

City Council Rules and Procedures

The following rules and procedures are hereby adopted for the Rockdale City Council. These rules and procedures may be amended by resolution from time to time as necessary by a majority vote of the City Council¹. These rules and procedures are intended to supplement State law and the City Charter and are not intended to replace any requirement of State law or the City Charter. Unless stated otherwise, the terms “Council Member” or “Council Members” shall mean the City Council and the Mayor.

Agendas

The Mayor or the City Manager may place any item on the City Council agenda. Two Council Members may place an item on the agenda and the item must be submitted to the City Manager in writing with both Council Members signatures. All items must be submitted to the City Manager at least five (5) days prior to the meeting at which the item is to be considered. All City Council agendas will be posted on a front window of City Hall, on the City Council Chambers door and at the Police Department. Copies of the agenda will be available at the City Council meeting.

Council Members must pick up their agenda packet at City Hall after being notified by the City Secretary that the packet is available.

The presiding officer may take agenda items out of the order in which they are listed unless a majority of the members present object to this variation.

The consent agenda includes items of a routine nature and will be approved with one motion. That motion will approve the recommended action for each item on the consent agenda. Any Council Member may ask a question regarding a consent agenda item, speak in opposition to the recommended action, request that their vote show opposition to an item, or may remove an item from the consent agenda and have it considered as a separate item. Any item so removed from the consent agenda shall be considered after other items on the consent portion of the agenda have been heard and voted on.

Ordinances for consideration by the City Council shall be listed under “Ordinances” and may not be listed under the consent agenda.

No Council Member shall speak a second time on any item under discussion until all other members desiring to speak on that item have been heard.

Council Members may make a motion on an agenda item whether or not the item was discussed. Before voting on the motion, the motion must be seconded. Once the motion has been made and seconded, the presiding officer will call for a vote on the motion through a showing of hands for or against the motion. A motion may be amended with the approval of the person making the original motion and the person seconding the original motion.

No agenda item may be re-considered by the City Council until six months have passed after the City Council has decided on the item.

¹ By Charter, the Mayor can vote only in case of a tie vote

Citizen Participation

Interested persons may request a subject be placed on the Council agenda. Persons may not request that an item be placed on the agenda that is the same as or substantially similar in subject matter to an item that has been on the agenda in the previous six-month period. The City Council shall, by consensus, decide if the requested item is the same as or substantially similar to an item previously discussed not more than six months earlier than the meeting at which the item was requested. The city manager and city attorney will decide if the item needs to be heard in executive session.

At regular meetings the Council shall hear from persons who desire to make comments to the Council. Persons who wish to speak during the public comment portion of the meeting shall sign up prior to the meeting and shall indicate the topic about which they wish to speak. No presentation shall exceed five minutes. The Council may inquire about a subject not on the agenda, but any responses are limited to giving a statement of specific factual information, recitation of existing policy, or advising the individual of the name of the appropriate staff member to speak with. However, the Council must abide by the Texas Open Meetings Act in responding to remarks and shall not deliberate or decide any subject that is not included on the agenda.

Persons who desire to speak during the public comment portion of a meeting shall have no more than five (5) minutes in which to make their presentation. Citizens who attend the Council meeting as part of a group may not give their time to another member of the group. The presiding officer may stop the person from speaking further if the remarks or gestures are profane, abusive, inflammatory or otherwise offensive. Persons who refuse to stop speaking at the direction of the presiding officer may be escorted from the meeting by a law enforcement officer at the request of the presiding officer.

Adjournment of a Meeting

The presiding officer at a meeting may adjourn the meeting without a motion and second.

Appointments to Boards, Commissions and Committees

The City Council by vote² shall appoint the members of boards, commissions and committees. The Mayor shall appoint the City Council liaisons to the boards, commissions and committees. Appointments to boards, commissions and committees and appointment of City Council liaisons may occur at any meeting of the City Council. Recognitions will be given to any person who has concluded their service on a board, commission or committee

Attending Board, Commission or Committee Meetings

Council Members may attend any board, commission or committee meeting, which are always open to any member of the public. Any public comments by a Council Member at a board, commission or committee meeting, when that Council Member is not a liaison to the board, commission or committee, should be clearly made as individual opinion and not as representation of the feelings of the entire City Council.

² By Charter, the Mayor may vote only in case of a tie

Ceremonial Events

Requests for a City representative at ceremonial events will be forwarded to the Mayor, or in his/her absence or disability the request will be forwarded to the Mayor Pro-Tem, who shall choose the person to represent the City at the event.

Contact with City Attorney or Texas Municipal League Attorneys

The Mayor and the City Manager may contact the City Attorney or Texas Municipal League Attorneys for City-related business. No Council Member may contact the City Attorney or the Texas Municipal League attorneys unless first obtaining the permission of the Mayor or City Manager.

Decorum

Council Members value and recognize the importance of the trust invested to them by the public to accomplish the business of the City. Council Members shall accord the utmost courtesy to each other, to City employees, and to the public appearing before the City Council. Members of City staff shall observe the same rules of order and decorum applicable to the City Council. City staff shall act at all times in a business and professional manner towards Council Members and members of the public. Noise emanating from the audience within the Council Chambers which disrupts City Council meetings shall not be permitted.

Designation of Acting Mayor If Mayor and Mayor Pro-Tem are Absent or Disabled

In the absence or disability of the Mayor and the Mayor Pro-Tem, the City Council Member present who has served longest shall be designated Acting Mayor and shall perform the duties of the Mayor.

Election of a Mayor Pro-Tem

The election of a Mayor Pro-Tem shall be done annually at the first meeting after the City Council election (not including a special election). The Mayor Pro-Tem shall be elected by a majority of the Council Members present³.

Endorsement of Candidates

Council Members have the right to endorse candidates for all Council seats including the Mayor's seat. It is inappropriate to mention endorsements during Council meetings or other official City meetings.

Media Relations

The City Manager is the designated representative of the City of Rockdale to speak on the official City position. If an individual Council Member is contacted by the media, the Council Member should be clear about whether their comments represent the official City position or a personal viewpoint.

³ By Charter, the Mayor can vote only in case of a tie

Miscellaneous Expenses

Reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in service on behalf of the City shall be paid to Council Members, provided that a detailed expense report is submitted and approved by the City Manager.

Out-of-Town Travel for City Business

Funds providing for Council representation at national, state, regional or local conferences or meetings related to City business will be provided for in the annual budget. Council Members must first obtain the permission of the Mayor before embarking on out-of-town City business that requires an overnight stay. Mileage, meals and incidental expenses (tips, snacks) will be reimbursed the same rates as what the Internal Revenue Service/General Services Administration allows for federal employees. Hotel, taxi, and air fare will be reimbursed upon submission of a receipt. Hotel and air fare reservations may be either arranged by each Council Member individually or they may choose to have the City Secretary make the reservations. All travel expenses for Council Members must be approved by the City Manager.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance shall be recited at every regular or special meeting of the City Council. The Pledge of Allegiance need not be recited at a workshop of the City Council.

Proclamations

Proclamations may be issued by the Mayor at any time. Any Council Member who desires a proclamation must have the prior approval of the Mayor.

Public Hearings

Public hearings will be held after required notice has been provided. The City Council may upon affirmative vote⁴ continue a public hearing to a future date. Anyone wishing to speak at a public hearing must sign their name and address on an approved form available at each public hearing. In addition, everyone attending and each Council Member present at the meeting shall sign their name and address on an approved form. Each person, other than a Council Member or City staff member, speaking at a public hearing will be allowed three (3) minutes to make their comments unless the presiding officer extends the time allotted and no person may speak more than twice at each public hearing. No person may donate their time to another person. The presiding officer may stop any person from talking if the person's comments are not relevant to the item under discussion, unruly, abusive, disruptive or disrespectful to another person and may have the person removed from the City Council Chambers if necessary.

Regular Business

Persons interested in addressing the City Council on items may do so only if a public hearing is posted on an item or if called upon by the presiding officer of the meeting. Other than asking questions for the purposes of gaining insight or clarification, Council Members shall not interrupt

⁴ By Charter, the Mayor may vote only in case of a tie

members of the public during their comments. Each person addressing the City Council must make their comments relevant to the agenda item being considered by the City Council. The presiding officer may stop any person from talking if the person is not speaking to the item under discussion, unruly, abusive, disruptive or disrespectful to another person and may have the person removed from the City Council Chambers if necessary.

Regular Meetings

Regular meetings shall be held in the City Council Chambers at 5:30 PM on the second Monday of each month, except for holidays or holiday-eves recognized by the City of Rockdale or special City election days.

Roll Call

Prior to proceeding with the business of the City Council, the City Secretary shall call the roll of the Council Members and the City Manager, and the names of those present shall be entered in the minutes. The roll call shall be conducted at each regular or special meeting and at every workshop.

Sergeant-at-Arms

The Chief of Police or his designee shall be the ex-officio Sergeant-at-Arms of the City Council and will remove any person from the Council Chambers if instructed to do so by the presiding officer.

Stationery and Mailing

Before sending correspondence, Council Members should check with City staff to see if an official City response has already been sent or is in progress. Stationery bearing the City letterhead and mailing of correspondence will be used only for official City business and not to solicit personal support, solicit support for any federal, state or local campaign activities nor for private purposes. Council Members must ask for stationery from the City Manager or City Secretary and return items to be mailed to the City Manager or City Secretary.

First Approved by Resolution: November 9, 2009

Amended: April 12, 2010

Amended: April 11, 2011

Amended: August 3, 2011