

# **Council Meeting Procedures**

*Adopted June 6, 2006*

Effective immediately following the adoption of this policy by the City Council, the following rules and order of business will be adhered to. They shall remain in effect unless otherwise changed by the City Council. Such action is in keeping with Section 3.09 of the Charter of the City of Seguin which states that the Council shall determine its own rules and order of business.

## **I. MEETINGS**

- A. Regular meetings will be held at the City Hall in the Council chambers commencing at 5:30 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday nights of each month.
- B. Special meetings are subject to call by the Mayor, City Manager or any two (2) Councilmembers. Except in unusual circumstances, these meetings will be held at City Hall at a stated time. The purpose of such meetings is to act upon matters of an unanticipated or emergency nature, which should not be delayed until a regular meeting. Minutes of such meetings will be maintained as a regular meeting.
- C. Workshop meetings are subject to call by the Mayor, City Manager, or any two (2) Councilmembers. The time, place and purpose will be stated at each instance. The purpose of such meetings shall be to discuss in depth or explore matters of interest to the City, such as a meeting with another governing board to discuss mutual problems, a meeting with one of the City's appointed committees, or the Council alone may wish to explore a matter in detail. The purpose of workshop meetings is to explore or discuss problems without taking specific action. The general public may attend such meetings, but may not participate in the proceedings unless invited to do so. Occasionally, public hearings may be held at workshop meetings for the convenience of the public.

## **II. AGENDA – The following stipulations relate to the agenda for meetings of the council.**

- A. Any Councilmember may request that an item be placed on the agenda. Agenda items must reach the City Manager's office at City Hall by 10:00 a.m. Thursday of the week preceding regular Council meetings. Councilmembers should make diligent effort to resolve any concern through the City Manager prior to scheduling an agenda item.

Any member of the City staff wishing to have an item placed on the agenda shall submit that item to the City Manager's office for approval. The City Manager may establish procedures for submission of routine items.

- B. Councilmembers may request items to be placed on the next meeting's agenda during the Councilmember's portion of the Citizens to be Heard item.
- C. Items that have been previously acted on cannot be reintroduced for ninety (90) days except with concurrence of three (3) Councilmembers.
- D. In order for a private citizen to have a particular item placed on the agenda, that person must prepare a short memo or letter outlining the request and deliver it to the City Manager. The Mayor or City Manager shall review the request to determine if it is appropriate to be placed on the agenda. If placed on the agenda the letter will be included in the packet to serve as a briefing paper for the entire Council. The same agenda deadline applies for citizen initiated items. The City Manager has the right to establish the proper wording of the agenda item. The citizen shall be informed that the letter is a requirement for an item to be placed on the agenda.
- E. The agenda packets for all regular meetings will normally be distributed by City staff on Friday preceding the meetings. This should afford ample time for all Councilmembers to inquire into the nature of each matter to be discussed or to personally investigate the matter to be better informed before a Council meeting.
- F. The City Manager's office will be responsible for posting notice of all meetings of the City Council and issuing copies of the agenda to all interested media representatives.
- G. An invocation is provided at the start of each regular City Council meeting. The invocation is given by members of City Council on a rotation basis. Individual City Council members may invite members of the clergy to give the invocation on their behalf.
- H. The United States and Texas Pledge of Allegiance are recited at each regular meeting. Council members may coordinate through the Mayor's office that youth groups, i.e. Boy Scouts, and/or other appropriate organizations or individuals be invited to lead the pledges of allegiance.

III. COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS - These procedures shall apply to all meetings of the City Council:

- A. The Mayor shall be the presiding officer at all meetings of the City Council. Councilmembers shall speak only upon being recognized by the presiding officer whose recognition shall not be unreasonably withheld. In the event of the absence of the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem, the councilmember with the most seniority shall serve as presiding officer.
- B. All meetings of the City Council shall be conducted in accordance with this ordinance and the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- C. Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, unless such rules shall conflict with this ordinance or state law, in which case this ordinance or state law shall control.
- D. A sufficient number of copies of City Council agendas shall be available to the public in advance of every Council meeting, both at City Hall and in Council Chambers immediately preceding the meeting. In addition to multiple copies of the agenda, at least three copies of every resolution or ordinance to be considered by the City Council shall be available to the public in conjunction with the agendas. A separate copy of the agenda and each ordinance or resolution to be considered by the City Council shall be available at the meeting for each member of the press who shall request copies in advance by filing a written request with the City Manager's office. A separate request shall not be necessary for each meeting. In no event, however, shall failure to provide any copy of any ordinance or resolution in any way affect the validity of said ordinance or resolution as passed by the City Council.
- E. Each agenda shall include an opportunity for citizens to be heard in advance of the conduct of regular business of the City Council. During this portion of the meeting, the presiding officer shall ask if any citizen wishes to be heard on any subject not shown as an agenda item. All remarks shall be preceded by the citizen's name and address, shall be made from the microphone provided for that purpose, and shall be limited to no more than five (5) minutes.

- F. Discussion by the City Council of each agenda item shall be preceded by an opportunity for remarks from citizens on that particular agenda item. Other than the Citizens to be Heard item, in order to speak on an agenda item, citizens must sign in and register to speak prior to the agenda item being introduced by the presiding officer. The citizen shall provide their name, address, and indicate the number of the agenda item which they wish to speak on. After introducing the item and before entertaining Council discussion, the presiding officer shall call on citizens that have registered to speak on an item. All remarks by citizens shall be preceded by the citizen's name and address, shall be made from the microphone provided for that purpose, and shall be limited to no more than five (5) minutes.

On zoning and annexation matters, citizens will be permitted to speak during the public hearings only. Staff shall be permitted to answer questions from the public during public hearings, but Councilmembers are not to participate. The item to consider action on the zoning or annexation ordinance will be reserved for discussion by staff and Council only.

A citizen may register to speak on no more than two (2) items on the Council agenda. In special circumstances, the Mayor may waive this rule, provided that the citizen asks for and receives permission prior to the items being called.

- G. Adherence to the five (5) minute time will be monitored by the City Secretary and enforced by the presiding officer. The time limitations set forth herein for remarks by citizens may be extended only by two-thirds vote of the City Council.

H. Rules for Speakers

1. Speakers must address all comments and questions to the presiding officer. Questions to individual Council members are not permitted.
2. Inquiries from speakers about matters not listed on the agenda will either be directed by the presiding officer to the Staff or placed on a future agenda for Council consideration.

## I. Rules for Members of the Public

Members of the public shall not engage in any of the following in the meeting room during a City Council meeting:

1. Shouting, unruly behavior, distracting side conversations, or speaking out when another person is talking.
2. Defamation, intimidation, personal affronts, profanity, or threats of violence.
3. Audible use of phones, pagers, radios, computers or other electronic equipment.
4. Booing, hissing, foot stomping, parading, signing or other similar behavior that impedes or disrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting.
5. Eating or drinking.

Members of the public who violate these rules may be asked to leave the meeting by the presiding officer.

## IV. DECORUM AND DEBATE

When a measure is presented for consideration to the Council, the presiding officer shall recognize the appropriate individual to present the case. When two or more Councilmembers wish to speak, the presiding officer shall name the member who is to speak first. No member of the Council shall interrupt another while speaking except to make a point of order or to make a point of personal privilege. No Councilmember shall speak more than ten (10) minutes on any subject or five (5) minutes on any amendment to the question except as further provided in this rule.

No Councilmember shall speak more than the time limits provided herein on any subject or amendment, and such Councilmember may use his/her time in any combination, in separate speech or comments totaling the number of minutes permitted. The Mayor shall not be obligated to recognize any Councilmember for a second comment on the subject or amendment until every Councilmember wishing to speak has been allowed a first comment. Councilmembers shall also have the right to yield a portion of time to another Councilmember.

Any Councilmember deciding to speak more than ten (10) minutes on any question or more than five (5) minutes on any amendment to the question shall be accorded the privilege without objection upon motion supported by two-thirds of the Council. No Councilmember shall be permitted to interrupt while another Councilmember is speaking.

If a Councilmember is violating these rules, the presiding officer shall, or any Councilmember, may, call him/her to order in which case he/she shall immediately be quiet unless permitted to explain. The Council shall, if appealed to, decide the case without debate. If the decision is in favor of the Councilmember called to order, he/she shall be at liberty to proceed, but not otherwise, and if the case occurs that he/she shall be liable to censure of such action as the Council may deem proper consistent with City ordinances and the City Charter.