

Introduced by: Councilmember Seamens

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND**

**RESOLUTION 2012-34  
ADOPTING COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURE**

WHEREAS, the City Council's general operating rules and procedures are governed by the City Charter and Code; and

WHEREAS, the Council may adopt supplemental rules and procedures by ordinance or resolution; and

WHEREAS, Robert's Rules of Order is the recognized authority as to any matter or procedure not covered elsewhere; and

WHEREAS, the Council last adopted rules of procedure in 2004, by resolution 2004-40; and

WHEREAS, the Council desires to update its rules of procedure to better reflect its current practice; and

WHEREAS, the Council wishes to conduct meetings in an efficient manner while ensuring that residents have opportunities to comment and participate; and

WHEREAS, to accommodate members of the City Council who are occasionally unable to attend meetings due to travel or for other reasons, but want to participate and vote at a scheduled meeting, the Council has included in its rules of procedure a formalized process to allow attendance at a meeting through electronic communication.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND, THAT the attached Council Rules of Procedure are hereby adopted.

Adopted this 11th day of June, 2012.

Attest:

---

Jessie Carpenter, CMC  
City Clerk

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND**  
**COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURES**  
**(Adopted June 11, 2012 by Resolution 2012-34)**

- 1) Council meetings will commence at 7:30 p.m. unless otherwise advertised.
- 2) A majority of the Council shall constitute a quorum for the purpose of transacting business except as otherwise provided in the City Charter.
- 3) 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 2/3 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 2/3 of the entire Council.
- 4) 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 (No. 15, below).
- 5) The normal preliminary order of business shall be as follows:
  - Call to Order
  - Roll Call
  - Additional Agenda Items/Agenda Scheduling Update
  - Public Comments
  - For the Record (to include reading of proclamations and the opportunity for Councilmembers to announce introduction of legislation)
  - Council Comments
  - City Manager's Comments
  - Adoption of Minutes
- 6) Public comments are permitted at each meeting. Speakers may address items that are on the work session agenda or any other topic. However, if the Council agenda includes voting on a resolution or ordinance, public comment should be given at the time the item is considered. Speakers who wish to address the Council shall come to the podium, and state their name and street for the record. In general, speakers should limit their comments to no more than three minutes. During public comment, Councilmembers shall limit their comments to asking the speaker for information or providing them with information. All those present at Council meetings shall permit speakers to express their opinions without interruption.

- 7) 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 for the record after public 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.
- 8) Following the preliminary order of business, each agenda item will be taken up. The Mayor, a Councilmember, or a City employee generally summarizes the content of the agenda item and states the action the Council is considering.
- 9) There are two kinds of Council meetings: legislative sessions and work sessions. Legislative sessions are generally held on the second and fourth Mondays of the month. At legislative 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 and for public comment, followed by the vote. Councilmembers are encouraged 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.
- 10) At the discretion of the Mayor, resolutions or single reading ordinances may be passed as part of a consent agenda. If any Councilmember wishes to discuss an item on the consent agenda, that item shall be removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda for that meeting.
- 11) At work sessions, which are usually held on the first and third Mondays of the month or after legislative sessions on other meeting nights, the Council discusses issues that may become future legislation, but does not vote on legislation. A special session for voting on legislation 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. Occasionally, the Council will include individuals who have specific information to bring to the work session discussion. If residents wish to be recognized during work sessions, it is best if they let their Councilmember know of their interest before the meeting.
- 12) During any meeting or work sessions at which a quorum is present, 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.

- 13) The Council may hold public hearings, which generally occur near the beginning of a meeting, in order to get public comment on an issue. Public hearings may be more structured than other public comment periods in order to accommodate all persons who wish to speak. When a large number of people wish to address the Council on an issue, speakers may be asked to sign up to speak. Comments will be limited to three minutes. After everyone has had an opportunity to speak, speakers may be given the opportunity to add additional comments, at the discretion of the Mayor. If someone is unable to attend a public hearing but wishes to submit testimony in writing, it can be emailed, mailed or faxed to the City Clerk. Written testimony will be copied to the Council and included in the official record of the hearing.
- 14) Council meetings will ordinarily be recorded by City TV. Electronic recordings of meetings are part of the permanent record of Council proceedings. Meetings and work sessions will be simultaneously cablecast on the Takoma Park cable channel and streamed and archived online. A copy of the recording will be available for one year for the public to check out from the Takoma Park Library. Copies are also available upon request from City TV if costs are paid for by the recipient.

15) **Special Rules for Electronic Participation**

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 his/her 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 he or she is present.

If the Councilmember leaves the meeting, he or she 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.