

Lopez, Donna

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From: Tom Stohlman [tstohlman@comcast.net]
Sent: Thursday, January 09, 2014 4:06 PM
To: Lopez, Donna
Subject: Fwd: Some New Council Rules
Attachments: 010214 City Council Letter on Rules.pdf; ATT00001.htm

Hi Donna,

I'm not sure if this pdf letter got on the record as a communication, so I'm sending it to you again just in case.

Thanks,
Tom Stohlman
19 Channing Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Begin forwarded message:

From: Tom Stohlman <tstohlman@comcast.net>
Subject: **Some New Council Rules**
Date: January 2, 2014 at 12:19:01 PM EST
To: Cambridge City Council <council@cambridgema.gov>, Donna Lopez <dlopez@cambridgema.gov>
Cc: Nadeem Mazen <nadeem@nimblebot.com>, Dennis Carlone <denniscarloneforcitycouncil@gmail.com>, Dennis Benzan <dennisbenzan@hotmail.com>, Marc McGovern <marcmcgovern@gmail.com>

Attached. I've cc'd the four newly elected members.

Tom Stohlman
19 Channing Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

January 2, 2014

To the New Cambridge City Council,

It's time for New Year resolutions and I'd like to suggest a few for the incoming Cambridge City Council. I've been to a lot of City Council meetings over the years and I'd like to suggest some rule changes from the point of view of an involved citizen.

1) **Let the School Committee elect its chair.** This would appear to be a direct violation of State Law (MGL C43 s31), which states that the Mayor should be the chair of the School Committee. But a Mayor can be the formal chair and permit another member of the body to be acting chair.

It's only right that an elected body be allowed to decide who among them will run the meetings. Even a newly elected school committee member knows more about school issues than a city councillor. It will take a special Mayor (see Resolution #2) to make this happen.

2) **Discuss who should be Mayor.** It seems there is a unwritten rule that there shall be no public discussion of the qualifications and election of the Mayor. There is, of course, plenty of discussion that occurs, just not in public.

I'd personally like to hear what the Mayoral candidates think the Mayor does. I'd like them to describe what they think the duties of the City Manager, the City Council, and the School Committee are. I'd like to know if they know Robert's Rules of Order, if they are willing to let the school committee decide who should preside over its meetings, and if they can suggest changes in the old City Council rules to help encourage open debate and public participation (see Resolution #3).

3) **Break these City Council rules by eliminating or changing them:**

General: Eliminate sexist pronouns (all over the 2012-13 Rules of the Council). *It's 2014, after all!*

Rule 17. Special Events Presentations. Commencing at 5:00 p.m before any regular meetings there may be a SPECIAL EVENTS PRESENTATION. At this time special events will be presented and will be broadcast on cable television. Special Events Presentations will be scheduled through the Mayor's Office. The Special Events Presentations will conclude at 5:30 p.m. No quorum of the City Council is required. *Do we really need a "rule" for this?*

Rule 21. The City Clerk shall prepare the minutes of the previous regular and/or special meetings and a calendar of all matters to come before the City Council at each meeting in accordance with the established order of business and shall deliver to the residence of each Councillor a copy of the same not later than twenty-four hours prior to said meeting. On all matters on which there has been a roll-call vote, the minutes shall reflect the votes of the individual members. *Simplify, modernize, and change to: "The City Clerk shall prepare the minutes of the previous meeting and the Order of Business for the next meeting and shall make both available on the City website not later than 24 prior to said next meeting."*

RULE 23 B. Six to eight meetings per year shall be roundtable/working meetings. The date for a particular roundtable shall be set by majority vote at a prior regular business meeting or as a special meeting. At a roundtable meeting, no votes shall be taken except upon a motion to adjourn. ~~The meeting shall not be broadcast on cable television.~~ The Mayor shall determine the agenda for the roundtable meeting in consultation with the City Manager and other members of the City Council. *Eliminate the underlined sentence. There is no rule that says a Council meeting must be broadcast, why have a rule which states that one must not be broadcast?*

RULE 23C. Public Comment.

Simplify, and bring into compliance with State Law by eliminating the ~~striked~~ sections. Improve by adding underlined sections.

Regular business Any meetings.

a. Under the provisions of Chapter 43, Section 98 of the General Laws, Tercentenary Edition, citizens and employees of the city shall have reasonable opportunity to be heard at any meeting of the City Council in regard to any matter considered thereat.

The Chair shall allow reasonable comment prior to the matter considered and in no case may limit the public's or employee's opportunity to be heard to less than three minutes.

~~Opportunities for citizens and employees to be heard at all regular meetings, except for working/roundtable meetings, shall be provided directly after the reading of the record, if requested by the City Council (submission of the record of the previous meeting). Members of the public may comment upon items in the following categories of business: Motions for reconsideration, City Manager's consent agenda, Unfinished business from preceding meetings, Applications and petitions requiring approval or referral by the City Council, Consent resolutions. Consent resolutions and orders relating to policy analysis or development, Committee reports and Communications and reports from other city officers. Each speaker shall limit his or her comments to no more than three minutes.~~

b. Procedure: An individual may sign up to speak before the City Council via telephone email, or text message to the City Council office on Mondays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., or in person from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. via a sign up sheet available in the Sullivan Chamber. To assist the Chair, the individual must may indicate on the sign up sheet which item(s) he or she is planning to address.

2. Regular roundtable/working meetings.

~~Public comment shall not take place at working/roundtable meetings of the City Council, where no matter being discussed may be finally considered, in that no votes may be taken. Written comments will be accepted and made part of the record of the meeting. The opportunity for the public to make oral comments on items discussed at working/roundtable meetings shall be at the regular meeting at which the item may be considered for action by the City council.~~

Rule 23E. The City Clerk shall include the written statement of the mission and goals or priorities of the City Council and the City Manager with the materials prepared for the agenda of the City Council for its weekly meeting. *This doesn't rise to "Council rule" status,*

but is a good rule to live by. It goes without saying that both the Council and the City Manager should explain to the public and each other why a particular motion is important to the City.

Rule 24. The seats of the members of the City Council shall be determined by the City Clerk in consultation with the members; no member shall change his seat but by permission of the Chair. *How did this silly rule even end up in the Council rules? It appears in the past the Council couldn't even figure out where to sit without asking for help from the Staff.*

Rule 30. No person will be admitted within the rail in the Sullivan Chamber or in Members' Lobby connected with said chamber at any meeting of the City Council except upon permission of the Mayor. *The symbolism of royal rulers who need gates and hidden chambers to protect them from the rabble is inappropriate for the People's chamber. This should have been eliminated centuries ago. Councillors, tear down this wall (metaphorically speaking).*

Rule 31B. Hearings

Eliminate the ~~striked~~ sections, add the underlined sections. Give subsections outline letters consistent with other rules.

Public hearings shall provide the public reasonable time for participation and breaks.

- a) Hearings shall be recessed for no less than 15 minutes every two hours. The time devoted to public hearings shall not be more than two (2) hours at any one sitting. Any hearing not completed within the specified time may be continued to another meeting.
- b) Any individual appearing before the City Council at a public hearing and claiming to represent another as agent or otherwise in the matter of being heard shall file with the City Council a written authorization signed by the individual, organization or corporation whose interests such individual represents.
- c) There shall be a five (5) minute time limit for each speaker to express her or his views on the matter being heard by the City Council, except as noted below. Speakers will be required to address themselves solely to the issue, which is before the City Council for discussion and shall not engage in personal or rude remarks. *It's a pity this has to be said, but so be it.*
- d) In all hearings before the City Council, the case of the petitioner shall be submitted first for 15 minutes, except in matters affecting acceptance of highways or taking by right of eminent domain. After the initial speaker, opponents then supporters shall be given the change to speak until all those desiring to speak have been heard.
- e) After all speakers have been heard at least once, the Chair shall permit individuals to speak again, alternating between opponents and supporters as before. Speakers shall continue to address themselves solely to the issue and will be required to avoid repeating prior statements.

Thank you,
Tom Stohlman
19 Channing Street
Cambridge, MA 02138