

Olympia City Council Guidebook Excerpt

Section 3: City Council Meetings

Each regular meeting of the Olympia City Council shall be conducted in accordance with a printed agenda setting forth the business to be transacted.

3.1 Meeting Schedule

3.1.a. Annual and Mid-Year Goal Setting Retreats.

The Council's annual goal setting retreat shall be held as early in January as possible taking into account Councilmember and staff schedules, facility and facilitator availability.

The Council shall also hold a mid-year retreat in June.

The annual and mid-year retreats shall be facilitated by a professional meeting facilitator who is not a member of the current Council or staff.

3.1.b. Meeting Schedule Established.

The Olympia City Council usually establishes its yearly meeting calendar, including vacation weeks, at its annual goal-setting retreat. Council business meetings are held on Tuesday evenings, 7:00 p.m., at Olympia City Hall Council Chambers, 601 4th Avenue E, unless otherwise noticed.

When any of the above scheduled Council meetings occur on a legal holiday, the next succeeding day shall be the date of the regular meeting.

If Council is meeting the week of the General Election Primary (August) or General Election (November), the meeting shall be on Monday instead of Tuesday (see OMC 01.04.050).

There are no regular meetings on the 5th Tuesday of a month unless scheduled by the City Council at its annual retreat.

3.2 Public Notice of Meetings and Hearings

The agenda and accompanying reports and documents are posted on the City of Olympia website, www.olympiawa.gov, ~~typically usually no later than by~~ 3:00 p.m. the Thursday before a meeting.

Paper copies of the agenda are available for in-person pick up at the Council's office during regular office hours. In addition, a paper copy of the entire Council packet is available for viewing at City Hall.

Notice of special meetings will be consistent with RCW 42.30.080.

3.3 Advancing a Policy Issue

It takes a majority of the City Council to bring a policy item before the full Council or a committee. Following are the routes a Councilmember may take to advance a policy issue:

- **Annual Goal Setting Retreat:** At the retreat Councilmembers decide on the council goals and implementation items for staff to focus on during the year.
- **Advisory Committee Work Plans:** The General Government Committee will draft committee work plans at the end of each year, and the committee chairs will come to Council in January with a year-long agenda. At that time, a majority of Councilmembers may request other items be added to the work plan.
- **Regular Meetings:** At any time during a regular Council meeting, a member may make a referral for an item to be addressed by a committee or by the full Council in the form of a study session. This request is subject to concurrence by a majority of the Council present. Also, such matter shall not be considered by the Council at the same meeting it is submitted to the Council without the concurrence of the majority of the Council present.
 - **Referral to Committee:** Item will be scheduled on the committee work plan agenda for a future date, and the committee chair will report back to full council on findings during a regular meeting.
 - **Referral to Study Session:** Item will be scheduled on the Council agenda for a future date.
- **During Budget Deliberations:** At the end of each year, the full Council sets priorities for the future year in setting the budget. This is a time of deliberation and decision-making.
- **City Manager's Performance Review:** Council can decide on items that need to be addressed during the City Manager's semi-annual review.

3.4 Legislative Process

All measures proposed for Council consideration must have the endorsement and sponsorship of at least one member or be recommended by a Council committee or be advanced by staff as a Consent Calendar item.

All proposed measures, except Consent Calendar items, must be referred to a Council committee of proper jurisdiction, unless the majority of the Councilmembers present approve a suspension of the rules and one of the following alternative dispositions of the proposal:

1. Referral to the Committee of the whole for later consideration, or
2. Immediate consideration, or
3. Referral to an advisory committee, or
4. Referral to staff for investigation and report.

3.5 Scheduling the Agenda

The agenda is the schedule of items the Council has determined it will address at a meeting. Agenda items may also be certain items proposed for the Council to address (i.e., lot vacations, ordinances to accept grants, etc.). The proposed agenda is set by the Mayor and/or Mayor Pro Tem in consultation with the City Manager, and is usually available by 3:00 p.m. on the Thursday immediately preceding the meeting.

Each Monday morning the City Manager meets with Department Directors to go over proposed future agendas, at which time any issues that need to be brought forth to the City Council are discussed with the City Manager.

3.6 Agenda - Order of Business

The City Council has established the following order of business for its regular meetings:

1. Opening and Roll Call
 - a. Changes to Agenda
 - b. Approval of Agenda
2. Special Recognition (Including Proclamations)
3. Public Communications – not to exceed 30 minutes
 - a. Council response to public communications
4. Consent Calendar

5. Public Hearings
6. Other Business or Study Session
7. Continued Public Communications
8. Reports and Referrals
 - a. Council Intergovernmental/Committee Reports and Referrals
 - b. City Manager's Report and Referrals
9. Adjournment

The order of business may be revised by a majority vote of the Council. Items pulled from the Consent Calendar for substantive discussion will be moved to a later place on the Agenda at the discretion of the Council with placement recommendation made by the Mayor.

3.7 Procedure for Public Communication

The City Council appreciates hearing from citizens about items relating to city business and normally sets aside up to thirty minutes near the beginning of Council business meetings for public communication. This forum is a limited public forum and all matters discussed shall relate to city business.

The manner and extent to which members of the public participate in the Public Communication portion of the agenda is under the control of the Mayor. ~~Therefore, to~~ the extent necessary to prevent unreasonable interference with the meeting, the Mayor is empowered to curtail or prohibit testimony that is overly repetitive or lengthy, beyond the reasonable scope of City business, or of a nature that would endanger the safety or wellbeing of the persons attending the meeting or individual city employees. The Mayor is also empowered to establish time constraints on testimony, if necessary, to prevent unreasonable delay of the Council meeting.

~~Interested individual citizens~~ may sign up to speak ~~before the Council~~ during Public Communication regarding about any item related to City business, except issues for quasi-judicial matters or topics for which the City Council either held a Public Hearing in the last 45 days or will hold a Public Hearing within 45 days. Individuals will be asked to indicate on the sign-in sheet whether or not they have addressed the Council as part of Public Communication within the past 30 days. The Mayor has the discretion to move to the end of Public Communication testimony from those individuals who indicate on the sign-in sheet that they have testified in the last 30 days or who are known to the Mayor to have testified in the last 30 days.

Sign-in for Public Communication begins when the lobby ~~entrance doors~~ to the Council Chambers ~~is~~are opened for the business meeting (about 30 minutes in advance of the start of the meeting) and continues until after the Mayor gavels the meeting to order, with the exact time at staff's discretion. Everyone who has signed in by the time registration is closed will be provided an opportunity to comment at that evening's meeting, either during the initial 30 minutes scheduled on the agenda for Public Communication, at the end of the meeting if everyone is not accommodated within the initial 30 minutes, or in another order if proposed by the Mayor at any time during a meeting and agreed to by a majority of Councilmembers in attendance at the meeting.

If time allows during the initial 30 minutes set aside on the agenda for Public Communications, the Mayor may ask if anyone else in the audience wishes to speak. In this circumstance, Public Communication will not exceed 30 minutes total of testimony time, and additional comment will not be carried forward to the end of the meeting.

Individual comment during Public Communication is generally limited to three minutes or less. Comments should be directed to the Council as a whole. Speakers may not cede all or a part of their time to another speaker.

In order to hear as many people as possible, the Council will refrain from commenting on individual statements until all public comment has been taken, or at the end of the 30-minute time allotment.

Out of respect for the time of our citizens, Council and staff – the Mayor, on behalf of the entire Council, will thank the individuals who spoke. Councilmembers may request additional information from the persons who spoke, information or a report from the City Manager, or make brief comments to help inform the issues.

3.8 Consent Calendar

The City Manager, Mayor and Mayor ProTem will propose which items are on the Consent Calendar.

The Consent Calendar consists of items of a routine nature that do not require discussion. An ordinance or budget resolution typically requires two separate readings at a regularly scheduled council meeting. Final passage typically occurs on second reading, although second reading may be waived by an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the Councilmembers present, unless precluded by law. Resolutions may be passed in one reading.

During the regular meeting, any Councilmember may pull a Consent Calendar item for discussion prior to approval of the Consent Calendar.

3.9 Councilmember Reports

Councilmember Reports are intended to allow Councilmembers an opportunity to share brief updates on committee and Council assignments and to seek guidance and direction. Councilmembers should do their best to be concise and restrict their remarks to these topics. Generally, Councilmember Reports should be no more than 5 minutes each.

For reports about Council Committee actions, the Committee's chair should give a brief recap of the substance of the Committee's discussion and recommendations. Items needing Council action or discussion will be scheduled for a subsequent Council meeting, so that all Councilmembers and the public have background information on the topic and any recommendations.

Comment [CB1]: Any changes to this section?

3.10 Public Hearings

For Frequently Asked Questions about Public Hearings, see the MRSC website at <http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/governance/hearings.aspx>

Sign in for Public Hearings is similar to Public Communication. Please refer to that section.

Individual comment during Public Hearings is generally limited to three minutes or less. Comments should be directed to the Council as a whole. Speakers may not cede all or a part of their time to another speaker. The mayor will determine the order and protocols for Public Hearing testimony.

Testimony on a topic subject to public hearing will not be accepted by the Council at a meeting either 45 days before or after the public hearing. The Mayor shall announce at the start Public Communication a list of any public hearings scheduled within the upcoming 45 days or held in the previous 45 days. However, by concurrence of a majority of Councilmembers, testimony for a public hearing may be continued or remain open until a specified date and time.

3.11 Council Action

Any action of the Council shall be by ordinance, resolution, proclamation, or motion and shall be conducted only in open public meetings unless otherwise provided by law. Any such action (except for the passage of any ordinance or the granting or revocation of any license or franchise) shall be deemed approved by an affirmative vote of a majority of those Councilmembers who are present and vote (i.e. do not abstain). The passage of any ordinance that grants or revokes a license or franchise, and any resolution for payment of money requires the affirmative vote of at least a majority of the whole membership of the Council. Public

emergency ordinances that take effect immediately must be passed by a majority of the whole membership, plus one. (RCW 35A.13.190).

A vote on any matter shall be taken by voice vote except where the Mayor or Council Chair is unable to discern whether the ayes or nays prevail, in which case a roll call vote shall be taken. Any Councilmember may abstain from voting on any matter.

An ordinance or budget resolution shall undergo two separate readings, and final passage may not be accomplished before the second reading. The readings shall occur at regular meetings. This guideline may be suspended by an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the Councilmembers present, in which case final passage may be accomplished at the same meeting the ordinance or budget resolution was introduced, unless precluded by law. As a general practice, the City Manager will not recommend that the Council take action as first and final reading.

3.12 Open Public Meetings Act

[RCW 42.30](#) outlines the Open Public Meetings Act, which applies to all city and town councils and to all county councils and boards or county commissions, boards and committees. Basically, the Act requires that all “meetings” of such bodies be open to the public and that all “action” taken by such bodies be done at meetings that are open to the public. The terms “meetings” and “action” are defined broadly in the Act.

Please see Appendix B for the Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) Guide to the Open Public Meetings Act. For Frequently Asked Questions about Open Public Meetings, see the MRSC website at <http://www.mrsc.org/askmrsc/pastingsubject.aspx?sid=22>.

3.13 Study Sessions

A Study Session is an informal opportunity for Councilmembers to learn about and discuss policy issues. Participants in the discussion may include Council, staff, representatives of other agencies or groups, advisory committee/ commission members, community members and other individuals.

Requests to refer a topic to a Study Session may be made by any Councilmember or the City Manager during the Reports/Referrals time at any Council business meeting. The person making the request or anyone eligible to make a request for a Study Session may ask that the topic be considered for priority scheduling. A majority of Councilmember must approve the Study Session request.

The Council's Secretary will maintain a list of topics referred for Study Session and publish it on a list of *Upcoming Council Agenda Items*. The list should include the topic name, date of referral, and the name of the person who requested the referral.

3.14 Special Meetings

A special meeting may be called at any time by the Mayor or by a majority of the Council. Notice will be provided in keeping with [RCW 42.30](#). If more than three Councilmembers attend and participate in an official capacity at any meeting, it shall be considered a special meeting and notice shall be given. In addition, the City Manager shall follow up with City Councilmembers by telephone, email or such other convenient communication method reasonable to apprise the members of special meetings. The City Manager may also, at his/her discretion, provide notice to interested parties.

Only Agenda items noticed for the Special Meeting may be discussed or considered by the Council at the meeting. The Agenda may not be amended at the Special Meeting to add items.

3.15 Executive Sessions

Executive Sessions are scheduled at the request or concurrence of the Mayor, or by a majority vote of the full Council during a meeting. The Council may hold Executive Sessions before, after, or during a regular or special meeting to consider such matters permitted by RCW 42.30 or other applicable state law, although the preferred time is before a regular or special meeting.

Such matters may include, but are not limited to, national security, purchase or sale of real estate, litigation, collective bargaining, appointment of Councilmembers and/or advisory board members, performance of publicly bid contracts, complaints against or evaluation of the performance of a public employee, and quasi-judicial matters. Decisions on any of the above subjects may be made at a subsequent regular meeting.

3.16 Televised Meetings

Olympia's weekly City Council meetings, Special Meetings, and Study Sessions when held in the City Council Chambers on Tuesday evenings, are televised live on Thurston Community Television (TCTV) and video streamed through the City's website by a third-party service, barring technical difficulties.

When City Council meetings are held in another location that does not allow for live telecast or on a day other than Tuesday, the meetings are taped for replay on TCTV and the City's video streaming service, if requested by Council and if TCTV has staff and equipment available to provide the service.

3.17 Council Attendance Policy

At the start of each City Council meeting, the Mayor will call the roll. Any absent Councilmember who has left a message by 5:00 p.m., or reached the Mayor or City Manager's Office directly before the start of the meeting on the day of the meeting to advise of such absence, will be considered excused.

3.18 Councilmember Resignations

A council position shall become vacant if the Councilmember fails to attend three consecutive regular meetings of the Council without being excused by the Council. (RCW 13A.13.020, also see OMC 2.04.030).

As a courtesy, a member who wishes to resign should submit a letter to the City Clerk that clearly states his/her intention to resign and the effective date.

Comment [CB2]: Move 2.18 to Section 2. Doesn't seem to fit with Guidelines regarding Council meetings.

3.19 Meeting Minutes

Robert's Rules of Order define minutes as the record of the proceeding which state what action was taken. The essentials of the record include all main motions (except those that were withdrawn) and points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost, and all other motions that were not lost or withdrawn.

3.20 Parliamentary Procedure

The City Council uses *Robert's Rules of Order* to help run its meetings. Robert's Rules works within the Council's process, and not the other way around.

3.21 Parliamentarian

The City Attorney shall assist the City Council on questions of parliamentary procedure and the application of the parliamentary rules contained in *Robert's Rules of Order*. Before deciding any question of parliamentary procedure, the Mayor may request advice from the City Attorney. In cases where serious errors in procedure are being used or being contemplated, the City Attorney may give advice even when it has not been requested.

Please refer to Appendix B for more detailed information about Parliamentary Procedures, including a summary of Robert's Rules, scripts and quick reference guide to motions.