



RULES OF ORDER CITY COUNCIL CITY OF MOUNT VERNON, NEW YORK

CHAPTER I

Powers and Duties of the President

RULE 1.

- A. The City Council shall fix 7:00 pm for public hearings or such time as may be otherwise specified by the Council. Notice of said public hearing shall be published once in the official city newspaper.
- B. The Committee of the Whole, also known as “The Work Session” meetings, shall be held at 7:00 pm on the Monday preceding the scheduled Legislative Session from September through June, inclusive, and on the second Monday of July and August. If a regular meeting day falls on a holiday, the Council shall meet on the next business day. If a regular meeting day falls on the eve of Thanksgiving, the eve of Christmas, the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the eve of Yom Kippur, or New Year’s Eve, the Council shall meet on the preceding day, at a subsequent public hearing, or at another time as determined by the City Council, including any time to which the Council has adjourned.
- C. The Legislative Session of the City Council shall be held after the Work Session on the second and fourth Wednesdays of September through June, inclusive; and the second Wednesday of July and August; or, if these regular meeting days be holidays, then the Council shall meet on the next day; or, if these regular meeting days be the eve of Thanksgiving, the eve of Christmas, the eve of Rosh Hashanah, the eve of Yom Kippur, or New Year’s Eve, then the Council shall meet on the preceding day.
- D. Special meetings of the City Council are other than Work Sessions and regular Legislative Sessions. A special meeting may be called by any Councilmember upon notice to the entire City Council. Notice may be given by telephone, in person, email, or in writing at least 24 hours in advance unless an emergency exists.
- E. All meetings of the City Council shall be broadcast to the public using videoconferencing technology and/or social media. All virtual attendees must be on camera and are subject to the Rules of Order of the City Council of the City of Mount Vernon, New York.
- F. The President of the City Council shall take the chair at each meeting at the said hour. The President shall call to order and, except in the absence of a quorum, shall proceed to conduct business in the manner prescribed by these rules, and in and during their absence or disability, the President Pro Tempore shall act and shall perform the duties of the President as herein prescribed. In and during the absence or disability

of the President Pro Tempore, the Acting President Pro Tempore shall act and shall perform the duties of the President as herein prescribed.

- G. Records of Activities (ROA) as per the New York State & Local Retirement System (NYSLRS) guidelines are required for Councilmembers who do not participate in the city's time-keeping system. Officials who begin a new term are required to complete a three-month ROA within 150 days of service and submit it to the City Clerk.

RULE 2.

The President of the City Council shall possess the powers and perform the duties herein prescribed, viz.:

- A. The President is the representative of the City Council on the Board of Estimate and Contract (BOE) and shall represent the will of the City Council on all matters previously voted upon by the City Council.
- B. The President shall preserve order and decorum, and in debate, shall prevent personal comments and confine members to the question under discussion. When two or more members ask to be recognized at the same time, they shall name the one entitled to the floor.
- C. The President shall decide all questions of order, subject to appeal to the City Council. On every appeal, they shall have the right in their place to assign a reason for the decision. In case of such an appeal, no member shall speak more than once.
- D. When so directed by the City Council, the President shall appoint Special Committees to be selected from the members thereof, except when the City Council shall otherwise order.
- E. The President shall designate the persons who shall act as newspaper reporters, not exceeding five persons. Such reporters so appointed shall be entitled to such seats as the council shall designate and shall have the right to pass to and from such seats in entering or leaving the City Council Chambers or Committee of the Whole rooms.
- F. The President shall have general control, except as provided by rules of law, of the City Council Chambers and the Reginald LaFayette Committee Room. In case of any disturbance, trespass, or disorderly conduct in the City Council Chambers or in the Reginald LaFayette Committee Room, the President shall have the power to order the expulsion of any person or persons creating such disturbance or trespassing therein.

CHAPTER II

Order of Business

RULE 3.

Following the conclusion of the Work Session, the Legislative meeting shall commence.

The first business of each legislative meeting shall be the calling of the roll. Immediately thereafter, except on days and at times set apart for the consideration of special orders, the order of business, which shall not be departed from, except by a vote of a majority of the members present, to be determined by a call of the roll, shall be as follows:

- Ordinances and Resolutions
- Adjournment

CHAPTER III

Rights and Duties of Councilmembers

RULE 4.

Any councilmember may introduce a proposed local law in its final form by electronic mail. *(As adopted unanimously by the City Council on December 23, 2025).*

Any councilmember presenting a paper document must sign it. Petitions, memorials, or reports to the City Council must include a brief description of the subject and the presenter's name. Committee reports must state the committee's name and the councilmembers submitting the report. All ordinances and resolutions must be distributed to each councilmember. In place of printing, materials can be distributed by electronic mail.

RULE 5.

No member shall leave the bar of the City Council after the roll call of the members present without permission of the Council President. Every member who shall be within the bar of the City Council chamber when a question is stated from the Chair shall vote thereon, unless they are excused by the City Council or unless directly interested in the question; but any request to be excused, whether by reason of interest or otherwise, shall be made before the call of the roll on the question. The bar of the City Council shall be deemed to include the entire portion of the City Council Chamber east of the railing.

CHAPTER IV

Order and Decorum

RULE 6.

Any local law, ordinance, or resolution can be read into the record by any Councilmember or Clerk. When presenting any local law, ordinance, or resolution, the member presenting the same shall address the Chair and shall proceed only upon recognition and permission of the Council President.

RULE 7.

No member shall debate, give a notice, make a motion, report, present a petition, transmittal, or other paper until they have addressed the President and have been recognized.

RULE 8.

While a Councilmember is speaking, other members shall not engage in any private discourse.

RULE 9.

While the President is putting a question, or a count is being had, no member shall speak or leave.

RULE 10.

When a motion to adjourn is carried, Councilmembers and officers shall keep their seats and places until the President declares the City Council adjourned.

CHAPTER V

Order and Debate

RULE 11.

No Councilmember shall speak more than once on the same general question, without leave of the City Council, until every member desiring to speak on the question pending shall have spoken. Unless otherwise provided by the President, no member shall speak for more than four (4) minutes on any issue each time the member addresses the City Council, nor more than once on any question, without leave of a majority vote of the Council.

RULE 12.

If any Councilmember in speaking transgresses the rules of the City Council, the President or any councilmember may be called to order in which case the Councilmember so called to order shall cease speaking and shall not commence speaking unless to explain or proceed in order.

RULE 13.

All questions relating to the priority of business, that is, the priority of one question or subject matter of another under the same order of business, shall be decided without debate. The council has a right to protect itself from dilatory motions or questions used for the purpose of delaying or obstructing business.

CHAPTER VI

Organization and Proceedings

RULE 14.

The five Councilmembers shall constitute a General Committee of the Whole.

RULE 15.

- A. Except for department heads on official business, no one shall be permitted to address the City Council, in meetings assembled as a Special Meeting and/or a Work Session, unless invited by the Council.
- B. Requests to speak at a City Council Legislative Session meeting made by the public, other than department heads, to address the City Council, must be made to the Office of the City Clerk, either in person, telephone, email or by signing up on the city's website, no later than 3:00 pm the day of the meeting and must include the name and address of the speaker, the organization, firm, corporation or person on whose behalf is appearing, whether they are duly authorized to appear and the matter about who wishes to speak. If there is no prior application to address the Council, the Council, by majority vote, may waive the prior application by the proposed speaker. No person will be allowed to address the Council for a period of more than four minutes unless additional time is requested and granted by a majority vote of the Council.
- C. Interested parties or their representatives may also submit written communications to the City Council.
- D. Speakers must be recognized by the President and step to the front of the room. Speakers must give their name, address, and organization (if applicable). Speakers may not yield any remaining time to another.
- E. Councilmembers may, with the permission of the President, interrupt a speaker during their remarks, but only for clarification or additional information. At such time, the clock will be paused and will resume at the completion of the councilmembers' inquiry.
- F. Speakers must adhere to generally accepted standards of courtesy, decorum, dignity, and good taste. All attendees must refrain from using profanity, offensive language, yelling (that prevents the meeting from continuing), stomping, whistling, any other disruptive physical outbursts, or speaking out of turn.

RULE 16.

Standing committees must review and report on referred matters promptly. All proposed ordinances and resolutions must be sent to the appropriate standing committee unless a majority of that committee votes to waive review. Legislation normally cannot be considered by the council unless approved and reported out by a majority of the committee, but the council may, by majority vote, consider and act on legislation that has not been reported out of committee.

RULE 17.

The President of the City Council shall not chair any of the standing committees but shall be a voting member of each. The standing committees, each consisting of three Councilmembers, shall be appointed by the City Council, by a majority vote thereof, and shall be as follows:

1. LEGISLATION AND PUBLIC WORKS

City Clerk, Mayor's Office, Law Department, Management Services, Charter Revisions, Parks, Public Works, Railroads and Bridges, City Property, Water Department, State and Federal Legislation, Governmental Relations, Cable Advisory Committee, Tree Advisory Board; Board of Ethics, and related matters.

2. HUMAN RESOURCES

Civil Service, Health and Welfare Services, Human Rights, Recreation, Senior Citizen Affairs, Youth Bureau, Memorial Field, Department of Human Resources, Mental Health, Immigration, Mount Vernon City School District, Veterans Affairs, Mount Vernon Public Library, and related matters.

3. PUBLIC SAFETY AND CODES

Civil Defense, Consumer Affairs, Fire Department, Buildings Department, Housing and Code Enforcement, Parking Bureau, Police Department, Pet Control, Zoning, Returning Citizens, Oversight and Investigations, Civilian Complaint Review Board, Taxicabs, Taxi Commission, and related matters.

4. FINANCE AND PLANNING

Budget, City-owned Property taken through In Rem Tax Foreclosure proceedings or other means and not needed for municipal purposes (under the jurisdiction of the Department of Finance), Funded Programs and Grants, Planning, Taxes and Assessment, Economic Development, Architectural Review Board, Landmarks and Historical Preservation, Office of the Inspector General, Memorial Field Finances, Chamber of Commerce, Urban Renewal Agency, Board of Assessment Review; and related matters.

CHAPTER VII

Motions and Precedence

RULE 18.

When a question shall be under consideration, no motion shall be received except as herein specified, which motion shall have precedence in the order stated, viz.:

1. For an adjournment of the City Council
2. A call of the City Council
3. For the previous question
4. To lay on the table
5. To postpone immediately
6. To postpone to a certain day
7. To commit to a select committee
8. To amend

RULE 19.

The motion to adjourn for the day or to lay on the table shall be decided without amendment or debate.

The motion to postpone to a certain day or committee shall preclude all debate of the main question.

RULE 20.

Every motion or ordinance must be clearly stated aloud before discussion begins, and again right before the vote, if requested. Any motion must be put in writing if the President or any councilmember asks for it, except for the routine motions listed in Rule 18, items 1 through 8.

RULE 21.

After a motion shall be stated by any councilmember and seconded, it shall be deemed in the possession of the City Council but may be withdrawn at any time before it is decided or amended.

RULE 22.

The motion to adjourn, to take a recess, or to adjourn for a longer period than one day shall always be in order; but the latter motion shall not preclude debate.

RULE 23.

A motion to reconsider a vote must be made at the same meeting in which the vote was taken or at the next meeting. It may be made only by a member who voted with the majority. The motion can be made at any time, but it may be considered only during the same order of business in which the original vote occurred.

RULE 24.

A motion for reconsideration that is raised and denied shall not be renewed, nor shall any vote be reconsidered a second time, without unanimous consent.

RULE 25.

Any motion that addresses more than one subject and can be divided must be split into separate questions if requested by a councilmember. However, a motion to strike out and insert language shall be considered indivisible and voted on as a single question.

RULE 26.

When a blank is to be filled, the question shall be taken on the largest sum, the greater number, and the longest time.

RULE 27.

No motion or resolution shall admit of more than two amendments.

CHAPTER VIII

The Previous Question

RULE 28.

The "previous question" shall be put as follows: "Shall the main question not be put," and until it is decided, shall preclude all amendments or debate. When, on taking the previous question, the City Council shall decide that the main question shall not be put, the main question shall be on the passage of the ordinance or any matter under consideration; but when amendments are pending, the question shall first be taken upon such amendments in their order.

RULE 29.

In all cases where a motion or ordinance shall be entered in the minutes, the name of the member introducing or moving the same shall also be entered in the Minutes.

RULE 30.

If a motion includes more than one separate issue, any member may ask the Chair to split it into separate votes. However, a motion to remove language and replace it with new language must be voted on as a single motion and cannot be divided.

RULE 31.

An Aye or Nay vote must be taken in every question, except that any member may elect to abstain on the question, provided that the reason for such abstention is stated for the record. Upon every call of the roll of the members, the same shall be called in last name alphabetical order, and when taken, shall be entered in the minutes, except that the President shall be called last.

RULE 32.

Any member requesting to be excused from voting upon any matter, may make, before the call of the roll upon the matter, a brief statement of the reason for making such request, not exceeding two (2) minutes in time, and

the City Council without debate, shall decide if it will grant such request, but nothing in this rule contained shall abridge the right of any member to record their vote on any question before the announcement of the result.

RULE 33.

Any of the foregoing rules may be suspended for a special purpose by a vote of four-fifths (4/5) of the members of the City Council.

RULE 34.

Any question or order not governed by the foregoing rules shall be decided in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

RULE 35.

These rules are not to be construed as abridging in any manner any powers given to any member or officer of the City Council by the City Charter.

RULE 36.

Notwithstanding the provisions of Chapter II, Rule 3 of these Rules of Order, the reading of petitions and communications at legislative meetings shall be dispensed with unless they relate to public hearings being conducted at said meetings or the reading of any or all said petitions or communications is requested by any member of the Council. The President, in cooperation with the City Clerk, shall refer all communications and petitions to the proper departments and parties.

RULE 37.

At public hearings conducted by the Council, the presiding officer shall, at the beginning of the hearing, designate the time to be allowed each person desiring to speak on the question. No person shall speak more than once on the same general question, and no rebuttal shall be permitted. At such public hearings, the presiding officer may, before the hearings commence, also designate the hour at which discussion will end, and shall preserve order and decorum, and shall prevent personal comments and confine speakers to the legislation under discussion. Written comments for public hearings must be submitted to the City Clerk, either in person or by email, no later than the announced deadline. Written comments will not be read aloud during the meeting and will be accessible via the City's website for public review.

RULE 38.

All attendees may be requested to remove hats or head coverings, except those worn for religious or other protected reasons.

RULE 39.

All "in-person" meeting attendees in the City Council Chambers may be required to have an appropriately placed face covering or mask on their face when State, Federal, and/or CDC guidelines require it during a pandemic, unless otherwise permitted by the President of the City Council.

CHAPTER XI

Presenter Procedures and Meeting Etiquette

RULE 40.

A. Guest Presenters

Both invited and approved presenters must follow the guidelines for presenting at a city council meeting. A request must be submitted to the Office of the City Clerk by noon on the day of the scheduled meeting. Shortly following the request, they will receive notice informing them that they have been approved to appear before the Council.

B. Presentations by Invited Guest Presenters

If you will be presenting materials during the meeting, please let the Office of the City Clerk know at the time of the initial request so that preparations can be made for materials to be received in advance of the start of the presentation.

C. Virtual Meeting Etiquette

All virtual meeting participants are expected to follow the Code of Conduct while attending City Council meetings online, including but not limited to keynote presentations, concurrent sessions, and live poster and Q&A sessions. Due to the virtual options available during City Council meetings, our Code of Conduct extends to communications related to the meeting and attendees, presenters, exhibitors, sponsors, staff, and vendors.

D. Mute Protocols

During the meeting, participants should remain muted unless instructed to unmute. Background noise, such as pets, ambient sounds, or multiple people speaking at once, can be disruptive and may cause confusion or delays, hindering the progression of the meetings.

End