



Commission Rules of Procedure

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OBJECTIVE

This research aims to analyze policies pertaining to city commissions' rules of order and procedure to determine if more formalized rules would benefit the City of Gainesville.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rules of procedure, or parliamentary procedure, are the rules, precedents, and practices adopted by a commission, or another assembly, to facilitate group discussions and decision-making in an efficient, orderly, and fair manner. Currently, the City of Gainesville has rules that address some elements of parliamentary procedure while either not discussing or minimally discussing other key features. Most notably, the City of Gainesville's rules do not discuss motions in depth, nor do they include adopting a supplementary parliamentary procedure manual to provide guidance on effectively utilizing motions during commission meetings. Formally adopting a parliamentary procedure manual, such as *Robert's Rules of Order* or an abbreviated version, or including more rules of order in the City's rules may assist the City Commission in running its meetings more efficiently, improving debate and discussions, and ensuring that all members have the chance to speak. However, adopting more formalized procedures could also make the motion and debate process more complicated and rigid or discourage member participation for those not as familiar with the procedures.

Local commissions and councils approach rules of procedures in several ways. There is significant variability in how specific each commission is with its local procedures. However, it is a common practice among commissions and councils to adopt a parliamentary procedure manual to supplement their outlined procedures. Florida commissions and councils most commonly adopt rules of procedure that are modified and simplified versions of *Robert's Rules of Order* and explicitly adopt *Robert's Rules* to govern where the local rules are silent. Regional leaders, including Jacksonville, Orlando, Tallahassee, and Tampa, have taken this approach. Due to the complexity and length of *Robert's Rules*, other commissions, such as the Alachua County Board of Commissioners, have adopted different procedural manuals, such as *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* or *Rosenberg's Rules of Order*, which is most popular amongst governing bodies in California.

DEFINITIONS AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Parliamentary procedure, also known as rules of order or rules of procedure, is the "generally accepted rules, precedents, and practices commonly employed in the governance" of an assembly or organization. Such procedure is meant to "maintain decorum, to ascertain the will of the majority, to preserve the rights of the minority, and to facilitate the orderly transaction of business of an assembly."¹

The basic concepts of parliamentary rules are motions, amendments, points of procedure, and chairs. A **motion** is a formal proposal by an assembly member for the assembly to take action. There are several types of motions, which can have different names depending on the parliamentary procedure form used. The main classifications of motions are main and secondary motions, where a main motion raises

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/parliamentary-procedure>

business before the assembly, and secondary motions take precedence over the main motion either by affecting the main motion or being of more immediate importance. **Amendments** are made by motion to modify another motion. The exact procedure for motions to amend, including the formality and how many times an initial motion can be amended, depends on the parliamentary procedure form used. **Points of procedure** include point of order, point of information, and point of privilege. A member can raise these points at any time, even when interrupting another speaker, to object to the current conduct or procedure being used, request information, or complain about something interfering with the meeting, respectively. The **chair**, or presiding officer, is responsible for conducting the meetings and applying the appropriate rules. The chair's exact duties and ability to make motions, second, debate, and vote can vary. Lastly, a **quorum** must be established for all meetings to begin, regardless of the parliamentary procedure used. A quorum is the minimum number of members of the assembly that must be present at a meeting for action to be taken.

The most common form of parliamentary procedure adopted and used by city commissions and councils is *Robert's Rules of Order*, originally written in 1876 for the U.S. Congress totaling 716 pages in length.² However, Florida cities broadly use their own local procedures, which are often modified versions of Robert's Rules to accommodate a smaller council size. The most common elements adopted by Florida city commissions include rules (1) prohibiting debate or discussion until a motion is made, (2) establishing that motions die if not seconded, (3) establishing how votes are to be taken (by voice or roll call), and (4) requiring the chair to call on an individual before that person is permitted to speak. To enforce the adopted procedures, some cities designate their city attorney to function in an interpretative role while paired with a sergeant-at-arms to enforce decorum, such as a police officer or chief.³ Several Florida cities, such as Jacksonville, Tampa, Orlando, and Tallahassee, have also formally adopted *Robert's Rules of Order* by reference to supplement their local rules. For those cities that have adopted the most recent edition, *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition*, they may refer to a section with alternative rules for smaller boards (approximately 12 people or less), which are discussed below in the "Best Practices."

Other parliamentary manuals have also been created in response to the length, formality, complexity, and specialized vocabulary used in the standard *Robert's Rules of Order*, including *Rosenberg's Rules of Order*, the *Democratic Rules of Order*,⁴ and *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* (aka *Sturgis Standard Code*).⁵ *Rosenberg's Rules of Order*, created by Judge Dave Rosenberg and published by the League of California Cities, is a seven-page manual meant to offer a set of simplified rules of parliamentary procedure.⁶ These rules are founded on four pillars: Rules should (1) establish order, (2) be clear, (3) be user-friendly, and (4) enforce the will of the majority while protecting the rights of the minority. According to the manual, "hundreds of cities, counties, special districts, committees, boards, commissions, neighborhood associations, and private corporations and companies" have adopted *Rosenberg's Rules of Order* instead of *Robert's Rules*.

² <https://robertsrules.com/our-history/>

³ Email from Lynn Tipton, Florida League of Cities, June 1, 2023.

⁴ <https://www.democraticrules.com/comparison-with-roberts-rules-of-order>

⁵ <https://senate.humboldt.edu/sites/default/files/senate/documents/ParliamentaryProcedureGuide.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.cacities.org/UploadedFiles/LeagueInternet/77/77d4ee2b-c0bc-4ec2-881b-42ccdbbe73c9.pdf>

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While significantly shorter, *Rosenberg's Rules* include the same fundamental structure as *Robert's Rules*, as both are based on common parliamentary principles and practices. Below is a chart outlining the key similarities and differences between the practices for the two sets of rules.

Practices	Rosenberg's Rules	Robert's Rules
Quorum	Default rule is one more than half the body, but specific rule of the body prevails	Same
Role of the Chair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies the rules of conduct of the meeting Makes the final ruling on the rules when the chair states an action Decisions are final unless overruled by the body Should strive to be the last to speak Should not make or second a motion unless no other member will 	Same
Agenda Item Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The meeting is governed by the agenda Provides basic 10-step format (p. 3) The chair can limit the time for speakers during public comment It is the discretion of the chair to require a second for a motion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not as much detail about agendas The body decides the time given to speakers during public comment Motions, but not points of procedure, need to be seconded
Motion Initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motions are made in a 2-step process: (1) chair recognizes body member and (2) member makes a motion by saying, "I move...." Chair initiates motion by (1) inviting members to make a motion, (2) suggesting a motion, or (3) making the motion 	Same
Motion Types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Basic motion</i>: puts forward a decision for the body's consideration <i>Motion to amend</i>: seeks to modify the basic motion before the body <i>Substitute motion</i>: seeks to do away with the basic motion and put a new motion before the body <i>(Friendly amendment)</i>: an informal parliamentary tool to suggest a change to a motion before the body, which the maker or seconding member can accept or reject 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Main motion</i>: introduces a new proposal for the body's consideration <i>Subsidiary motion</i>: changes or affects how to handle a main motion <i>Incidental motion</i>: questions the procedure of other motions (point of order, appeal, withdraw or modify, suspend) <i>Privileged motion</i>: brings up an unrelated urgent or essential

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		<p>matter (orders of the day, question of privilege, recess, adjourn, set next meeting time)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The motions all have special properties which must be learned or found in tables⁷ (debatable, amenable, vote needed, interrupt) • Robert's gives more detail about amendments • "To substitute" is a type of amendment • Specific, more complex rules governing how substitutions are handled; best to defeat motion then propose a different motion • No friendly amendments
Multiple Motions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There can be up to 3 motions on the floor at the same time • Should proceed first on the last motion made 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permits up to 13 ranking motions • Customary system of "precedence of motions": a ranked order for how motions must be addressed⁸
Debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General rule is that motions are subject to discussion and debate • <u>Exceptions</u>: (1) motion to adjourn, (2) motion to recess, (3) motion to fix the time to adjourn, (4) motion to table, and (5) motion to limit debate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally the same, with different terminology for some motions • Length of recess included in the motion and amenable • Motion to table must be justified by urgent other business • Motion to suspend the rules is not debatable
Voting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All motions require a simple majority ("one more than 50% of the body is required") • <u>Exceptions</u> that require a 2/3 supermajority: (1) motion to limit debate, (2) motion to close nominations, (3) motion to object to the consideration of a question, (4) motion to suspend the rules • Cities may prescribe their voting requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally, the same • Simple majority: "more than half or more than 50% of the votes cast"

⁷ University of North Carolina, "Robert's Rules Cheat Sheet" https://diphi.web.unc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2645/2012/02/MSG-ROBERTS_RULES_CHEAT_SHEET.pdf

⁸ <http://www.rulesonline.com/rror--01.htm>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides examples re: abstention 	
Motion to Reconsider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires a majority vote to pass Must be made at the meeting where item was first voted upon May be made only by a member who voted in the majority of the original motion If the motion passes, a new original motion is in order 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generally, the same If the motion passes, the debate is resumed at the point just before the vote was taken
Decorum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Best for only one person to have the floor at a time Best for every speaker to be first recognized by the chair Chair may limit the time allotted Generally, member of the body cannot interrupt the speaker <u>Exceptions</u>: (1) point of privilege, (2) point of order, (3) appeal, (4) call for orders of the day, (5) withdraw a motion by the maker of the motion The chair should tell the public what the body is doing, keep the public informed during actions, and inform the public what the body did for each agenda item 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Also recognizes the importance of decorum Interruption to raise a point of privilege should be done only if unavoidable Same for point of order Generally the same for appeal, but some appeals cannot be debated Same for call for orders of the day A member wishing to withdraw a motion must ask permission from the body; cannot interrupt and cannot be done unilaterally
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member who made a motion may interrupt a speaker at any time to unilaterally withdraw the motion, which immediately takes effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot withdraw motion unilaterally

HISTORY

City of Gainesville

The Gainesville City Commission is governed by City Resolution No. 210548, which states the rules of the City Commission. Many of the rules include elements of typical parliamentary procedure.⁹ However, no parliamentary authority, such as *Robert's Rules* or *Rosenberg's Rules*, has been formally adopted to supplement these procedures.

Rule 4, "Attendance, Quorum/Voting, Recess/Adjourn, and Cancellation," specifies that a quorum is established when four members of the seven-member Commission are present. A motion is adopted

⁹ [1465-2022 Resolution 210548 \(2\).pdf](#)

when approved by a majority of the members *present*. In contrast, an ordinance or resolution can only be adopted when approved by at least four Commission members. Moreover, all present members are required to vote on each matter unless there is a conflict of interest or failure to be impartial during a quasi-judicial hearing. Rule 5, “Agenda and Agenda Management Meeting,” outlines how to request items for the agenda and the process of holding Agenda Management Meetings. Rule 6, “Presiding Officer-Election and Duties,” designates the Chair of the Commission, including a temporary chair, if necessary. Rule 10, “Persons Appearing before the Commission,” permits the presiding officer to enforce the rules of decorum and other members of the Commission to request that the presiding officer do so upon a motion and majority vote. Additionally, the City Manager or a designee is required to be the sergeant-at-arms at commission meetings, whereby the sergeant carries out orders by the presiding officer to maintain order and decorum.

Rule 8, “Rules of Debate,” permits the presiding officer to move, second, and debate like any other member of the Commission. However, the presiding officer must relinquish the chair to another member during the presiding officer’s motion or seconding. This rule also requires that all motions be seconded to be debated or put to a vote. Other limited discussion about motions includes:

- The specific language to use when motioning to vote immediately or move to the previous question
- The specific requirements for any motion to vote immediately
- Speaker must address the presiding officer, be recognized by the presiding officer, limit their discussion to the question under debate
- Limits interruptions unless needed to call the speaking member to order
- Members can move to reconsider after the decision of any question

Alachua County, Florida

The Alachua County Board of Commissioners adopted Policy No. 21-32, “Rules of Procedure for Meetings of Alachua County Board of County Commissioners,” on April 13, 2021.¹⁰ This 18-page policy includes procedures that address what constitutes a quorum (a majority of the entire Board) and specify that adoption of an ordinance, resolution, or motion requires an affirmative vote by the majority of Board members present or a supermajority when required by Florida law.

Section V of the Rules designates the presiding officer as the Chair of the Commission. The section also includes a non-exhaustive list of the Chair’s responsibilities, including recognizing members who seek the floor, preserving decorum and order, calling to order members, and deciding questions of order. Like the City of Gainesville presiding officer, the Alachua County Chair must relinquish the gavel to make a motion. Additional sections of the Rules are dedicated to the order of business, voting, rules of decorum, and the suspension of the rules. The County Manager, or a designee, is the designated sergeant-at-arms of the Board meetings, with the Sheriff’s Office permitted to assist.

¹⁰ [https://www.alachuacounty.us/Depts/BOCC/Documents/ADACompliant/Resolution-2021-32-\(Board-Rules-of-Procedure\).pdf](https://www.alachuacounty.us/Depts/BOCC/Documents/ADACompliant/Resolution-2021-32-(Board-Rules-of-Procedure).pdf)

The policy also stipulates that *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* (or *Sturgis Standard Code*) (TSC) governs the Commission's methods of organization and conduct of business except what is specified in the Commission's own Rules. TSC was created to be a more streamlined and less technical alternative to *Robert's Rules of Order*. TSC classifies motions similarly to *Robert's Rules of Order* with five groups: main motions, restorative main motions, subsidiary motions, privileged motions, and incidental motions. However, there are fewer named motions and requests in TSC, and the terminology used is often more straightforward. TSC also includes explanations of its rules and procedures, a separate list of definitions of parliamentary terms, a Frequently Asked Questions chapter, and several appendices with forms and useful information.¹¹

BEST PRACTICES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Policy Significance

Parliamentary procedure is meant to promote order and efficiency while providing impartiality and fairness for all participating members. Of particular importance, these rules help to ensure that all members of an assembly, or commission, have the opportunity to speak and have their voices heard during a meeting. Without adopted rules of procedures, city commission meetings and the body risk being dysfunctional, disorderly, and inefficient.

Best Practices

Georgia

The Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) created a "Parliamentary Procedure" guide for city officials in June 2007.¹² GMA encourages local governments to adopt these simplified Parliamentary Procedures instead of *Robert's Rules of Order*, which it argues can "bring an even more daunting obstacle than the duties themselves." Recognizing *Robert's Rules* as effective for large groups, GMA believes the rules are "unwieldy" for smaller bodies, including local legislative bodies. This guide provides basic guidelines for getting the floor, discussion and debate, limits on motions, voting requirements, passing a motion, and amending procedure rules. Motions needed for a council to conduct its business and commentary about each motion are extensively outlined with explanations and requirements for when motions can be made. According to the guide, the description of these motions "represent[s] the vast portion of procedures needed so that the legislative body may function." The motions outlined in the guide include a motion to appeal the procedural ruling, a motion to adjourn, a motion to recess, a call to follow the agenda, a motion to suspend the rules, a motion to defer consideration/table, a motion to end/limit debate, a motion to refer a motion to committee, a motion to amend, a motion to revive consideration, a motion to reconsider, a motion to prevent reconsideration, and the withdrawing of a motion. The guide also includes a section on decorum, including points of procedure, the time limit on speakers, addressing council and citizens, focusing on relevant matters, and abstention.

¹¹ <https://jurassicparliament.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Comparing-AIPSC-and-RONR.pdf>

¹² <https://www.gacities.com/GMASite/media/PDF/publications/procedures.pdf>

South Carolina

South Carolina law requires each of its municipalities to adopt by ordinance its own rules of procedure.¹³ The Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC) and the South Carolina Association of Counties (SCAC) have each created manuals with sample model rules of procedure.

The Sample Rules of Order in Appendix B of MASC's "How to Conduct Effective Meetings"¹⁴ include sections dedicated to establishing a quorum and the rules of order, meetings of the council, public notice and agenda, adding an item to the agenda, executive sessions, voting requirements, motions, minutes, appearance of citizens, attorney attendance and parliamentary duties, clerk and their duties, hearings by committee, ordinances (several), resolutions (several), and electronic attendance. The Sample Rules of Order recommends that localities adopt *Robert's Rules of Order*, 11th ed., to govern all proceedings with the city/town attorney serving as parliamentarian. The section on voting recommends that all actions are adopted by a majority vote of members present. The motions section is minimal, only discussing motions to reconsider and substitute motions.

The SCAC Sample Parliamentary Procedure Ordinance¹⁵ is based on the SCAC's Model Rules of Parliamentary Procedure.¹⁶ The Sample includes sections on the applicability and deviation from the rules (including quorum); adoption of the recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* to supplement the Model Rules; the role of the council members; meetings and notice; agendas; hearings; minutes and ordinances; voting; ordinances and resolutions; debate; conflicts of interest; and several types of motions.

Rule 8 on voting addresses how members may vote; the majority vote required (two-thirds or positive) for various ordinances, resolutions, or motions; how a vote can be proposed; and how to vote to elect boards, committees, and commissions. Rule 10, "Debate," requires that members only participate when they are recognized by the chair and lists when speakers may be interrupted. Additionally, members who have not spoken on an issue have preference over those who have already spoken. Rules 12 through 17 extensively address various types of motions that align with those in Robert's Rules, including main, procedural, privileged, subsidiary, incidental, and recall motions. Within each rule dedicated to these categories of motions are the specific motions members can raise (e.g., motion to adjourn, motion to table, motion to commit, etc.). It is specified whether the motion requires a second, can be reconsidered, is debatable, and what majority is needed.

Oregon

The League of Oregon Cities created Model Rules of Procedure for Council Meetings in March 2017.¹⁷ Chapter 1, "General Governance," recommends that *Robert's Rules of Order*, 11th ed., be used to

¹³ South Carolina Code s. 5-7-250 and 5-7-270

¹⁴ <https://www.masc.sc/sites/default/files/uploads/administration/conductingmtgshndbk.pdf> (Appendix B)

¹⁵ <https://www.sccounties.org/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/parliamentaryord.docx>

¹⁶ https://www.sccounties.org/sites/default/files/uploads/publications/model-rules-3rd-ed_web.pdf

¹⁷ <https://www.orcities.org/application/files/1115/7228/7626/ModelRulesofProcedure3-15-19.pdf>

supplement the Module Rules. However, *Robert's Rules* should not be used to “obscure the issues before the council and confuse members of the public.” This chapter also establishes a quorum, designates the presiding officer and their duties, describes other elected and appointed officers, discusses agendas, and extensively outlines the order of business to be followed. Chapter 2, “Meeting Time, Location, and Frequency,” describes the various types of council meetings and sessions, as well as notice, attendance, and location. Chapter 5, “Motions, Debate, Public Comment, and Voting,” outlines the rules for various motions, debate, public comment, and voting. Chapter 6 is dedicated to minutes; Chapter 7 addresses appointments; and Chapter 8 addresses ethics, decorum, and outside statements.

Florida Regional Leaders

Unlike other states’ municipal associations and leagues of cities, the Florida League of Cities (FLC) has not created a guide on model rules of procedure or sample rules of procedure for municipal governments. Lynn Tipton from FLC, who was contacted for this report, confirmed that rules of order for municipal commission/council meetings have been discussed during past annual conference workshops, but FLC does not have any available resources on this topic.¹⁸

Ultimately, there is significant variability in the specificity of procedural rules adopted by Florida regional leaders. These procedures are individually discussed in more depth below. However, some key features of multiple cities’ commission/council rules include the following:

- Posted and available on the city commission/council’s website
- Explicitly adopt a supplementary parliamentary procedure manual, most commonly *Robert's Rules of Order*
- A member cannot speak on any question or discuss a matter without first being recognized by the presiding officer/chair
- Members are to confine their discussion to the question under debate
- Interruption of a speaker is only permitted for questions/points of order
- Specify what constitutes a quorum
- Members can only speak twice on any matter on the agenda and cannot speak a second time until every member who desires to speak has spoken

Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 12th edition: Small Board Rules

The latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* includes a set of different rules for boards or assemblies of a small size (approximately 12 or less people).¹⁹ Recognizing that the formality required for larger assemblies can hinder the efficiency of smaller boards, this edition provides these seven alternative rules that can be used for small boards:

- Members must obtain the floor before making motions or speaking, but can do so while seated.
- Motions do not need to be seconded.

¹⁸ Email from Lynn Tipton, Florida League of Cities, June 1, 2023.

¹⁹ <https://jurassicparliament.com/small-board-rules/>

- There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a question, and motions to close or limit debate should generally not be entertained.
- Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.
- When a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion having been introduced. Unless agreed to by unanimous consent, however, all proposed actions of a board must be approved by vote under the same rules as in other assemblies, except that a vote can be taken initially by a show of hands.
- The Chair does not need to rise while putting questions to the vote.
- The Chair can speak in discussion without rising or leaving the chair; and, subject to rule or custom within the particular board, they can usually make motions and vote on all questions.

CHALLENGES

There are several potential concerns about using overly formalized parliamentary rules. For smaller-sized boards or governing bodies, formalized procedures can make the process too complicated or rigid, thus causing confusion and wasting time. Additionally, overly formalized rules can discourage member participation of, or be weaponized against, members who are not as familiar with the formalized parliamentary procedure. Lastly, members rarely read, let alone memorize, the entirety of *Robert's Rules of Order* when adopted because of its extensive length.²⁰ Having a more formalized parliamentary process would also place additional responsibility on the meeting Chair, who must be aware of the rules to ensure they are followed, and may necessitate the appointment of a formal parliamentarian, often a designee from the city attorney's office, to ensure rules are followed.

There is similarly criticism of the use of simplified manuals. For example, the Jurassic Parliament has critiqued *Rosenberg's Rules of Order* for several reasons.²¹ First, the chair has greater discretion in several matters which *Robert's Rules* designate to the body. Second, substitute motions are given more importance and leeway, which can become confusing; instead, critics state that a motion should be defeated, and a new one should be proposed, as is common practice under *Robert's Rules of Order*. Third, "friendly amendments" allow the maker and the seconder to accept an amendment during discussion instead of leaving the decision to the whole body. Fourth, it can be disruptive to allow members of the body to interrupt debate and withdraw a motion unilaterally. Fifth, allowing only three motions on the floor at a time limits the actions of the body. Lastly, *Rosenberg's* does not cover all the motions, situations, and issues addressed in the more comprehensive *Robert's Rules*.

²⁰ See *Rosenberg's Rules of Order* Introduction, GMA "Parliamentary Procedure" Introduction, <https://socialistcall.com/2019/11/05/roberts-rules-dsa-meetings-democracy/>

²¹ <https://jurassicparliament.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Problems-with-Rosenbergs-Rules.pdf>

PRACTICES FROM OTHER JURISDICTIONS

Adopted Elements in Rules of Procedure	Gainesville	Jacksonville	Tampa	Orlando	Tallahassee	Miami	Clearwater
Parliamentary Authority	N/A	Robert's	Robert's	Robert's	Robert's	N/A	Robert's
Quorum	4 of 7	14 of 19	4 of 7	Majority of all elected members	Majority of all elected members	N/A	3 of 5
Voting-Majority Action	Yes, majority present; 4 for ordinance of resolution	Yes, majority present; 10 for budget or appropriations	Yes, 4 except where state law requires supermajority	Not specified	Yes, 3 for ordinance or resolution	N/A	Not specified
Motions	Minimally	Extensively	Minimally	Minimally	N/A	N/A	Extensively
Rules of Debate	Yes	Yes	Not specified, but some included	Yes	N/A	N/A	Yes
Role and Duties of the Chair	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Only designates mayor as presiding officer	Yes
Rules of Decorum	Only enforcement	Yes	Not specified, but some included	Only preservation and enforcement	N/A	N/A	Some, as "Rules of Conduct"

Jacksonville, Florida

The City of Jacksonville has created a 95-page manual titled "Rules of the Council of the City of Jacksonville."²² In this manual, Chapter 4 is dedicated to the procedures for city council meetings. These procedures address establishing a quorum, the duties of the presiding officer, rulings by the chair and appeals, rules of decorum, the manner of speaking, disruption of meetings, voting, motions, the rules of debate, and vetoed legislation. Part 7 of this chapter discusses motions extensively, including how motions are made and withdrawn, the motions that do not require a second, the motions that are not allowed to be debated, the motions that cannot be amended, the motions that shall have precedence and the order in which they are to be entertained, motions to amend, motions to reconsider, motions for the previous question, motions to postpone indefinitely, and motions to table a bill or amendment.

Important rules included in the manual include: (1) council members cannot speak or introduce a motion without recognition by the Chair; (2) council members are not allowed to speak more than twice on a

²² http://apps2.coj.net/City_Council_Public_Notices_Repository/Council%20Rules%20updated%209.13.22.pdf

subject; (3) council members cannot speak a second time until all other members who want to speak have spoken; (4) council members are confined to speaking about the question under debate; (5) members cannot be interrupted unless being called to order; and (6) the presiding officer may move, second, and debate upon relinquishment of the chair to another council member.

Chapter 5 of the manual also explicitly adopts *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* as the parliamentary authority to supplement the rules outlined in the manual. The Chair of the Rules Committee is the Parliamentarian of the Council. They are responsible for advising the presiding officer of parliamentary procedure and the proper application of the manual's rules.

Tampa, Florida

The City of Tampa has created a 10-page document titled "Rules of Procedure," adopted and revised by several resolutions between 2010 and 2019.²³ Rule 1 addresses the selection of Chair and Chair Pro Tem and their respective duties. Rule 4 includes 12 adopted parliamentary policies of the Council, including a policy to use *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* to govern City Council proceedings where specific rules have not been adopted in the Rules of Procedure. These 12 policies also specifically address quorum and majority voting and make limited reference to motions, rules of debate, and rules of decorum.

There is no section or rules dedicated to making motions. However, the use of motions is sporadically discussed throughout the document. These include motions related to an ordinance or resolution and motions to reconsider. Other notable policies are: (1) council members cannot speak or introduce a motion without recognition by the Chair, (2) council members are not allowed to speak more than twice on a subject, (3) council members cannot speak a second time until all other members who want to speak have spoken, (4) remarks are limited to five minutes per agenda item, and (5) the Chair decides all questions of procedure and order unless reversed by a majority vote.

Orlando, Florida

The City of Orlando has created a 2-page document titled "City Council Rules of Order and Decorum," included in the city's Policies and Procedures Manual.²⁴ These rules broadly address decorum as it relates to members of the public participating in City Council meetings, not council members. However, these rules also designate the Mayor as the presiding officer.

Additionally, Orlando has adopted many of its rules and procedures for its City Council into its Code of Ordinances (Article VIII).²⁵ Section 2.37 outlines the creation of the agenda. Section 2.38 designates the Mayor as the presiding officer of the Council, with the Mayor Pro Tem as the stand-in officer, and their

²³

https://atg.tampagov.net/sirepub/docsresults.aspx?pagetype=results&cabinet=RulesProcedure&meet_date=01/01/2007%7C01/01/2020&srchoperator=or&viewall=True

²⁴ http://www.cityoforlando.net/cityclerk/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2015/02/121_5.pdf

²⁵ https://library.municode.com/fl/orlando/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TITIICICO_CH2AD_ARTVIIIIRUPRCO

respective duties. Other procedures addressed in Article VIII include establishing a quorum in Section 2.41 and the rules of debate in Section 2.43.

Motions, voting, and rules of decorum are discussed sparingly, although they are mentioned throughout Article VIII. For example, procedures regarding motions to reconsider are specifically addressed. Moreover, the presiding officer is responsible for preserving “strict order and decorum” with the assistance of a sergeant-at-arms.

Other notable provisions include: (1) council members must be recognized by the presiding officer to speak, (2) council members are confined to speaking about the question under debate, (3) members cannot be interrupted unless being called to order, and (4) the presiding officer is permitted to move, second, and debate from the chair. Additionally, Orlando has adopted *Robert’s Rules of Order* to govern the meetings of the City Council, where Article VIII is silent.

Tallahassee, Florida

The City of Tallahassee adopted the “City Commission Agenda/Rules of Procedure” in 1992 and last amended the procedures in 2021.²⁶ This 3-page set of rules makes up City Commission Policy 112, which outlines the types of city meetings, the responsibilities of various city employees and departments, and agenda procedures. Other parliamentary procedures are not specified. However, Section 112.08 states that the City Commission “adheres generally to simplified parliamentary procedures to conduct its meetings and is guided by *Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised*, 12th ed., as may be amended from time to time.” The City Attorney is responsible for advising and assisting the presiding officer regarding parliamentary law.

Moreover, Article II of the City’s Code of Ordinances, titled “City Commission,” includes additional rules of procedure.²⁷ It specifies that a quorum is established when a majority of all elected officials are present. Additionally, an affirmative vote of three members of five is needed to adopt any ordinance or resolution. Other procedures regarding motions, rules of debate, the role of the chair, and rules of decorum are not specified.

Miami, Florida

The City of Miami has also adopted rules of procedure for its City Commission into its Code of Ordinances (Article II).²⁸ Section 2-33, “Order of business and rules of procedure,” specifically outlines the Commission’s rules of procedure. Section 2-34 designates the mayor as the presiding officer of the City Commission unless the mayor designates another commission member. This section also specifies that the mayor, as presiding officer, cannot move, second, debate, or vote on any matter before the City

²⁶ <https://www.talgov.com/uploads/public/documents/commission/policy/112.pdf>

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https://library.municode.com/fl/tallahassee/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOGEOB_CH2AD_ARTIICICO

²⁸ https://library.municode.com/fl/miami/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIITHCO_CH2AD_ARTIIMACO

Commission. Another commission member acting as the presiding officer can only move, second, debate, or vote after relinquishing the chair.

The procedures in Section 2-33 primarily relate to setting the agenda and including no more than 60 items, allowing for public comment time, specifying the times for lunch recess and adjourning, and conducting special meetings. Section 2-36 also outlines the mayoral veto and commission override process. However, these procedures do not specify what constitutes a quorum; address voting, motions, rules of debate, rules of decorum, or the role of the chair; or adopt a parliamentary authority. Instead, the various city Boards, Committees, and Commissions outlined in Article XI each have their own quorum, voting, rules of procedures, and parliamentary authority individually designated by ordinance. These bodies all use the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* as parliamentary authority unless they adopt their own order of business and rules of procedure to govern their meetings.

Clearwater, Florida

The City of Clearwater has created a 9-page document titled “Council Rules” that has been adopted and revised by several resolutions between 1977 and 2022.²⁹ These rules include several parliamentary procedures, including establishing a quorum, attendance for other city officials, the duties and responsibilities of the chair, the order of business, the agenda and waiver or changing of rules, “debate of motions” and tie votes, non-debatable motions, reconsideration of an action, rescission of council action, breaks and recesses, rules of order, and rules of conduct.

Rules 4 and 5 designate the mayor as the presiding officer of the City Council and the Vice Mayor as the presiding officer in the Mayor’s absence. Motions are discussed in Rules 8 through 11. One important procedure noted in Rule 8 is that council members may discuss an agenda item before a motion is made. A motion to call the question is made to end such discussion. Motions and amendments can be withdrawn or modified by the maker of the motion any time before the Chair states the question on the motion. If the Chair has already stated the question on the motion, there must be Council majority approval to withdraw or modify. Rule 9 specifies which motions are not debatable: to adjourn, to lay on the table, to take from the table, and to call the previous question. Rule 10 addresses motions to reconsider while Rule 11 addresses motions to rescind.

Other notable provisions within these rules include: (1) the chair shall not make or second a motion, (2) the rules can be waived or changed with an affirmative vote of a majority plus one, (3) no one is entitled to the floor a second time until all those who want to speak have done so, (4) any member making a motion must wait recognition by the Chair before speaking, and (5) the Chair decides all questions of order unless appealed by a majority vote. Additionally, Rule 14, “Rules of Order,” specifically adopts the most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* to supplement rules of the City Council for the conduct of its business.

²⁹ <https://www.myclearwater.com/files/sharedassets/public/city-council-manager-attorney/documents/council-rules-as-approved.pdf>

RECOMMENDED POINTS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

If the City Commission is interested in adopting additional rules of procedure, points for further research and discussion include:

- Whether to supplement the Commission's established procedures with a parliamentary procedure manual and, if so, which manual.
- The inclusion of more specific information about motions that can be made and how and when they can be made and voted upon, and the process of amending motions, including friendly amendments.
- The designation of a commission parliamentarian or parliamentary enforcer.
- Allowing additional permitted reasons for an interruption, e.g., point of privilege, appeal, call for orders of the day, and withdrawal of a motion.
- Limiting the number of motions on the floor.
- Outlining the format for agenda item discussion.
- Limiting the number of times a member can speak about a specific agenda item, including before all members have spoken on the item.
- Limiting the amount of time each member can speak about a specific agenda item.

Educational Resources

- National Association of Parliamentarians: [Education – National Association of Parliamentarians](#)
 - [NAP University](#)
- University of Tennessee, "How to Conduct a City Council Meeting Bases on Robert's Rules of Order" https://trace.tennessee.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1010&context=utk_mtastech
- California Institute for Local Government, "Parliamentary Procedure Simplified" <https://www.ca-ilg.org/document/parliamentary-procedure-simplified>
- Florida Institute of Government, "Understanding & Using Parliamentary Procedure" Course: <https://iog.fsu.edu/parliamentary-procedure>

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