

RULES OF PROCEDURE GOVERNING CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

The City of Alamo Heights Charter Article VI Section 3 states that the City Council may determine its own rules of procedure for meetings. These Rules of Procedure were adopted by City Council Resolution on October 9, 2006 and have been revised five times since adopted. The most recent July 26, 2021 City Council Rules of Procedure are in effect until such time as amended, suspended or new rules are adopted by City Council Resolution.

The purposes of the Rules of Procedure are as follows:

- To ensure that City Council meetings are conducted in a way that allows the business of the City to be effectively administrated.
- To ensure that members of the public who attend City Council meetings can be heard in a fair, impartial, and respectful manner.
- To ensure that City Council meetings are conducted in a way that is open to all viewpoints, yet free from abusive, distracting, or intimidating behavior.
- To ensure that the rules governing decorum at City Council meetings are understood by persons attending the meetings.

City Council Meetings

The deliberations and proceeding of the Council shall be open to the public, except as state law may provide otherwise – (e.g., executive sessions).

Regular Meetings

Regular meetings of the city council will be held on the second (2nd) and fourth (4th) Monday of each month beginning at 5:30 p.m. at the City Hall Council Chambers, located at 6116 Broadway, or at any place that the Council may direct. The date and/or time of any regularly scheduled meeting may be adjusted, if necessary, so long as proper public notification is provided.

Special Meetings

Special meetings shall be set at such times as are necessary or appropriate and may be called by the Mayor or via a memorandum requesting a special meeting signed by any two (2) members of the City Council and submitted to the City Manager. Upon receipt of a request for a special City Council meeting by the City Manager, the City Manager shall determine the availability of the City Council chambers, the other City Council members and Mayor and appropriate city staff for a special meeting and shall call such meeting at the earliest available opportunity at which such participants and facilities are available. Notice of a special meeting shall be given to each member of the Council at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting or 1 hour in advance in case of an emergency meeting. The notice of an emergency meeting shall clearly identify the emergency or urgent public necessity justifying the emergency meeting. Notice may be given in writing, in person, by telephone or by electronic communication.

Executive Session

An executive session (a meeting closed to the public) may be held in accordance with Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code (TGC), Open Meetings Law. The Presiding Officer may call any regular, special, or emergency meeting into executive session by citing the specific provision of TGC Chapter 551 Section 551.101.

Work session meetings are informal special meetings to review upcoming issues, receive special reports, conduct goal setting sessions and for special training purposes. No official action or votes are held at these meetings.

City Council Agenda

The City Council Agenda is the official order of business at Council meetings. Items for the agenda are prepared and submitted to the City Council by the City Manager and staff. Any individual City Council member may propose an agenda topic for consideration by the City Council at the next regular City Council meeting by delivering to the City Manager a written proposed agenda topic for discussion at least one week prior to the date of the next regular City Council meeting; or an action item at least two weeks prior to the date of the next regular City Council meeting at which the agenda topic is to be considered.

The Agenda lists the items coming before the Council for consideration. An Agenda Memo for each item gives background and analysis.

Prior to the public posting of City Council Agendas, a proposed agenda shall be submitted to the Mayor (or Mayor Pro Tem if the Mayor is not available) for review and approval.

The Council may take action on any matter noticed in the agenda, in any manner deemed appropriate by the Council. The Council's consideration of the noticed matters is not limited by the information indicated in the Agenda Memos.

A certified City Council Agenda will be posted at City Hall and on the City's website no later than 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Agenda packets will be available at City Hall and on the City's website for public review no later than 72 hours prior to a regularly scheduled meeting.

Meeting Procedures

Presiding Officer and Duties

The Mayor, or in the absence of the Mayor, the Mayor Pro-Tem, shall be the Presiding Officer at all meetings. If both the Mayor and Mayor Pro-Tem are absent, an acting Mayor Pro-Tem may be elected by the City Council members present to preside.

Quorum Requirements

The Mayor/Presiding Officer shall call the meeting to order at the time designated for a scheduled meeting. Except to adjourn, a quorum is necessary to conduct business at any meeting of the City Council. Quorum is defined by Charter as a majority of the Council members.

Right of Member to be Heard

Council members desiring to speak shall gain the attention of the Mayor/Presiding Officer and, upon recognition by the Mayor/Presiding Officer, shall confine their remarks to the question under debate.

The Mayor/Presiding Officer shall be authorized to ask any member to cease or to limit discussion, or to call the question when it appears further discussion will not be meaningful.

Preservation of Order

The Mayor/Presiding Officer shall preserve order and decorum, discourage attacks on personalities or the impugning of member's motive, and confine member debate to the question under discussion. Individuals in attendance at the meeting who become disorderly, abusive, or disruptive may be removed from the meeting.

Consideration of Agenda Items

The City Council procedure for the consideration of an agenda item is as follows:

- a. Staff presents background information.
- b. Council members may ask questions of staff.
- c. The representative/applicant then has the opportunity to present information/presentation.
- d. Council members may ask questions of the representative/applicant.
- e. Citizens signed up to speak for an agenda item are provided with the opportunity to make comments, once called upon by the Mayor/Presiding Officer.
- f. A Council member makes a motion.
- g. Another Council member seconds the motion. (If there is no second, the motion will not be considered.)
- h. Once the motion has been properly made and seconded, the Mayor/Presiding Officer may open the matter for discussion among Council members. During deliberation, Council members may ask anyone present a specific question for clarification.
- i. Once the matter has been fully discussed, the Mayor/Presiding Officer calls for a vote, no further discussion will be allowed, provided, however, Council members may be allowed to explain their vote.

Appearance Before City Council

There are several ways for citizens to be heard by the City Council during regular Council meetings. Alamo Heights City Council will accept comments from citizens of Alamo Heights only. Citizens are property owners, residents, tenants, and business owners within the City of Alamo Heights.

Citizens may sign a sheet available in the Council Chambers which will be available as early as 30 minutes prior to the meeting and may be heard on:

- Citizens To Be Heard
- specific agenda items
- any scheduled public hearing item

Citizens wishing to be heard on specific posted agenda items, Public Hearings and Citizens to be Heard should sign the appropriate sign-up sheet prior to the commencement of the meeting.

Agenda item “Citizens to be Heard” provides the opportunity for any citizen to speak on any topic that is not on the posted meeting agenda. City Council members will not be able to address or debate topics raised during Citizens to be Heard, but Council can request for the topic to be placed on a future Council agenda or for the City Manager or staff to meet with the citizen to address the issues raised. There will be an opportunity to speak on specific agenda and public hearing items as those items are announced. Non-residents may express comments by special privilege acknowledgment by the Mayor or a Council member. Coordination for a special privilege acknowledgement must be made with the City Secretary no later than noon on the Friday prior to the Council meeting. No person may speak without being recognized by the Mayor/Presiding Officer.

After being recognized by the Mayor/Presiding Officer, the person shall approach the podium and state his/her name and address for the record and their remarks shall be limited to the question under discussion or agenda items. Audience members shall address their comments to the Mayor/Presiding Officer, avoid personalizing, or directing comments to any one or more individuals, and avoid lengthy commentary. State law prohibits the City Council from discussion or taking any action on any item unless it appears on the posted meeting agenda.

In order to conduct a timely meeting, each individual’s comments may be limited to three (3) minutes unless the Mayor/Presiding Officer grants an extension of time. The Mayor/Presiding Officer may, at his/her discretion, shorten the time for speaking. No person may be allowed to yield their time to another person (non-transferrable). An individual’s comments are concluded when the time allotted has expired and/or the Mayor/Presiding Officer recognizes another speaker.

Members of the audience may not engage in disorderly conduct, rebuttal, including the utterance of loud, threatening, or abusive language, clapping, whistling, and stamping of feet or other acts, which disturb, disrupt, impede, or otherwise render the orderly conduct of the City Council meeting impractical. A member of the audience engaging in any such conduct may, at the discretion of the Mayor/Presiding Officer or a majority of the City Council, be subject to ejection from that meeting.

The Mayor/Presiding Officer shall have the discretion to take any measures necessary to maintain control of a public meeting in order to ensure the fair and impartial conduct of business and the timely completion of that business.

No audible electronic device use is allowed in the Council Chamber. Audio and/or visual recording devices are permitted to be used from audience seating areas so long as the equipment does not interfere with the conduct of business. Equipment use that may interfere with the conduct of business may be permitted in designated areas.

Municipal boards and commissions are encouraged to adopt these Rules of Procedure as applicable.