

Council Policy 2021-01
Order of Business at Council Meetings
Approved May 24, 2021

Purpose.

This policy is designed to guide the City's administration in the preparation and presentation of matters on the agenda for consideration by the City Council.

Authority.

Section 5.9 (e) of the City of Hastings Charter requires that the Council determine its rules and order of business annually.

Background.

Public organizations' order of business can vary widely depending upon historical practices and contemporary objectives related to the conduct of meetings that are orderly and aid decision-makers in achieving their aims. This policy was developed as a response to a city manager review of the order of business that had been in use. This review identified areas for improvement that were believed to advance the cause of effective municipal governance by City Council members.

Policy.

Members of the City administration charged with preparing the agenda for City Council meetings shall organize the presentation of matters for consideration by the City Council according to the outline that follows. Comments regarding various sections of the outline are provided as guidance in understanding those sections and are not to be considered a part of the outline itself.

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Pledge to the Flag
4. Approval of the Minutes of the Preceding Meeting
5. Approval of the Agenda

Comments: In approving the agenda, the Council establishes the final order in which it will consider the business before it. It may choose to remove matters from the agenda, add matters to the agenda, or move matters from the unanimous consent agenda to another section of the agenda. It might also choose to move a matter to an earlier portion of the agenda as a courtesy to an attendee. This would typically be used when presenting a proclamation or a special recognition if it is anticipated that public hearings or the call to the public would require extensive time to complete.

To avoid amending motions, the Mayor should ask members of the Council whether they have additions or deletions they wish to propose or matters on the unanimous consent agenda that they wish to take up individually. Once those have been identified, the Mayor should call for a motion reflecting these proposed changes.

6. Public Hearings

Comments: Public hearings are given a place of priority on the agenda in recognition of the importance to the democratic process of providing an opportunity for citizens to address those who govern the community. Except when clarification of a speaker's comments is needed, the public hearing should be used only for the purpose of receiving public input. City Council should reserve its discussion of the matter for that portion of the agenda when action on the matter is to be taken.

7. Call to the Public

Comments: This is the first of two opportunities for the receipt of public comments on matters other than those that were the subject of public hearings. This was formerly referred to as open public discussion and was limited to matters not on the agenda. Permitting comments on any matter, including those that are before the Council, affords Council to be better informed about the actions that it is contemplating taking later during the meeting.

8. Formal Recognitions and Presentations

Comments: This portion of the meeting will be used to present proclamations or adopt resolutions honoring individuals or organizations or recognizing particular events or activities in the community or the state. It will also be used for City Council to receive information from presenters about matters of interest to the community that will require more than the time allowed for comments under Call to the Public.

9. Items for Action by Unanimous Consent

Comments: This section of the agenda is used for routine business items that typically proceed without discussion. Examples of such items would include appointments to boards and commissions, annual reappointments of representatives of the city for various purposes, referring matters to other boards or commission, approval of invoices, and the like.

10. Items of Business

Comments: The order of business formerly in use segregated items of business by type. Such a system does not allow for organizing business items in terms of importance. The practice should be to order items of business such that those that are the subject of public hearings are considered first, followed by those judged to be of greatest significance to the public or that will require the most extensive discussion, and finally those removed from the unanimous consent section.

11. Staff Presentations and Issue Discussion

Comments: This portion of the meeting will be devoted to longer presentations to City Council about matters that might require action in the future. It will also be used for discussions initiated by one or more City Council members on issues that they believe might warrant action in the future.

12. Reports and Communications

Comments: The first portion of this section will be used for reports from the City Manager, City Attorney and Legislative Director. It will also be used to list routine reports from administrators, minutes of board and commission meetings, correspondence to the City Council from members of the public and other similar communications. City Council might act to receive such reports if it wishes but such an action is not required. City Council will be welcome to ask questions regarding any reports or communications it receives.

13. Call to the Public

14. Mayor and Council Comments

15. Adjournment

Effective Date.

This policy shall have immediate effect and shall be employed for all meetings subsequent to its approval.

Sunset Date.

This policy shall expire and no longer be in effect after one year following the date of approval unless re-approved by City Council in fulfillment of its obligations under Section 5.9 (e) of the Charter.