



CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH
CITY COUNCIL MEETING – COUNCIL MEMBER ITEM REPORT

TO: The Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Natalie Moser, City Council Member

DATE: September 6, 2022

SUBJECT: Establishing Rules of Order and Procedure for City Council Business

Charter Section 304(c) authorizes the City Council to “establish rules for the conduct of its proceedings...” These rules, which are often referred to as Rules of Order and Procedure, would govern City Council business and provide a guide that Council Members, staff, and members of the public could easily access and follow. Establishing such rules not only promotes consistency, but also transparency between the City and the community.

In 1961, the City Council adopted its first set of Rules, which were centered on voting procedures for the City Council. Over the following 15 years, the City Council amended the Rules as needed, adding other provisions to help conduct its business consistently and to provide a roadmap for future City Councils to build upon. Amendments to the Rules included provisions such as the procedure to make motions or nominate officers (see Attachment 1). In September 1976, however, the Council repealed the Rules and incorporated them into a Council Manual (Attachment 2).

Since then, the Council Manual has evolved into a compilation of reference documents, and the Rules themselves are spread out across 8 out of 13 sections in the Manual (Attachment 3). While the Manual is helpful, there are gaps in its contents. For ease of use and clarity, the sections on Rules could be a focus of revision and reconsideration as a standalone “Rules of Order and Procedure for City Council Business” by the City Council. Once adopted by resolution, it can be included in an updated City Council Manual along with other important reference materials to benefit the City Council in conducting its business.

The Rules, like all guiding principles, require a comprehensive review and update, as needed, to ensure: 1) they reflect best practices and 2) include any new or amended provisions that would promote consistency and transparency in City Council business. The “Rules of Order and Procedure for City Council Business” would be a comprehensive guide, helpful to both existing and newly elected City Councilmembers.

This proposed process could include a review of the City Charter, Municipal Code, and Resolutions of the City of Huntington Beach, as well as other laws (i.e. Brown Act) and current practices of the Huntington Beach City Council. Rules of Order and Procedures in comparable charter cities may also be reviewed. Based on a brief survey of other cities’ Rules, I’ve identified potentially topics that could make the Rules more robust:

Rules of Order and Procedure

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- Roles and duties: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, Council Members, appointed officers, staff
- Rules of decorum and conduct for and between: elected officials, appointed officials, staff, and the public
- Facilitating public comments: purpose, sign up and queueing process, time limits, circumstances that allow for limited dialogue between the City Council and public commenters, topics that can be addressed, use of signs and other props, distribution of multimedia materials to staff and Council, and procedures to manage disorderly behavior
- Meeting types, schedules, and procedures: regular meetings, special meetings, emergency meetings, study session, closed session, public hearings, and strategic planning workshop; cancelations, quorums, adjournments, recesses, etc.
- Meeting agendas and procedures: types of agenda items, requirements for their submittal, supplemental communications from the City and the public, preparation and distribution of the agenda packet, deadlines to post and distribute the agenda, exceptions
- Order of business: roll call, pledge of allegiance, invocation, presentations and awards, attendance, order of discussion, public comments, consent calendar, administrative items, H-items, Council comments, etc.
- Accessibility of Council Meetings: in-person, online, telephone, HBTv, recordings, etc.
- Rules of debate and deliberations
- Council Committees and ad hoc subcommittees: responsibilities, expectations, reporting, formation and dissolution
- Board, Committee, and Commissions: responsibilities, expectations, meeting management, appointments, reappointments, removals, vacancies, and dissolution
- Procedures for making City Council requests for staff support
- Election activities guide
- Administrative matters: attendance, correspondence, participation in outside boards, communicating with the public, issuing proclamations, participation in events and conferences, required trainings, etc.
- Rules of interaction and involvement with outside agencies and the media
- Understanding and addressing conflicts of interest
- Rosenberg's or Robert's Rules of Order
- Enforcement and/or suspension of the Rules of Order and Procedure

All provisions in the Rules would need to be in conformance with existing regulations, including but not limited to the City Charter, Municipal Code, and Administrative Regulations. The Rules should also be updated by Resolution on a scheduled basis or as needed. This will help ensure that they continue to meet the evolving needs of the Huntington Beach City Council and community.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

I would like to request that City Council provide input on the topics that are important for inclusion in the Rules of Order and Procedure and to request that the City Manager prepare a draft set of Rules of Order and Procedure for City Council's consideration on or before the first meeting in November 2022. The intent would be to provide feedback on the draft in the first meeting in November 2022 and request the City Manager to work with the City Attorney to prepare a Resolution for adopting the Rules of Order and Procedure by the second meeting in November 2022.

Attachments:

1. 1961-1976 Council Rules and Procedures
2. 1976 City Council Manual
3. 2022 City Council Manual