



Board, Commission, and Committee

Guide to Meeting Facilitation

City of
SACRAMENTO
Office of the City Clerk

Rev. 12-22-2023

Office of the City Clerk
915 I Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 • clerk@cityofsacramento.org • (916) 808-7200

Thank you for volunteering to serve as chair or vice chair! This handbook is intended to be an informational source to guide you in facilitating efficient and inclusive meetings.

The City of Sacramento utilizes more than 25 commissions to promote community and stakeholder input. Most serve in an advisory capacity to the City Council. However, a few are quasi-judicial, complaint reviews, or appeals boards. The specific role of most advisory bodies is to review and make recommendations to the city council on matters within its scope of authority and responsibility. This is achieved at publicly noticed meetings, serving as a venue for robust community input and participation in developing suggestions regarding city policy within the purview of that advisory body.

I. Role of the Chair

The [Ralph M. Brown Act](#) (Brown Act), California's open and public meeting law, and the [Sacramento Sunshine Ordinance](#) have requirements to ensure that all city council, board, commission, and committees are inclusive, transparent, and encourage public participation.

The chair (or vice chair in the absence of chair) is responsible for presiding at all meetings and charged with equally applying rules of conduct, ensuring parliamentary procedure is followed, compliance with the Brown Act, and that the scope and work of the commission is accomplished. [Rosenberg's Rules of Order](#) outlines parliamentary procedure and the [Sacramento City Code](#) outlines the scope of most commissions. The order and conduct of business of commissions are also governed by the City of Sacramento [Council Rules of Procedure](#).

As the chair runs the conduct of the meeting, it is usual courtesy for the chair to play a less active role in the debate and discussion than other members of the body. This does not mean that the chair should not participate in the debate or discussion. To the contrary, as a member of the body, the chair has the full right to participate in the debate, discussion, and decision-making of the body. What the chair should do, however, is to strive to be the last to speak at the discussion and debate stage. The chair should not make or second a motion unless the chair is convinced that no other member of the body will do so at that point in time.

II. Parliamentary Procedure

The City follows [Rosenberg's Rules of Order](#): Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century for parliamentary procedures not addressed in the [Council Rules of Procedure](#).

Basic Format for Agenda Item Discussion

- Chair should announce the agenda item and number.
- Chair will invite the appropriate person to present.
- Following staff presentation, Chair will ask members if they have questions or comments.
 - Any member wishing to speak must first obtain the floor by being recognized by the chair.
- Chair will invite members of the public to comment.
- Chair will invite a Motion/Second.
- Chair will make sure everyone understands the motion by repeating the motion or asking the maker of the motion to repeat it.

- Vote. Simply asking for the “ayes” and then asking for the “nays” normally does this. If members of the body do not vote, then they “abstain.”
- Chair announces the result of the vote.

Public Participation

It is the role of the chair to ensure that members of the public have an opportunity to address the commission and are all treated equally and consistently. Members of the public are expected to follow the rules of decorum as outlined in the [Council Rules of Procedure](#). The presiding officer may further limit, or expand, the time allotted for public comments per speaker or in total for the orderly conduct of the meeting as long as such limits are consistently applied.

Motions in General

Although [Rosenberg’s Rules of Order](#) has additional motions, below are the most common:

- Basic Motion is one that puts forward a decision for the body’s consideration.
- Motion to Amend is if a member wants to change a basic motion. Maker of the motion and seconder must approve any amendments.
- Substitute Motion is when a member wants to completely do away with the basic motion and would like to put a new motion before the body.
- There can be up to three motions on the floor. When there are two or three motions on the floor (after motions and seconds) at the same time, the vote should proceed first on the last motion that was made. Any substitute or amended motion shall be taken before the original motion.

Counting Votes

The matter of counting votes starts simple but can become complicated. Below is basic direction and for more complicated votes, the chair should turn to the City Attorney for clarification.

A member should vote Yes, No, or Abstain. Under the “present and voting” system an abstention is counted as not voting at all.

Generally, a vote of a majority of members present is needed to pass a motion. This means that one vote more than 50 percent of the body is required. For example, in a five-member body, if the vote is three in favor and two opposed, the motion passes. If it is two in favor and three opposed, the motion is defeated. In the event of a tie, the motion fails.

III. Agenda Format

The order of business is typically carried out as listed on the agenda as set out below; however, the presiding officer may reorder the items at the meeting, unless members object.

Roll Call – The chair opens the meeting, asks the clerk to call the roll, and confirms there is a quorum required for the advisory body to meet. If a quorum is not reached within 15 minutes of the meeting start time, the meeting will be cancelled for lack of quorum.

Land Acknowledgement and Pledge of Allegiance. The chair will read the land acknowledgement and will lead the pledge of allegiance or may ask another member to do either.

Consent Calendar is considered one item, consisting of matters deemed routine and non-controversial, and typically adopted in one motion. Any member may comment on any item, or request to pull an item from the Consent Calendar for a separate vote.

Public Hearings are duly noticed hearings as mandated by local, state, or federal law, providing an opportunity for public review and comment of a proposed action. There are additional parliamentary procedure requirements such as opening and closing the hearing and the ability for proponents and opponents to present. More details can be found in the [Council Rules of Procedure](#).

Discussion Calendar consists of non-routine items which typically have an oral presentation and discussion before action is taken.

Member Comments is an opportunity for members to make comments which may include a request for future agenda items, information from city staff, and general announcements.

Public Comments – Matters Not on the Agenda is an opportunity for members of the public to make comments on items that are not related to a specific agenda item. This section is only for regular, not special, meetings.

Adjournment. Once the legislative body has completed its business, the chair adjourns the meeting. No vote is required to adjourn a meeting.

Agenda materials will be available [online](#) no later than 120 hours prior to each regular meeting in compliance with the City Code and a chair script is provided to help the chair guide the meeting.

IV. Conclusion

Thank you for your enthusiasm to serve as chair or vice chair. You have the following partners to collaborate with in facilitating inclusive, transparent, and productive commission meetings:

City Staff: City staff will provide subject matter expertise to provide recommendations based on their professional analysis of the project and/or topic. Staff will also provide clerical and administrative support in preparing agendas and staff reports.

Office of the City Attorney: The City Attorney serves as legal counsel to the city government and all officers, departments, boards, commissions and agencies ([Sacramento City Charter §72](#)) and shall provide legal advice to each commission.

Office of the City Clerk: The City Clerk shall act as secretary of the city council and all other boards, commissions, and agencies of the city ([Sacramento City Charter §71](#)). This ensures that all commissions have consistent meeting practices and support, are working toward their purpose and annual goals, and have appropriate staffing consistent with their scope, powers, and duties.