



Rules of Procedure and Code of Conduct for the City of Morristown City Council

As adopted 12/2/2024

Revised 5/5/2025

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1. **Purpose.** The purpose of this policy is to set the groundwork for orderly and respectful communications between and among council members, city staff, and citizens to promote the efficient working of the city.
2. **Electronic Communications.** In keeping with the intent of the Minnesota Open Meeting Law, city council members shall not use any form of electronic communications technology, such as text messaging or email, to communicate with one another or third parties during a public meeting.
3. **Remarks and Debate.** City Council must abide by the following.
 - a. No member of the Council shall interrupt or argue with any other member while such member has the floor.
 - b. Members of the Council shall be courteous in their language and demeanor in the discussion, comments, or debate of any matter, and shall not engage in disorderly behavior, make personal comments, derogatory remarks, or insinuations in respect to any other member of the Council, any city staff, or the public.
 - c. If a member of the Council violates these rules, the mayor shall call such member to order, in which case such member shall be silent except to explain or continue in order.
 - d. The City Administrator, City Clerk, and City Attorney shall have the right to enter into a discussion of any matter coming before the Council. Other city staff may enter into a discussion through the City Administrator or when asked a direct question by a member of the Council.
4. **Voting.** The votes of the city council will be taken by voice vote. The mayor shall announce the results of all votes of council.
 - a. Council members may ask for a roll call vote for any item to be voted on by council.
 - b. The Mayor or City Clerk may ask for a verification roll call if the vote of a council member is not clear on the voice vote or if the roll call vote is not unanimous.
 - c. Whenever a matter is put forward for a vote, every council member shall vote, unless a bona fide conflict of interest, as defined by state law, exists. If a conflict of interest exists, a council member shall announce as early in the discussion as possible that they have a conflict and that they are abstaining from the vote and discussion on the matter.
 - d. The Mayor and council members have a public stage to show how individuals with disparate points of view can find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the community as a whole. In so doing, council members should support the majority opinion of the council once a vote has been taken.

5. **Agenda.** An agenda shall be prepared for all regular council meetings by the City Clerk or City Administrator.
- a. A council member may request to have an item placed on the agenda. All requests should follow these guidelines:
 - i. The request must be submitted on a 'Council Member Agenda Request Form' and contain sufficient information to clearly describe the subject matter to be considered by council and any action requested or required. The council member shall strive to provide factual background information and avoid opinion and personal bias on the agenda request form.
 - ii. The City Clerk or City Administrator shall review the form for clarity and ask for clarification if needed.
 - iii. Staff time will not be spent on an individual council member's agenda request until council as a whole has discussed and requested additional information for possible council action.
 - iv. Council Member Agenda Request Forms should be submitted to the City Clerk by 3:00 p.m. on the Thursday before the meeting.
 - v. If a council member has requested an item be placed on the agenda, and the council has previously acted upon the matter, a council member may not request to have the same item placed back on the agenda for a period of 6 months (without significant new information to present). Nothing herein shall be interpreted to prevent a majority of the city council from revisiting an item previously on a meeting agenda.
 - b. A council member may make a motion to remove an item from the agenda during the time to adopt the agenda. The motion must be approved by a simple majority vote.
 - c. To ensure the public's ability to know the items being addressed by council, and to allow council members the ability to be prepared to discuss the matters before them, no items may be added to the agenda after the agenda is posted, unless an urgent situation arises that requires immediate attention.
 - d. Agendas shall be posted and emailed to council members no later than the Friday prior to the meeting.
 - e. To assist with the effective flow of information during council meetings, Council members should send questions on agenda items to the City Administrator and/or City Clerk by noon on the day of the meeting. This will assist staff with their preparation for the meetings so they can be prepared to address the questions. This does not preclude council members' ability to ask additional questions during the meeting.

6. **Consent Agenda.** The consent agenda is used to improve the efficiency of the meetings and allows council to consider several times at one time. Only one motion is necessary to approve all items on the consent agenda. City staff shall have discretion on what items are placed on the consent agenda.
 - a. If a council member wants to remove an item from the consent agenda and place it on the regular agenda, the council member may request that the item be pulled from the consent agenda at the time that the meeting agenda is approved. The item shall then be removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda.
7. **Public Comment and Participation.**
 - a. Public participation at council meetings. City council meetings are the forum for the city council to conduct the city's business. While city council meetings are open to the public pursuant to the Minnesota Open Meeting Law, they are not a forum for public expression. As such, members of the public are not allowed to participate in council discussion and debate without a specific invitation and/or formal recognition by the Mayor. Members of the public shall not applaud, engage in conversation, or engage in other behavior through words or action that may disrupt the proceedings of council.
 - b. Public conduct at council meetings. Members of the public who do not follow the direction of the mayor will be warned that further disruptive conduct will result in removal from the meeting. After warning, if the conduct continues, the Mayor may ask the member of the public to leave the meeting room. If the member of the public refuses to follow the direction of the Mayor, the Mayor may direct the removal of the person through any lawful means or ask for a motion to recess the meeting. In emergency situations, or where conduct is an egregious threat to the safety of the public or the council, a warning is not necessary before the removal may be directed.
 - c. Public Comment Period. Members of the public may provide public comment during the 'Citizen Comments' section of the agenda, which will be limited to 30 minutes. All public comments are subject to these limitations.
 - i. Sign-in prior to the start of the city council meeting is required. A form will be provided at the back of the room that includes citizen name, address, and a brief description of what is to be discussed.
 - ii. Speakers may only speak once during 'Citizens Comments'.
 - iii. Speakers must be called on by the Mayor prior to speaking.
 - iv. Speakers are required to state their name and residential address at the beginning of their comments.

- v. Speakers will have a time limit of two minutes. The Mayor or two council members may choose to allow the speaker extra time.
 - vi. When multiple speakers appear to speak on the same topic, comments should not be repetitive. The Mayor may request that the speakers appoint a spokesperson.
 - vii. Speakers shall not use obscene, profane or threatening language, nor conduct themselves in a threatening, loud or boisterous manner that disrupts the conduct of the meeting or the security of the public.
 - viii. Speakers are required to follow the direction of the Mayor.
 - ix. Citizens are only allowed to address the board as a whole. They may not address an individual council member and may not address the audience.
 - x. City Council is not required to respond at the same meeting where an issue is initially raised by a member of the public. Matters raised by members of the public will generally be referred to staff for further research and possible report of action at a future council meeting.
8. **Agenda Items.** Agenda items shall be handled in the following manner;
- a. Each agenda item is introduced by the mayor.
 - b. The mayor or council member may ask for staff clarification, if needed.
 - c. The mayor may ask for comments from the applicant of the agenda item.
 - d. The city council may discuss the item.
 - e. Members of the audience may speak if called upon by the mayor. Comments should be not be repetitive and must be pertinent to the agenda item.
 - f. The mayor will call for a motion and second.
 - g. Once a motion has been made and seconded, no additional comments will be heard from Citizens and only the City Council will discuss the issue from that point on.
9. **Public Hearings.** Public hearings are sometimes required by law to allow the public to offer input on city council decisions. When public hearings are required by law, notice shall be provided as required by state statute. Public hearings shall be commenced at the time advertised in any notice required by law, or as soon thereafter as is practical.
- a. General procedure for public hearings. The order of business for all public hearings conducted by council shall be:
 - i. Mayor announces the purpose of the public hearing and opens the public hearing.
 - ii. Staff presents information on the public hearing.
 - iii. Developer/other presentation (if any).
 - iv. Public comments are received.

- v. Written comments submitted prior to or during the meeting by interested persons shall be read.
 - vi. Motion and vote to close the public hearing.
 - vii. Mayor announces the public hearing is closed.
 - b. Interested persons who wish to address the city council at a public hearing must follow the same rules as provided for public comment. However, the Mayor may allow additional time for speakers, as required, to comply with applicable state law.
 - c. Speakers may also provide written comments to the city council before or at the meeting. Written comments shall be read aloud by the city clerk. Anonymous, unsigned communications will not be read.
10. **Communications.** In order to maintain a consistent, open, and mutually productive relationship between the city council and city staff, a common communication protocol is needed. To further these objectives, communications should follow these guidelines.
- a. Council Questions. Council members should direct all questions to the City Administrator or City Clerk.
 - b. Staff Communication and Direction. The city council directs city staff and consultants only through the City Administrator, as determined by majority vote of the council. Individual council members shall not direct city staff, nor the City Administrator.
 - c. Citizen Questions. Council members should refer questions and concerns from citizens to the City Administrator. City staff should report back to the city council on the resolution of the referral.
 - d. Respect for staff time. If a council member is asking for information from City Teammates that will require more than thirty minutes of their time to collect and/or research a problem and prepare a response, the request will need to be approved by the Council to ensure that staff resources are allocated in accordance with overall Council priorities.
 - e. Confidential Attorney Communication. Council members should refer all questions to the City Administrator and not directly to the city attorney. The City Administrator will forward questions/concerns to the city attorney with appropriate information for the city attorney to be able to provide legal guidance and opinion as needed. However, nothing herein shall limit a council member's ability to contact the city attorney directly to discuss city business.
11. **Confidential Information.** Council members shall respect and preserve the confidentiality of non-public, protected nonpublic, private, and confidential information provided to them concerning matters of the city. They shall neither

disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization nor use such information to advance their personal, financial, or private interests.