

If the Councilmember leaves the meeting, they shall announce the departure unless the meeting has been paused for a break or has been adjourned. After a break, the Mayor will confirm that the Councilmember is still present at the meeting.

The Councilmember attending electronically shall ask for recognition from the Mayor if he or she desires to speak.

When a Councilmember is attending electronically, all votes taken during the meeting shall be by roll call. The vote of the remote participant must be audible.

c. Limitations

Remote participation will be limited by the technology available. No more than one member may participate remotely in a meeting unless a second member is needed in order to achieve a quorum. Requests shall be accommodated in the order that they are received.

If the remote connection fails or the participating member cannot hear the proceedings or be heard by all those present, the Councilmember shall depart the meeting until the

connection can be properly restored. In this event, the Mayor will announce the departure and, when applicable, subsequent rejoining at the meeting.

Electronic participation is always contingent upon the ability of staff to make arrangements for the voice of the remote participant to be heard by all persons at the meeting and for the remote participant to hear all Councilmembers in attendance.