

City Council  
**Chairs Meeting**  
Monday, February 5, 2024  
6:30 pm



The City Council will hold this meeting as a Hybrid meeting, virtual and in Room 204 on Monday, February 5, 2024 at 6:30 pm. To view this meeting use this link at the above date and time: <https://newtonma-gov.zoom.us/j/85239873744>

Or One tap mobile : +13017158592,, 852 3987 3744# or +13052241968,, 852 3987 3744#  
Or Dial: +1 301 715 8592  
Webinar ID: 852 3987 3744

**Agenda:**

1. City Council Meeting start time.
2. Zoom Settings for Committees: Meeting or Webinar.
3. Council Communications and Letters of support.
4. Committee report structure.
5. Running efficient Committee meetings.

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The location of this meeting is accessible and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities who require assistance. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: [jfairley@newtonma.gov](mailto:jfairley@newtonma.gov) or (617) 796-1253. The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089. For the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), please dial 711.



City Councilors:

On January 12, 2024, a survey was sent to City Councilors, asking for their preference on the start time for our full City Council meetings. Currently our meetings commence at 7:45 PM and it is included in the Council Rules under Article II. Council Meetings and Procedures

Section I. Regular meetings.

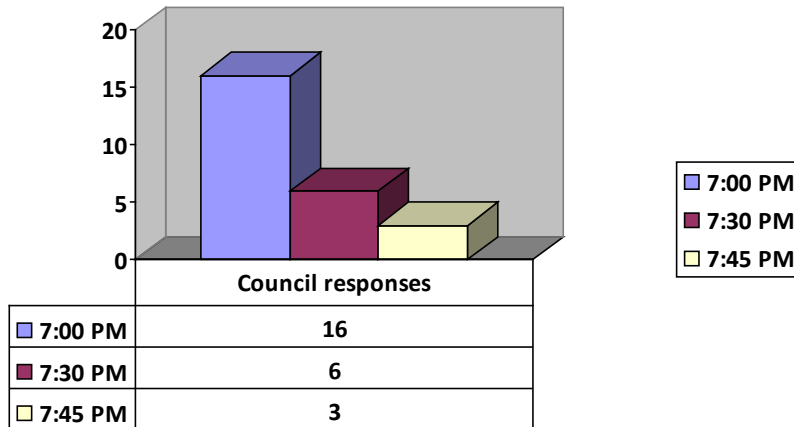
A. Regular meetings of the Council shall be held in the months of January through June (inclusive) and in the months of September through December (inclusive) on the first and third Mondays of each month, at 7:45 p.m., unless otherwise ordered, and in the months of July and August on the second Monday of each month pursuant to §4-1 of the Ordinances.

And under our Revised Ordinances, ordered in 1973:

Sec. 4-1. Time, place for city council meetings.

Regular meetings of the city council shall be held in the months of January through June, inclusive, and in the months of September through December, inclusive, on the first and third Monday evenings of such months and in the months of July and August on the second Monday of each month at 7:45 p.m., unless otherwise ordered by the city council. Where any such Monday shall be a legal holiday, the meeting shall be held on the next following day which is not a legal holiday. Every adjourned sitting of the city council, not an adjourned special meeting, shall constitute a regular meeting, and the order of business thereat shall be the same as in the case of a regular meeting. Said meetings will be conducted in the city council chambers of the Newton City Hall. (Rev. Ords. 1973, § 2-1)

The outcome of the survey (the total is 25, I believe someone voted twice, in error.)



Start times from neighboring communities:

Waltham	7:30 PM
Framingham	7:00 PM
Somerville	7:00 PM
Haverhill	7:00 PM
Quincy	7:30 PM
Fall River	7:00 PM

A concern with beginning the meeting earlier is the scenario of holding a special committee meeting or Chairs meeting prior. We currently implement this procedure, and it is often noticed as follows: "The City Council Meeting will commence immediately following the conclusion of the Chairs meeting."

If the consensus is to change our start time, the next steps would be for the City Clerk to docket an item under Programs & Services to request and draft an Ordinance to update our Rules and Sec 4-1 of our Revised Ordinances. If passed, the Clerk's office will disseminate the change to all local news outlets and post the change on our website and calendars.

Thank you,

Carol Moore, CMC  
City Clerk/Clerk of the Council



February 2, 2024

Virtual Meeting security practices.

In the past year, our committee meetings have seen multiple incidents of “Zoom bombing,” ranging from pranks to serious offences including hate speech targeting specific participants, account misrepresentation using commission members pictures as their profile image, and disruptive flooding of meetings with duplicate malicious accounts, complicating the removal process for our Committee Clerks. These incidents not only threaten the safety of our participants, make our public meetings hostile where it stifles public participation, but also places undue stress on our Committee Clerks, who are trained in virtual meeting security processes, and feel responsible for the meeting’s success. To address these challenges and enhance our virtual meeting security, I present the following information to assist Council in deciding about our future virtual meeting practices.

Open Meeting Law guidelines:

Governor Healy signed into law, a supplemental bill extending the temporary provisions to allow public bodies to continue to hold meetings remotely without a quorum physically present and to provide “adequate, alternative” access to remote meetings until March 31, 2025. “Adequate, alternative means” could include Zoom, a high-capacity telephone conference line, Facebook Live, YouTube Live, and broadcasting on live TV, including local cable access television. The updated guidance from the State can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/updated-guidance-on-holding-meetings-pursuant-to-the-act-extending-certain-covid-19-measures>

Recommendations:

### Law Department

In discussion with our Law department, their recommendation is to move all committee meetings to webinar format, unless it is a noticed public meeting. Even during a regular committee meeting in webinar format, an attendee can raise their hand and the clerk can promote them to panelists, if the Chair chooses to allow public comment on an item. Once the public comment has been made, the clerk can move them back to attendee.

### City’s Chief Information Officer

Attachment A

### City Clerk

While we are not required to have a virtual way for public participation and we can revert to NEWTV only, as other municipalities have (see attachment B), providing many ways for our residents to hear and see our legislative process is an important part of a transparent and accountable government. My recommendation is to continue to utilize the Zoom platform, as this provides greater community outreach and the flexibility for the public to listen. I believe that the webinar format without pre-

registration or passwords is the safest way to ensure that all participants are following along with our meetings. In a former position, I created detailed instructions for the public to raise their hand in Zoom and the Chair can make a brief statement before allowing public comment as well. It was well used and allowed for public comment in a safe environment. Since 2020, virtual meetings have become a mainstay for many people and all generations are more comfortable using this software. As always, our office is available to assist anyone with questions or further instructions.

The Deputy Clerk and Assistant Clerk have trained our committee clerks in security measures and work with our IT department with any new updates but even with training, the surprise of an incident and stress of performing quickly, will have moments where hate speech or images are broadcasted. Committee Clerks are busy running efficient meetings, taking notes of the votes and monitoring the process, to ensure items are addressed and motions are made. The added job of being responsible for the actions of the public is daunting.

As always, we will work with the Chairs with the decision made to ensure efficient meetings are held.

Thank you,

Carol Moore, CMC  
City Clerk/Clerk of the Council

January 19, 2024

To our City Councilors,

First, I'd like to express my condolences for anybody having to be subjected to the hateful and disgusting statements at PS&T.

Second, moving forward, I respectfully recommend that all city council meetings use the webinar format.

It is our best protection against zoom-bombers. I agree that it may be a slight inconvenience (extra clicks) but consider the protection the community deserves. Innocent constituents who only want their voices heard, just as our elected officials, deserve not to be subjected to the crass, disgusting agendas of a small group who have nothing to offer the city but chaos and disfunction.

Our City Clerks who run these night meetings are skilled but the format currently being used is inherently open to zoom-bombing. I and my staff have a set of best practices and send out help files quarterly. We are ready and available to continue helping the clerks and discussing best practices for 2024.

I have emailed Lt. Henrickson the link to the video as well as a spreadsheet of attendees. IP addresses are not an option in Zoom reporting. I know that Chief Carmichael and NPD are also in contact with all of you and are ready to help.

FYI, the FBI has recommended that we report the incident at the Internet Crime Complaint Center ([www.IC3.gov](http://www.IC3.gov)) which I am doing.

Respectfully,  
Joe

Joseph P. Mulvey  
Chief Information Officer  
City of Newton, MA Information Technology Dept.  
1000 Commonwealth Ave.  
Newton Centre, MA 02459  
617-796-1188

## Attachment B

Neighboring Communities Virtual Meeting practices:

Worcester uses Zoom Webinar and some commissions use Teams with a password, with posted instructions on how to raise hand for Public Comments

<https://www.worcesterma.gov/uploads/7c/79/7c794940df1037e22377081a0f325e24/joining-zoom-event.pdf>

Waltham does not use Zoom for public meetings, it is in person or viewed on their channel (similar to NewTV)

Somerville uses the Webinar feature with registration  
<file:///C:/Users/Cmoore/Downloads/Agenda.pdf>

Quincy does not use Zoom for public meetings, it is in person or viewed on their channel (similar to NewTV)

Cambridge uses Zoom Webinar format with registration and in person and on their city Channel

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/citycouncil/zoomonlinemeetinginstructions>

Lynn does not use Virtual meetings and is in person and on their tv channel

<file:///C:/Users/Cmoore/Downloads/City%20Council%20Meeting%20Notice%20-%20January%202023,%202024.pdf>

## **Best Practices for Councilors at City Council Meetings (2024)**

The following are some guiding principles for all City Councilors at City Council meetings (including full Council meetings, Committees of the Whole, and Committee meetings):

### *Before the meeting*

- Read materials in advance of each meeting.
- When making requests for additional materials or information from staff, copy the President and Vice President or Committee Chair and Vice Chair on all requests.
- Become familiar with and follow the Rules & Orders of the City Council 2024-2025, Robert's Rules of Order, and, for Land Use matters, the Statement of Good Practices for Communications with Councilors Regarding Land Use Petitions.

### *At the meeting*

- Arrive on time.
- Notify the President and Vice President (for the full City Council) or the Committee Chair and Vice Chair (for committee meetings) and the appropriate clerk if you are going to be absent, late, or leaving early.
- Dress appropriately (business attire for full City Council and Committee of the Whole meetings and Committee meetings where a public hearing will be held or a significant public turnout is expected; business attire or business casual for all other meetings).
- If appearing virtually, please keep your video turned on, unless there are technical difficulties.
- Address fellow Councilors by title (Councilor) followed by the last name; staff members by title (Director or Commissioner) or Mr. or Ms. followed by the last name; and members of the public by \_\_\_\_\_ (unless you know their name, in which case use Mr. Jones or Ms. Jones).
- Raise your hand (electronically, if you are participating virtually) if you wish to speak and wait to be recognized by the President or Committee Chair.
- Stay on point when speaking - remain on topic and be concise. Try not to repeat what has already been said.
- Listen attentively to all speakers – fellow Councilors, staff members, and members of the public.
- Feel comfortable engaging in robust debate on issues but do so in a respectful manner.
- Always remember that we are in public setting acting as representatives of the city and that our words (and sometimes actions) are being recorded.



- Avoid the use of cell phones, computers, tablets, and other electronic devices during meetings for anything other than reviewing meeting materials electronically, calendaring items or similar tasks directly related to the meeting.

*After the meeting*

- Meet individually on a periodic basis with the President and Vice President and Committee Chair and Vice Chair to provide and receive feedback on meetings.
- If there is an issue or concern about how a meeting has been run or something that has happened at a meeting, first address it directly with the President (if a full City Council meeting) or the Committee Chair (if a Committee meeting), preferably in person. If dissatisfied with the outcome, then contact the Vice President or the President Emeritus (in the case of the full City Council) or the President (in the case of a Committee).



## Best Practices Discussion on Report Writing.

The report or official minutes of a public meeting has been a topic of discussion under the prior City Clerk and has been brought up frequently in the past two years under my tenure, as well. As a Certified Municipal Clerk with years' experience creating minutes in various settings, I was trained and practice under the guidelines set by Robert's Rules (attachment A) and they are also recommended by parliamentarians. While I understand, historically, reports were drafted as an aid to capture more details of the meeting, which predates before meetings were recorded, first on cassette tapes and now on video. Transcriptions can be produced, and I can investigate the costs of providing that service.

The following information aims to assist the Council in their discussion and decision-making regarding the structure and best practices of report writing:

- Attachment (A) are excerpts from Robert's Rules (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) relating to the content and approval of minutes.
- Attachment (B) Massachusetts Open Meeting Law guidelines section on minutes.
- Attachment (C) recommendations by parliamentarians.
- Attachment (D) neighboring communities' procedures with links to examples.

Currently, our Committee Clerks spend between 8 to 12 hours on writing reports, depending upon the complexity and length of meetings. If there is a decision to expand upon our reports, our writing time will increase. My only recommendation is there is a decision to expand upon our reports, that we implement a procedure of approving the report at the beginning of committee meetings, allowing members to vote on its accuracy to ensure a proper recall, as everyone may interpret a situation differently. The draft will be posted in the Friday Packet and the approved one will be shown on the respective committee page afterwards.

Thank you,

Carol Moore, CMC  
City Clerk/Clerk of the Council

## THE CONTENT AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES According the *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (12<sup>th</sup> ed.)

For ordinary non-legislative groups, societies, or organizations, particularly those that specifically provide in their governing documents (constitution, bylaws, or special rules of order) that the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* is the parliamentary authority, the minutes should be “a record of what was done at the meeting, not what was said by the members.” [RONR (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) 48:2]

To add or delete from what RONR describes is supposed to be in the minutes requires adoption of a special rule of order (e.g. 2/3 vote), although a majority vote may direct the inclusion of specific additional information in the minutes of a particular meeting. [RONR (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) 48:3]

**NOTE:** It is not a point of personal privilege for a member to insist that ‘the minutes reflect’ any statement or record of any sort that has not been ordered by a majority vote of the members assembled.

FIRST PARAGRAPH [RONR (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) 48-4]:

1. the kind of meeting (regular, special, adjourned regular or adjourned special);
2. the name of the society or the assembly;
3. the date and time of the meeting, and the place, if it is not always the same;
4. the fact that the regular chairman and secretary were present or, in their absence, the names of the persons who substituted for them; and
5. whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved—as read, or as corrected—and the date of that meeting if it was other than a regular business meeting. Any correction approved by the assembly is made in the text of the minutes being approved; the minutes of the meeting making the correction merely state that the minutes were approved “as corrected,” without specifying what the correction was (see first paragraph of form, 48:8).

BODY OF MINUTES:

The body of the minutes should contain a separate paragraph for each subject matter, giving, in the case of all-important motions, the name of the mover, and showing:

6. all main motions (10) or motions to bring a main question again before the assembly (6:25–27; 34–37) that were made or taken up—except, normally, any that were withdrawn—stating:
  - a. the wording in which each motion was adopted or otherwise disposed of (with the facts as to whether the motion may have been debated or amended before disposition being mentioned only parenthetically); and
  - b. the disposition of the motion, including—if it was temporarily disposed of (9:7–11, 38:8)—any primary and secondary amendments and all adhering secondary motions that were then pending;
7. secondary motions that were not lost or withdrawn, in cases where it is necessary to record them for completeness or clarity—for example, motions to Recess or to Fix the Time to Which to Adjourn (among the privileged motions), or motions to Suspend the Rules or grant a Request to Be Excused from a Duty (among the incidental motions), generally only alluding to the adoption of such motions, however, as “... the matter having been advanced in the agenda on motion of...” or “... a ballot vote having been ordered, the tellers...”;
8. the complete substance of oral committee reports that are permitted to be given in small assemblies in particular cases as provided in 51:60–62;
9. all notices of motions; [RONR (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) 10:44-51; and
10. all points of order and appeals, whether sustained or lost, together with the reasons given by the chair for his or her ruling;
11. the declaration by the chair in “naming” an offending member as a part of disciplinary procedures, as well as any disorderly words that led to such naming and that the chair directed the secretary to take down (see 61:12–14); and

LAST PARAGRAPH:

12. The last paragraph should state the hour of adjournment.

RONR (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) 48:5:

**Additional rules and practices relating to the content of the minutes are the following:**

- The name of the maker of a main motion, but not the seconder unless ordered by the assembly.
- When a count has been ordered or the vote is by ballot, the number of votes on each side should be entered; and when the voting is by roll call, the names of those voting on each side and those answering "Present" should be entered. If members fail to respond on a roll-call vote, enough of their names should be recorded as present to reflect that a quorum was present at the time of the vote. If the chair voted, no special mention of this fact is made in the minutes.
- The proceedings of a committee of the whole, or a quasi committee of the whole, should not be entered in the minutes, but the fact that the assembly went into committee of the whole (or into quasi committee) and the committee report should be recorded [see RONR (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) 52].
- When a question is considered informally, the same information should be recorded as under the regular rules, since the only informality in the proceedings is in the debate.
- When a committee report is of great importance or should be recorded to show the legislative history of a measure, the assembly can order it "to be entered in the minutes," in which case the secretary copies it in full in the minutes.
- The name and subject of a guest speaker can be given, but no effort should be made to summarize his remarks.

**THE SIGNATURE.** Minutes should be signed by the secretary and can also be signed, if the assembly wishes, by the president. The words *Respectfully submitted* - although occasionally used - represent an older practice that is not essential in signing the minutes

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THINGS THAT DO NOT GO INTO THE MINUTES:

Unless required by law, bylaw, a special rule of order or are ordered by means of a main motion properly made, seconded and approved by a majority vote of the members at a meeting with a quorum present, these things do not go into the minutes,:

1. The name(s) of the person(s) who second(s) motions or resolutions;
2. Content or summary content of the debate or discussion of motions being considered;
3. The names of members speaking in favor or opposed to a motion or their statements;
4. Expressed opinions of members or officers, not in the language of the motion;
5. Minutes of standing or special committee meetings;
6. The number of members who abstain from voting, except when a roll call vote is ordered;
7. Any member's reasons for voting;
8. Any member's vote, except when a roll call vote is ordered;
9. Individual member's or non-member's demand for their remarks "to be in the minutes."
10. Letters, articles, petitions, extraneous facts introduced at the insistence of one or a minority;

THE "MINUTE BOOK"

"The minutes should be kept in a substantial book or binder." RONR (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) 48:1

"It must be understood in such a case that the formal copy placed in the minute book contains all corrections that were made and that none of the many copies circulated to members and marked by them is authoritative." RONR (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) 48:14

FORM OF THE MINUTES. The principles stated above are illustrated in the following model form for minutes (*Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (12<sup>th</sup> ed., 48:8):

The regular monthly meeting of the L.M. Society was held on Thursday, January 4, 20 \_\_, at 8:30 P.M., at the Society's building, the President being in the chair and the Secretary being present. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved as corrected.

The Treasurer reported the receipt of a bill from the Downs Construction Company in the amount of \$5,000 for the improvements recently made in the Society's building. The question put by the chair "that the bill be paid" was adopted.

Mr. Johnson, reporting on behalf of the Membership Committee, moved "that John R. Brown be admitted to membership in the Society." The motion was adopted after debate.

The report of the Program Committee was received and placed on file.

The special committee that was appointed to investigate and report on suitable parking facilities near the Society's building reported, through its chairman, Mrs. Smith, a resolution, which, after debate and amendment, was adopted as follows: "*Resolved*, That . . . [its exact words immediately before being acted upon, incorporating all amendments]."

The resolution relating to the use of the Society's library by nonmembers, which was postponed from the last meeting, was then taken up. This motion and a pending amendment were laid on the table after the chair announced that the guest speaker had received a phone message which would require his early departure.

The President introduced the guest speaker, Mr. James F. Mitchell, whose subject was \_\_\_\_\_.

At the conclusion of Mr. Mitchell's talk, the resolution relating to the use of the Society's library by nonmembers was taken from the table. After amendment and further debate, the resolution was adopted as follows: "*Resolved*, That . . . [its exact wording immediately before being finally voted on]."

Mr. Gordon moved "that the Society undertake the establishment of a summer camp for boys on its lakefront property." Mrs. Thomas moved to amend this motion by inserting the word "underprivileged" before "boys." On motion of Mr. Dorsey, the motion to establish the camp, with the pending amendment, was referred to a committee of three to be appointed by the chair with instructions to report at the next meeting. The chair appointed Messrs. Flynn, Dorsey, and Fine to the committee.

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 P.M.

Margaret Duffy, Secretary

## APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

According the *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (12<sup>th</sup> ed.) 41:9-12, 48:9-15

The minutes of each regular or special meeting are normally read and approved at the beginning of the next regular meeting, immediately after the call to order and any opening ceremonies. (48:9)

A special meeting does not approve minutes of a previous session unless the meeting was called for that purpose, which is not ordinarily the case. (48:9)

In a session lasting longer than one day (like a convention), the minutes of meetings held the preceding day are read and approved at the beginning of each day's business after the first. (48:9)

In particular, an adjourned meeting of an ordinary society approves the minutes of the meeting that established the adjourned meeting; its own minutes are approved at the next adjourned or regular meeting, whichever occurs first. (48:9)

### **Procedure:**

The chair says, "The Secretary will read the minutes." (41:9) Or, if drafts of the minutes have been sent to all members in advance, the chair announces that this has been done, and the actual reading of them aloud is omitted unless any member then requests that they be read. *NOTE: A draft of the minutes circulated to members must be clearly marked as such* (41:12).

If for any reason there are minutes of other meetings in addition to the last meeting that have not yet been approved, they are taken up from earliest to latest. (41:9)

A formal motion to approve the minutes is not necessary. (41:10)

The only proper way to object to the approval of the secretary's draft of the minutes is to offer a correction to it. (41:11)

With or without a formal motion, the chair asks, "Are there any corrections to the minutes?" (41:10)

Corrections, when proposed, are usually handled by unanimous consent, but if any member objects to a proposed correction, a motion to Amend may be moved. (41:10)

When there are no or no further corrections, the chair states, "Since there are no (or "nor further") correctons, the minutes are approved as circulated (or "as corrected"). (41:11)

When the minutes are approved, the word "Approved", with the secretary's initials (or the signature of the chairman of the approving committee) and the date, should be written below them. If the minutes are approved with corrections, the secretary should prepare a fully corrected version and distribute copies to the members as well as placing it in the minute book. (As noted in 48:4(5) all such corrections should be incorporated in the minutes to which they pertain, and not in the minutes of the meeting making the corrections.) (48:14)

Only the secretary's corrected version of the minutes is the official copy. (41:12)

If the assembly does not wish to carry out the approval of the minutes at the regular time, it may, by majority vote without debate, "dispense with the reading of the minutes." The minutes can then be taken up by majority vote without debate at any later time during the meeting while no business is pending, under the same rules as those governing *Take from the Table* (34). (48:11)

Attorney General encourages public bodies to allow as much public participation as time permits.

Any member of the public may make an audio or video recording of an open session of a public meeting. A member of the public who wishes to record a meeting must first notify the chair and must comply with reasonable requirements regarding audio or video equipment established by the chair so as not to interfere with the meeting. The chair is required to inform other attendees of any such recording at the beginning of the meeting. If someone arrives after the meeting has begun and wishes to record a meeting, that person should attempt to notify the chair prior to beginning recording, ideally in a manner that does not significantly disrupt the meeting in progress (such as passing a note for the chair to the board administrator or secretary). The chair should endeavor to acknowledge such attempts at notification and announce the fact of any recording to those in attendance.

## Minutes

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### What records of public meetings must be kept?

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Public bodies are required to create and maintain accurate minutes of all meetings, including executive sessions. The minutes, which must be created and approved in a timely manner, must include:

- the date, time and place of the meeting;
- the members present or absent;
- the decisions made and actions taken, including a record of all votes;
- a summary of the discussions on each subject;
- a list of all documents and exhibits used at the meeting; and
- the name of any member who participated in the meeting remotely.

While the minutes must include a summary of the discussions on each subject, a transcript is not required. No vote taken by a public body, either in an open or in an executive session, shall be by secret ballot. All votes taken in executive session must be by roll call and the results recorded in the minutes. While public bodies must identify in the minutes all documents and exhibits used at a meeting and must retain them in accordance with the Secretary of the Commonwealth's records retention schedule, these documents and exhibits needn't be attached to or physically stored with the minutes.

Minutes, and all documents and exhibits used, are public records and a part of the official record of the meeting. Records may be subject to disclosure under either the Open Meeting Law or Public Records Law. The State and Municipal Record Retention Schedules are available through the Secretary of the Commonwealth's website at: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcrmu/rmuidx.htm>.

## Attachment C

Parliamentarians' articles on reports and minute taking:

Ann MacFarlane, PRP <https://jurassicparliament.com/meeting-minutes-local-government/>

Jim Slaughter, PRP <https://blog.lawfirmcarolinas.com/best-practices-for-board-meeting-minutes/>

Michael Mouritsen, RP <https://michaelmouritsen.ca/blog/f/a-few-moments-on-minutes?blogcategory=Minutes>



# Attachment D

Municipality	Meetings webpage	Example of Committee Minutes
Somerville	<a href="https://somerillema.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx">https://somerillema.legistar.com/Calendar.aspx</a>	<a href="file:///C:/Users/cmoore/Downloads/Minutes%20(4).pdf">file:///C:/Users/cmoore/Downloads/Minutes%20(4).pdf</a>
Waltham	<a href="https://www.city.waltham.ma.us/city-council/pages/standing-committees">https://www.city.waltham.ma.us/city-council/pages/standing-committees</a>	<a href="https://www.city.waltham.ma.us/sites/g/files/vyhlf6861/f/minutes/lf_minutes_10.2.2023.pdf">https://www.city.waltham.ma.us/sites/g/files/vyhlf6861/f/minutes/lf_minutes_10.2.2023.pdf</a>
Worcester	<a href="https://www.worcesterma.gov/city-">https://www.worcesterma.gov/city-</a>	<a href="https://www.worcesterma.gov/age">https://www.worcesterma.gov/age</a>
Cambridge	<a href="https://cambridgema.iqm2.com/Citizens/calendar.aspx">https://cambridgema.iqm2.com/Citizens/calendar.aspx</a>	<a href="https://cambridgema.iqm2.com/Citizens/FileOpen.aspx?Type=12&amp;ID=2620&amp;Inline=True">https://cambridgema.iqm2.com/Citizens/FileOpen.aspx?Type=12&amp;ID=2620&amp;Inline=True</a>

## **Best Practices for Leading City Council Committees (2024)**

The following are some guiding principles for leading City Council Committees:

### *Leadership*

- Maintain an open dialogue with the President and Vice President. Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs should alert the President and Vice President when there are controversial and/or time sensitive issues, items that will be on second call at full City Council meetings and matters in need of procedural clarification.
- Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs should work closely together on all aspects of planning, running, and reviewing meetings. The Chair and Vice Chair should provide one another with honest feedback, constructive criticism, and suggestions for improvement.
- Communicate frequently with Committee members about the Committee's work.
- If the Chair happens to be involved in a heated dialogue at a meeting, the Vice Chair should help defuse the issue.
- If the Chair and Vice Chair are unable to be at a meeting, the Committee member with the most seniority on the Council should serve as the chair of the meeting.
- Become familiar with the Rules & Orders of the City Council 2024-2025, Robert's Rules of Order, and, for Land Use matters, the Statement of Good Practices for Communications with Councilors Regarding Land Use Petitions
- Make sure that all items are discussed within a year of their docketing as required by the Council Rules.
- Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs should be knowledgeable about important deadlines associated with their individual committees. For example, Land Use and Zoning and Planning have legal requirements about when public hearings need to be held and what happens if action is not taken on an item within a particular time.

### *Agenda Management*

- Communicate regularly with your Committee clerk regarding agenda development, meeting preparation, and report generation.
- Map out a schedule of meetings for the calendar year with an understanding of the goals for the year and each meeting.
- Prepare an agenda for each meeting that includes topics to be discussed and the estimated length of the discussion for each item.
- Plan so that no meeting is normally longer than three hours.

- Work with department heads and others who will present at the meetings to review presentations in advance so that they are well-organized and complete. Presentations should not go forward (except with rare exception) unless complete back-up materials are provided to Councilors as part of the Friday packet.
- Keep an open dialogue with department heads under the purview of your Committee. Try to schedule a regular call or meeting with them and develop and share the standards that you have for the type and delivery time of back-up materials you expect to accompany items while being mindful of the workload of their staff.
- Group similar items that can be discussed together to consolidate the docket and avoid duplicate discussions.
- Periodically arrange informational presentations on topics related to the purview of your Committee if you think it will make later work on the topic more effective.
- Develop agendas early to allow for ample notice to attendees and lead time for City staff.
- Review the requested invitees for a docket item and, if necessary, invite others that you feel should attend.
- Discuss items with the person docketing the item in advance of meetings.
- Anticipate the types of questions that will come up with each docket item and the people who are most likely to have the answers.
- For all docket items on the agenda, confirm that the person who has docketed the item is prepared to present, the appropriate back up materials are available for the packet, and all necessary personnel have been notified.
- Review new docket items and, if you believe that the topic might be better addressed informally, speak to the person docketing the item about how to do so.
- Take advantage of opportunities to have joint meetings for items that are referred to multiple committees to save time for the presenters, allow for a consistent and comprehensive discussion of the item, and eliminate duplicate meetings on the same topic.

#### *At the Meeting*

- Dress appropriately (business attire for Committee meetings where a public hearing will be held or a significant public turnout is expected; business attire or business casual for all other meetings).
- Begin on time.
- State that meetings are audio and/or videotaped and introduce Councilors and staff.

- State at the outset of the meeting what is intended to be covered, with an estimate of the time when the meeting will end.
- Monitor the pace of the meeting to make sure that there is appropriate time for discussion for each item while ending on time.
- Assess the interests of the audience before the meeting and manage expectations for public comment (including whether any public comment will be taken and, if so, how it will be done) and Committee and Council action.
- Reserve comment until other members of the Committee have spoken, unless to clarify matters of background or procedure.
- Make sure that all Councilors get a chance to speak before allowing others to speak again.
- Politely guide Councilors who are straying off point or talking for a lengthy period of time to remain on topic and be concise while not limiting their right to speak on the issue.
- Set and enforce clear rules for public comment at public hearings, while always remaining calm and polite.
- Always remember that we are in public setting acting as representatives of the city and that our words (and sometimes actions) are being recorded.
- At the end of each meeting, offer Councilors a preview of items to be discussed at the next meeting and in the future.

*After the meeting*

- Work with the Committee clerk to make sure that Committee Reports are prepared in a timely fashion.
- If ordinances or other materials requiring law department review are to be reported to the full City Council, make sure that the materials have been reviewed for legal form and character.
- If financial items are involved, make sure they have been reviewed by the Comptroller before being reported to the full City Council.
- Review presentations with department heads and other presenters to evaluate the presentations and provide constructive feedback for improvement.
- Meet individually on a periodic basis with the President and Vice President and Committee members to provide and receive feedback on meetings and suggestions for improvement.