



Procedural Rules for Public Meetings

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This presentation is a collaboration between



CITY OF
LONG BEACH
Office of Ethics and Transparency

Topics Covered in this Presentation

- Why Do We Need Procedural Rules for Commission Meetings?
 - Basic Principles
 - Role of the Chair
 - Goal of Meeting Discussions
 - How does it work?
 - Typical Procedure of an Agenda Item
- Getting to Speak
 - When You're Speaking
 - Motions
 - Public Comment
 - Discussion

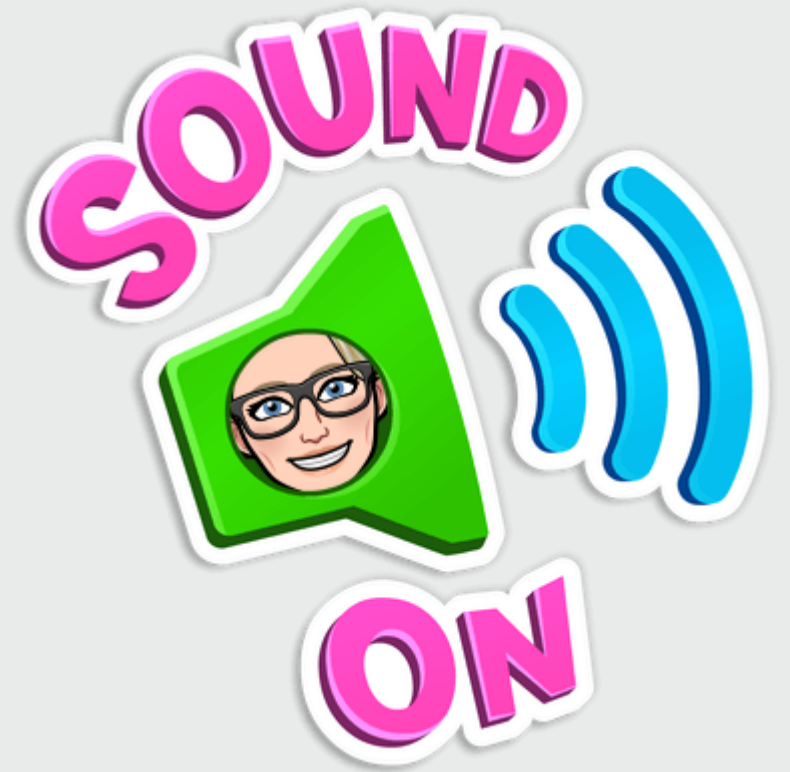
Why Do We Need Procedural Rules for Commission Meetings?

- Bring order to meetings and keep them on track
- Allow commissions to take care of business in an efficient and predictable manner
- Are a common, tested way to conduct meetings
- Give everyone an opportunity to participate and to be heard
- If used properly, can avoid confusion



Basic Principles

- Chair runs the meeting consistent with the Brown Act, bylaws, and Roberts Rules of Order
- Decisions are made by a **majority vote**
- The commission should conduct its business **orderly** and **efficiently**
- Every member (and all viewpoints) should have an equal opportunity to **participate** and **be heard** before voting



Basic Principles

- Fairness and courtesy for all members
- Rules of procedure should be followed consistently and uniformly
- These rules are intended to keep order and decorum during the meeting
- Rules should help, not hinder



Role of the Chair

- Introducing business in proper order per the agenda
- Getting through the agenda items in a timely manner
- Determining if a motion is in order
- Keeping discussion focused on the agenda item
- Enforcing time limits fairly and neutrally for public speakers



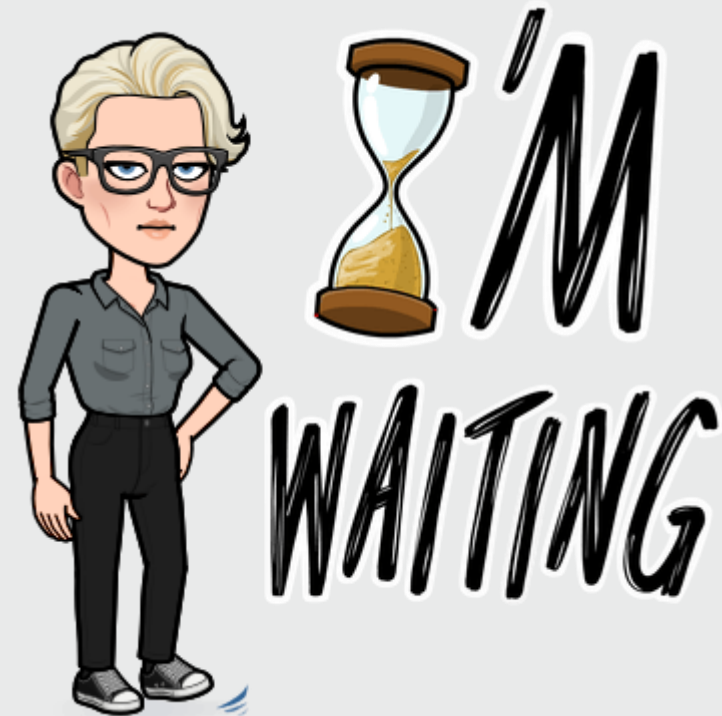
Goal of Meeting Discussions

- Receive and share information, so everyone can make informed choices
- Share thoughts and perspectives on what decision best serves the public's interests and other community values
- Reach a decision on what the best option is
- Reach decisions in a way that builds and maintains relationships between commissioners
- Reach decisions in a way that promotes the public's trust in both commissioners and the decision-making process



How does it work?

- A quorum must be present to start the meeting and conduct business. (consistent with the Brown Act)
- Move down the agenda in order, one item at a time.
- All agenda items will require a motion, second, debate/discussion (if needed), and a vote
- Commissioners wait to speak until recognized by the Chair.



Typical Procedure of an Agenda Item

- Presentation or staff report
- Short discussion (if needed)
- A commissioner makes a motion
- Another commissioner seconds the motion
- Public comment
- The Chair restates the motion for the Commission and opens the motion for discussion
- The Chair puts the motion to a vote
- The Chair (or Staff) announces the outcome

Getting to Speak

- All commissioners have equal rights to speak
- Only one commissioner speaks at a time.
- When a commissioner has something to say, they ask for recognition by the Chair
- Raise your hand to be acknowledged
- The Chair should not engage in debate with anyone providing public comment, other than a brief response.



Motions

- Once a commissioner has been recognized by the Chair they may make a motion
- The motion must be seconded by another member
- The motion is then debated or voted upon
- Typical motions are a main motion, second, friendly amendment, and substitute motion

How to Make a Motion

- To make a motion, you say “I move that _____”

“I move to recommend the City buys a new fire truck.”

- Introduces a new subject for discussion and action before the commission
- You can withdraw a motion or second any time before a motion is adopted or rejected
- Be clear and specific

How to Second a Motion

- Main motions must have a second
 - To second a motion, you say “I second the motion.”
- Withdraw any time before a motion is adopted or rejected
 - No second = No discussion
 - Second does not necessarily mean you support the motion. It means that believe the motion is worthy of discussion

How to Make a Friendly Amendment

- Used whenever you want to change the wording of the motion under consideration
- Must be relevant to the main motion
- Can add or strike words in the main motion
- If the maker of the motion agrees to the change, then the main motion is amended
- The second to the motion may object to the change

How to Make a Friendly Amendment

- To request a friendly amendment, you say: “Would the maker of the motion be open to _____ [insert changes you would like to the motion].”

“I think the branding of the City should be reflected in fire trucks. Would the maker of the motion be open to including that the fire trucks should be blue?”



How to Make a Substitute Motion

- Substitute motion must be substantively different from the main motion
- New motion proposing a different action than the main motion before the body
- Can only discuss one motion at a time. Discussion must be limited to the motion on the floor.
- Substitute substitute motion may also be made if one substitute motion is on the floor
- Must have a second



How to Make a Substitute Motion

- To make a substitute motion, you say “I move that _____”

- **MAIN MOTION WITH FRIENDLY** - “I move that the Commission recommends that the City buys a new blue fire truck.”
- **SUBSTITUTE MOTION** - “I move that the Commission recommends that the City buys a new mobile adoption trailer for the animal shelter.”
- **SUBSTITUTE SUBSTITUTE MOTION** - “I move the Commission recommends that the City paves alleyways with the extra funds.”

How to Manage Multiple Motions

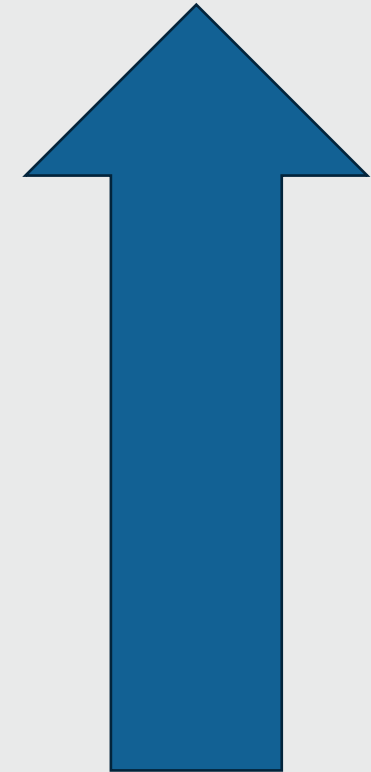
- Commission votes on last motion first and works its way backwards
- If a motion is successful, the commission is done
- If a motion fails, the Commission moves to the next motion
- Only the motion on the floor can be discussed
- No more than 3 motions can be proposed at once

How to Manage Multiple Motions

The motions were made in this order:

1. “I move that the Commission recommends that the City buys a new blue fire truck.”
2. “I move that the Commission recommends that the City buys a new mobile adoption trailer for the animal shelter.”
3. “I move the Commission recommends that the City paves alleyways with the extra funds.”

BUT they are considered in reverse.



Public Comment

- Required by the Brown Act
- Public comment may occur either:
 - After a presentation or staff report
 - After a motion and second but **BEFORE** the discussion



Chair Opens Motion For Discussions

- After a motion has been seconded, commissioners may discuss or comment on the motion on the floor
- Priority should be given to commissioners who have not spoken yet over those who wish to speak again
- When there are no more Commissioners that wish to discuss or comment further, the Chair will call for a vote on the motion



Role of the Chair During Discussions

- Ensuring clear decisions are made
- Recognizing commissioners who wish to speak
- Ensuring debate is controlled to ensure fairness, balance, and efficiency
- Ensuring every member (and all viewpoints) have an equal opportunity to participate and be heard
- Actively listening to determine potential points of agreement and testing those points for actual agreement
- Managing any conflicts that may arise during the discussions.



Chair Calls for the Vote

- The Chair must call for the vote
- Secret ballots are prohibited under the Brown Act
- If the vote is a tie, the motion fails, since a tie is not a majority.





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