



## Rules of Decorum

City meetings are for the primary purpose of considering action on matters pertaining to City business, public interest, the operation of the City, and the provision of City services. City meetings on important community issues may at times become contentious. Establishing rules of decorum to govern the conduct of all persons attending and/or participating in such meetings is in the public interest and helps to ensure orderly and respectful meetings as well as the safety of attendees and participants. On occasion, however, members of the City Council, Board/Commission, public and/or staff may not follow the rules. On these occasions, the presiding officer's role is particularly important. The presiding officer shall be responsible for maintaining order and decorum of such meetings. All councilmembers, as well as members of committees, boards and commissions, as applicable, shall assist the presiding officer in preserving order and decorum at meetings and in providing for the efficient and orderly operation of meetings. The following rules of decorum shall apply to all persons attending and/or participating in a meeting, unless otherwise expressly noted. The following rules of decorum shall also apply to all persons attending and/or participating in a meeting of any City Council committee, and/or board or commission established by the City.

1. City Council and/or Board/Commission meetings shall be conducted in a courteous manner that recognizes the validity of differing points of view and promotes the ideal of democratic discussion and debate free of insult, slander, and personal attacks and threats.
2. Participants shall conduct themselves at City Council and/or Board/Commission meetings in a manner consistent with the following:
  - a. No person shall engage in conduct which delays or interrupts the proceedings.
  - b. No person shall hinder honest, respectful discussion and debate.
  - c. No City Council member or Board/Commission Member shall engage in private conversation or pass private messages while in the chamber in a manner so as to interrupt the proceedings of the City Council or Board/Commission.
  - d. In keeping with the intent of the Minnesota Open Meeting Law, the City Council and/or Board/Commissions shall not use any form of electronic communications technology, such as sending or receiving text messages or e-mail, to communicate with one another or third parties about the business of the meeting during a public meeting.
  - e. No person shall leave his or her seat or make any noise of disturbance while a vote is being taken and until the result of the vote is announced.
  - f. No person shall use profane or obscene words or unparliamentary language or use language that threatens harm or violence toward another person during a City Council and/or Board/Commission meeting.
  - g. No person shall use dismissive body language (i.e. eye rolling, gestures, turning back to speaker, etc.)
  - h. No person shall speak on any subject other than the subject in debate.

- i. No person shall ask rhetorical or leading questions during City Council and/or Board/Commission question period. Questions of clarification should be succinct.
- j. No person shall speak without being recognized by the chair; nor shall any person interrupt the speech of another person, except where permitted to raise a point of order.
- k. No person shall disobey the City Council Rules of Order and Procedure or a decision of the presiding officer on questions of order or practice or upon the interpretation of the rules of council.
- l. No person shall engage in disorderly conduct that interferes with the effective orderly conduct of any meeting by failing to comply with these rules of decorum or otherwise disrupting or impeding the meeting, where the interference is solely caused by the conduct of the person and not the content of the person's expression. Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to, audible demonstrations of approval or disapproval; cheering or shouting; vulgar, profane, threatening, obscene, abusive, or disruptive conduct or unprotected speech; whistling, clapping, or stamping of feet; or, holding, displaying, or placing banners, signs, objects, or other materials in any way that endangers the safety of others, prevents the free flow of individuals within the meeting room or the ingress or egress from the meeting room or any emergency exits thereto, or otherwise obstructs or prevents the viewing of the meeting by other persons in attendance.
- m. All cell phones and other electronic devices shall be silenced during meetings.
- n. Persons should be addressed by use of title and/or last name.

### **Enforcing decorum:**

When a person, attendee or participant violate the above rules of order and decorum, the presiding officer is authorized to take any one or more of the following actions:

- Not recognize a violating or breaching person's, attendee's or participant's request to speak, or limiting their role in debate or comment, as applicable, until decorum is observed.
- Declare the person's, attendee's or participant's actions out of order.
- Temporarily recess the meeting until order is restored.
- Issue the person, attendee or participant a verbal warning and/or directive that the person, attendee or participant is out of order and shall follow the rules of order and decorum, be silent unless recognized to speak and/or immediately cease such conduct.
- If after issuance of a verbal warning as provided above, the person, attendee or participant continues to engage in prohibited conduct or otherwise fails to comply with the presiding officer's warning, the presiding officer may further direct or order the person, attendee or participant to immediately leave the meeting.
- If the person, attendee or participant so ordered as provided above does not immediately abide by the presiding officer's order or directive by leaving the meeting, and/or the person, attendee or participant continues such prohibited conduct, the presiding officer may direct any law enforcement officer to remove the person from the meeting

Members of the council and/or Board/Commission may request action by the presiding officer to curb another member's conduct through a motion for a point of order. The motion may request a specific

response to conduct by the presiding officer. For example, “I make a motion for the presiding officer to call Councilmember and/or Board/Commission Member \_\_\_\_ to order and to desist from making personal attacks.” Any member of the Council and/or Board/Commission may appeal to the full council and/or Board/Commission a ruling on order or procedure made by the presiding officer. The procedure is noted in Rule 7 of the Council Rules of Order.

Members may make a motion for adjournment or for a brief recess, if a participant’s actions are so offensive as to disrupt the orderly process of the meeting.

Generally any councilmember and/or Board/Commission Member (including the mayor and/or chair), may make a motion to censure a City Council member and/or Board/Commission member for conduct that breaches decorum. A censure often takes the form of a resolution adopted by City Council vote noting the member’s conduct and expressing disapproval of such conduct.

State law and City Code also prohibits persons, including City Council members and/or Board/Commission members, from disturbing public meetings, through fighting or threatening words and conduct. Persons or City Council members and/or Board/Commission members who engage in this unlawful conduct may be charged with a misdemeanor.

These rules of decorum shall be available in the City Council Chambers.