

Town of Narragansett Town Council Rules and Guidelines

The following Rules are hereby adopted as the Rules and Guidelines of the Town Council pursuant to the General Laws of the State of Rhode Island and the Town of Narragansett Home Rule Charter.

RULE 1. PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

- (a) The President and President Pro Tempore shall be elected from within the Town Council's own membership at the first meeting after all five (5) Council members have been certified by the Board of Canvassers as per the Town Charter.
- (b) In the absence of the Council President, the President Pro Tempore of the Town Council shall preside over regular and special meetings of the Town Council. If the President and the President Pro Tempore are unable to discharge their duties, the Town Council shall elect a member to perform their duties.
- (c) In the start of a new term it is the Town Council President's role to assign newly elected members of the Town Council to all Boards and committees for their elected term. The Town Council President shall have the right to appoint himself/herself a member of any committee. The Town Council Liaisons support the mission of the committee. The Town Council member supports and facilitates a close working relationship between the Town Council and the specific committee to which they are assigned.
- (d) The Town Council President shall preside over all ceremonial events for the town of Narragansett.

RULE 2. REGULAR MEETINGS

- (a) The Town Council shall hold regular meetings of the Town Council at seven (7:00) o'clock p.m. on the first and third Mondays of the month except on holidays when the meeting will be scheduled for the following day.
- (b) All meetings of the Town Council shall be open to the public; however, the Town Council may authorize an executive session, which shall comply with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act (OMA). Council and staff members shall keep matters discussed in executive session confidential.
- (c) In case of emergency, including but not limited to inclement weather, the President of the Town Council, on the day of a regular meeting, as soon as possible in his/her discretion, may cancel the meeting and shall reschedule the meeting to a specific date in compliance with the OMA. The Town Clerk shall post notice of the cancellation and rescheduling.

RULE 3. SPECIAL MEETINGS

- (a) Special meetings of the Town Council are held when due to a timeframe requirement, regular business cannot wait for the next scheduled meeting and shall be called by the Town Clerk in accordance with §2-37 of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Narragansett and the OMA.

- (b) At any special meetings called by the Town Council through the Town Clerk under §2-37 of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Narragansett, the purpose of the special meeting shall be stated in the notice or agenda of the meeting, and no business shall be transacted at any special meeting other than that which has been stated, although matters may be added to the agenda for discussion and/or referral only pursuant to the OMA.
- (c) Emergency meetings, as defined by RIGL §42-46-6(c), are called in cases where the meeting is deemed necessary to address an unexpected occurrence that requires immediate action to protect the public and may be called by the Town Council President or President Pro Tempore, but only pursuant to the OMA.

RULE 4. EXECUTIVE SESSION

According to RIGL§ 42-46-4, and 42-46-5, a public body may hold a meeting closed to the public on 10 exempted matters that are allowed from discussion at open meetings. A roll call vote is needed to go into executive session.

- (1) Any discussions of the job performance, character, or physical or mental health of a person or persons provided that such person or persons affected shall have been notified in advance in writing and advised that they may require that the discussion be held at an open meeting. Failure to provide such notification shall render any action taken against the person or persons affected null and void. Before going into a closed meeting pursuant to this subsection, the public body shall state for the record that any persons to be discussed have been so notified and this statement shall be noted in the minutes of the meeting.
- (2) Sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation.
- (3) Discussion regarding the matter of security including, but not limited to, the deployment of security personnel or devices.
- (4) Any investigative proceedings regarding allegations of misconduct, either civil or criminal.
- (5) Any discussions or considerations related to the acquisition or lease of real property for public purposes, or of the disposition of publicly held property wherein advanced public information would be detrimental to the interest of the public.
- (6) Any discussions related to or concerning a prospective business or industry locating in the state of Rhode Island when an open meeting would have a detrimental effect on the interest of the public.
- (7) A matter related to the question of the investment of public funds where the premature disclosure would adversely affect the public interest. Public funds shall include any investment plan or matter related thereto, including, but not limited to, state lottery plans for new promotions.

- (8) Any executive sessions of a local school committee exclusively for the purposes: (i) of conducting student disciplinary hearings; or (ii) of reviewing other matters which relate to the privacy of students and their records, including all hearings of the various juvenile hearing boards of any municipality; provided, however, that any affected student shall have been notified in advance in writing and advised that he or she may require that the discussion be held in an open meeting. Failure to provide such notification shall render any action taken against the student or students affected null and void. Before going into a closed meeting pursuant to this subsection, the public body shall state for the record that any students to be discussed have been so notified and this statement shall be noted in the minutes of the meeting.
- (9) Any hearings on, or discussions of, a grievance filed pursuant to a collective bargaining agreement.
- (10) Any discussion of the personal finances of a prospective donor to a library.

A Town Council Member, Town Manager and Town Solicitor may request to hold an Executive Session meeting according to RIGL §42-46-5(a) (1) - (10).

RULE 5. WORK SESSIONS

Whenever possible, Work Sessions will be held the second and fourth Mondays as required in accordance with §2-38 of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Narragansett.

RULE 6. AGENDA

- (a) The Council agenda shall be prepared by the Town Manager, Town Clerk and the Town Council President. The President, or in his/her absence, the President Pro Tempore shall provide final review and approval of the agenda. All Council agendas shall be reviewed by the Solicitor prior to posting to ensure OMA and other legal compliance requirements are satisfied. Any one or two (2) members of the Town Council may add items to the agenda by providing timely notice to the Town Clerk.
- (b) The Agenda for regular meetings will be finalized on Wednesday at 12:00 PM before a Monday meeting, and made available for Council members and the general public on Thursday afternoon by 6:00 p.m. All relevant documents and back up materials for an agenda item shall be provided to the Town Clerk by noon of the Monday preceding the scheduled meeting. If such documents have not been so delivered, then the Clerk will not place the item on the agenda, except upon specific direction of the Town Manager or the President, or the President Pro Tempore in the absence of the President. The Council reserves the right to table any matter to allow sufficient time to review the documents prior to discussion or action. This shall not prevent the Council from considering, discussing, or acting upon any item in an emergency or when circumstances require action within a short period of time, despite the size of the documents and back up materials.

- (c) An opportunity will be provided in each regular meeting to allow for Public Comment and will be placed on the agenda for each regular meeting. Any person may address the Council on any item not on the agenda during that period of time designated as Open Forum. Those wishing to comment will use a sign-in sheet available at the start of the meeting. This time will be limited to thirty (30) minutes and may be extended by the discretion of the President. The length of time each individual may speak must be limited in the interest of order and conduct of the business at hand. Individuals are limited to three minutes speaking time. Such time may be extended at the discretion of the Council President. When appropriate to an agenda item, the presiding officer may allow Public Comment on an item.
- (d) Any item not included on the published agenda may be added during a Town Council meeting in accordance with RI General Law § 42-46-6(b) which states: “Nothing contained herein shall prevent a public body, other than a school committee, from adding additional items to the agenda by majority vote of the members. Said informational items may not be voted upon unless they have been posted in accordance with the provisions of this section. Such additional items shall be for informational purposes only and may not be voted on except where necessary to address an unexpected occurrence that requires immediate action to protect the public or to refer the matter to an appropriate committee or to another body or official.”

RULE 7. CALL TO ORDER, QUORUM, DECORUM

- (a) The Town Council President shall preside at all meetings of the Council and, at the stated hour upon the appearance of a quorum, shall call the Councilors to order.
- (b) The President shall preserve decorum and order; he/she shall decide all questions of any points of order, subject to an immediate appeal to the Town Council by any member present. No other business shall be in order until the question on appeal shall have been decided by a majority of the members present. He/she may speak on points of order, in preference to other members and may speak and vote and make or second motions on general questions the same as other members. The President shall enforce order and decorum among persons and any person addressing the Town Council. The Council shall follow Roberts Rules of Order 10th Edition when addressing matters of parliamentary procedure, not otherwise covered by the Charter, the General Laws of Rhode Island, and these Rules.
- (c) Councilmembers shall avoid accessing any electronic messages during Council meetings to ensure avoidance of potential OMA concerns.

RULE 8. VOTING

- (a) The President of the Town Council shall clearly and succinctly state every question before the Town Council as a whole.
- (b) Items on the Consent agenda may be voted on by a single motion; however, items may be removed for separate action by the request of any Council member.
- (c) In case of a tie vote, the motion is not carried or passed.

RULE 9. DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

As per Robert's Rules of Order, at any meeting of the Town Council, any member desiring to speak, shall address the President, and after his/her right to speak has been recognized, he/she shall not be interrupted while speaking, except by a call to order, or to yield to another member. He/she shall confine his/her remarks to the question under discussion or debate. No member shall speak more than once on the same question, until all other members desiring to speak thereon shall have done so. There shall be no conversation among members while a member is speaking, while a vote is being taken, while any paper is being read or while a question or motion is being stated by the President.

RULE 10. RECONSIDERATION

In accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, reconsideration of a completed motion is allowed if the request is made within a limited time after the original motion. Reconsideration must be requested by a member who voted with the prevailing side in the original motion. The reconsideration can be seconded by any member, and a discussion and vote can occur. If it passes, the original vote is void and the motion can be debated, amended or tabled as with any motion.

RULE 11. COMMUNICATIONS

- (a) Non-confidential mail or written communications received by Council members related to Town business or issues may be forwarded to the Town Clerk's office for copying and/or email distribution to the entire Council, upon request by said Council member.
- (b) E-mail messages will be utilized to keep all Council members updated on issues or matters of interest.
- (c) As Council members are made aware of problems or concerns within the Town, the Council member may notify the Town Manager by e-mail or telephone, so the matter may be addressed promptly.
- (d) Individual members of the Council may contact Department Heads directly after informing the Town Manager of the intended contact and the substance of any such contact. Any contact shall be for informational purposes only and Council members shall not provide direction or give orders to any Department Head or to any employee of the Town.
- (e) Individual members of the Council may contact the Town Manager directly. However, individual Council members shall not give orders to the Town Manager, nor shall the Town Manager undertake substantial projects nor allocate significant Town resources other than upon direction of a majority vote of the Town Council at a meeting of the Town Council.
- (f) Any member of the Town Council may contact the Town Solicitor regarding any questions they may have. When pertinent all Council members will be informed by the Town Manager of the response or recommendation of the Town Solicitor.

RULE 12. DISCRIMINATION

The Town Council is committed to the enforcement of all applicable laws and regulations which prohibit discrimination.

RULE 13. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The Town Council is a continuing body, and unfinished business pending before it shall not lapse or cease to be under consideration following expiration of the Council's term of office, but all pending business before the Town Council at the termination of any term of office shall be considered as pending before the Town Council of the next succeeding term of office and with the same effect as if no change in such Town Council had taken place by the expiration of a term of office.

RULE 14. RECUSAL

Pursuant to RIGL §36-14-6, when a member of the Town Council must refrain from participating in discussion and/or voting on a particular matter because of a conflict of interest, as defined by the Rhode Island Ethics Commission pursuant to Title 36, Chapter 14 of the General Laws of Rhode Island, that member shall complete a Statement of Conflict of Interest (also known as a "Recusal Form") which will be noted in the minutes of the meeting. Said form shall be kept on file in the Office of the Town Clerk, and a copy shall be forwarded to the Rhode Island Ethics Commission. The recused member shall immediately leave the table and sit at the back of the Council Chamber or leave the room entirely, or if the meeting is being conducted virtually, the recused member shall have his or her microphone and camera turned off for the duration of the consideration of the item.

RULE 15. ADJOURNMENT

No item of business other than that of adjournment may be brought before the Town Council at any meeting unless such an item is introduced before 10:30 p.m.; provided, however, that this rule may be suspended by an affirmative vote of a majority of member.

RULE 16. AMENDMENT OF THE RULES

The Rules contained herein may be amended by a majority vote of the Town Council from time to time. Amendment of these Rules must be properly noticed and posted on a Town Council Agenda before a vote may be taken.

ADDENDUM

Format for Regular meetings as follows:

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- III. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PRESENTATIONS
- IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
- V. OPEN FORUM/PUBLIC COMMENT
- VI. PUBLIC HEARING / DECISION 7:30 PM
- VII. CONSENT AGENDA
- VIII. OLD BUSINESS
- IX. NEW BUSINESS
- X. ADJOURNMENT