

Parliamentary Procedure

A Guide for City Officials

Georgia Municipal Association
June 2007

Introduction: The Purpose of Procedural Rules

The rules of parliamentary procedure are intended to help organizations and other large bodies conduct business efficiently and fairly. Historically, the rules allow healthy debate and discussion while controlling who speaks and when so that decisions are made in an orderly and timely fashion. Legislative bodies in particular have a lot of work to accomplish, and the rules of parliamentary procedure should alleviate problems and assist officials in accomplishing their tasks and goals. Most clubs, organizations, and other bodies across the United States have adopted Robert's Rules of Order, as it is the most widely accepted procedure guide.

For local governments, however, the procedural rules often bring an even more daunting obstacle than the duties themselves. While Robert's Rules may be effective to assist in the orderly conduct of large groups, it may become unwieldy for smaller bodies of people, in particular local legislative bodies. It may cause confusion, waste time, and even cause legitimate actions of the mayor and council to be invalidated on technicalities. This publication is intended to serve as a guide to municipal governments for simplified procedures to follow in the course of a council meeting. While there are various laws requiring meeting notices, open meetings, and agendas, this publication only covers suggested procedures for efficiently conducting a council meeting. The commentaries provide additional guidance.

The following rules, with a few alterations to meet the needs of the city, may be adopted as Standard Operating Procedure for the conduct of council meetings. For a quick summary of the most common motions used by a municipal body, see **Motions at a Glance** on page 5.

For more information regarding parliamentary procedure for local governments, see Rosenberg's Rules of Order: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century¹, or Suggested Rules of Procedure for Small Local Government Boards². For information regarding Open Meetings and Records, see the GMA publication Government in the Sunshine: Open Meetings/Records Guide for City Officials (Sixth edition, 2004); and the Georgia Open Meetings Act and Open Records Act, starting at Code Sections 50-14-1, 50-18-70 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, respectively.

¹ Rosenberg's Rules of Order: Simple Parliamentary Procedures for the 21st Century, available at http://www.cacities.org/resource_files/22486.ParliamentaryRevised.pdf (hereinafter "Rosenberg's Rules").

² A. Fleming Bell, II, Suggested Rules of Procedure for Small Local Government Boards, 2nd Ed., 1998.

Basic Guidelines

1. Getting the Floor

When an individual member of the legislative body wishes to make a motion, the chair must first recognize the individual's right to speak.³ The individual may then make the motion, beginning with the phrase, "I move...".⁴ Typically a second is then required; however, the council may choose in its adoption of parliamentary rules whether or not to require a second. The original purpose of the second was to assure minimum support for the issue, and theoretically on a local council, if even one member has interest then there is sufficient interest for the proposal to go forward. Keep in mind, however, that the second can be a useful tool, especially with larger councils. First of all, on a larger council, one member represents a smaller percentage of support for the motion, so the original purpose of the second may be invoked—to assure sufficient support of the issue. Further, on any size council the second can help to curb the forced consideration of an issue in which only one member shows interest. Without the use of a second, there is the potential for one member to repeatedly propose an issue that the rest of the council finds irrelevant. Thus, although not required, a second is highly suggested, especially in the case of large councils.

2. Discussion and Debate

After the motion (and second, if the council so chooses), the presiding officer repeats the motion and opens the floor to discussion of the motion.⁵ The maker of the motion speaks first, and the presiding officer allows proponents and opponents to alternate speaking if possible. A member who has not yet spoken has precedence over those who have already voiced an opinion.⁶ The presiding officer has the authority to end discussion if it becomes too personal or too longwinded.

3. Limits on Motions

The various procedural motions available are explained under the "Motions At a Glance" section. A procedural motion is one that governs the way the meeting is conducted, whereas a substantive motion is a motion on a particular topic or issue. A member may only make one motion at a time. Ratification of an act is considered a substantive motion.⁷

³ Rosenberg's Rules, *supra* note 1, at 2.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Bell, *supra* note 2, at 15.

⁷ *Id.* at 15.

Up to three motions (one substantive, two procedural) may be on the floor at one time; for example, one substantive motion and two motions to amend.⁸ While two substantive motions may not be pending at the same time, multiple procedural motions may be on the floor if the rules discussed in “Motions at a Glance” so allow.⁹ When multiple motions are on the floor, the last motion made should be the first voted on.¹⁰ See motions to amend under “Motions at a Glance” for more detail.

4. Voting Requirements

A quorum is necessary to conduct business and is generally defined as a majority of the membership of the council. Unless otherwise provided by the city’s charter, the council may decide whether to exclude vacant seats for purposes of determining quorum, as well as whether or not to count the chair. Typically, boards decide to count in quorum a member who leaves a meeting without being excused by majority vote of the other remaining members, but the charter may contain a definition of quorum or specific voting requirements. Thus, the charter must first be consulted by the city in setting its voting requirements.

Just as the council has the power to choose whether to include the presiding officer in attaining a quorum, they may also be able to decide whether or not he or she votes always or only to break a tie. Again, the charter usually controls this, so the requirements in the charter will govern this section of the procedural rules. If someone fills in for the presiding officer, that individual votes as he or she normally would, regardless of the rules governing chair voting unless the charter provides otherwise.

5. Passing a Motion

If a quorum is present, the chair can take a vote by asking for the “ayes” and “nays”.¹¹ Approval of a motion is generally attained by a majority vote (more than half) of all the votes cast when quorum is present, but the charter again should be consulted, as it may provide otherwise. The council may choose to require a 2/3 or other supermajority approval vote for certain motions that tend to curb the rights of individuals to voice their opinions or make motions.

Further, in the case of a motion to suspend the rules, a unanimous vote may be needed for certain actions, such as having both the first and second reading of an item in the same meeting when two separate meetings are typically required. Abstention should be disallowed except in cases where a conflict of interest exists.¹² Otherwise, it may be used improperly to cripple the council. Although it is highly discouraged, however, a council does have a choice to allow abstention. The charter should delineate how an

⁸ Rosenberg’s Rules, *supra* note 1, at 3.

⁹ *Id.* at 13-14.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ Rosenberg’s Rules, *supra* note 1, at 4.

¹² Laurel E. Henderson, Vagaries of Voting: The Oblique Approach (unpublished paper); 2000 GMA City Attorneys Section Seminar.

abstention is to be treated. When there is not a roll call vote and the minutes do not reflect the names of the members voting against a proposal or abstaining, state law provides that the action taken is presumed approved by each person in attendance.¹³ After the vote, the chair should declare the results of the vote.

6. **Amending Procedure Rules**

The council also needs to provide a process for amending its procedural rules. It is suggested that amendments to parliamentary procedure be allowed at any regular meeting or a special meeting called for that purpose, and that adoption occur upon approval by a majority of a quorum.

¹³ O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1(e)(2) (2006).

Motions at a Glance

The following are procedural motions that may be needed by a city council in order to conduct its business. They are presented in descending order of precedence.

As a side note, included in this example are motions that are rarely, if ever, used. For example, the motion to divide a complex issue and consider it by paragraph, discussed below, should only be used in the most complex, confusing situations, and motions to refer to committee are unnecessary in a city that does not use committees. In adopting procedural rules, the council may thus choose whether or not to include such motions. A word of caution about exclusion, however; unforeseen situations may arise where such motions are needed, and it is sometimes easier to let a procedural motion sit on the books unused than to go through the process of adding it to the rules.

However, if the council feels the presence of a rarely-used motion may cause unnecessary confusion, the amendment process discussed above is fairly simple and would allow a motion to be added if such a contingent circumstance arose. For example, if the motion to divide and consider by paragraph was not in the rules and a very complex motion was made, the speaker may withdraw the motion, allowing the council to amend the procedural rules to include a motion to divide. Then the motion may be renewed and the council may move to divide it into simpler pieces. The decision to include some of the less-known motions discussed below thus lies with the council.

- **Motion to appeal the procedural ruling:**¹⁴ A speaker may be interrupted for the purpose of making this motion, which arises when the presiding officer (typically the mayor or mayor pro tem) has ruled a motion in or out of order or made some other procedural decision with which the speaker disagrees. The ruling is appealed to the council and thus requires a majority vote under guidelines typically provided in the charter.

Commentary

The motion to appeal may be made only at the time that the procedural ruling is made. Because it must occur so immediately, it takes the highest precedence of the procedural motions. The member of the body making the motion may speak without being recognized, and the motion may not be ruled out of order.

- **Motion to adjourn:**¹⁵ This motion proposes the meeting end and takes precedence over all other motions discussed below if it passes. It may not be made during the discussion of a pending substantive issue and may only be brought by an individual after he or she has been recognized by the chair to have the floor.

¹⁴ Bell, *supra* note 2, at 16.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 17.

Commentary

The council may still choose to adjourn without deciding a pending substantive matter; however, one of the below-mentioned motions must be used. There is no debate on the motion to adjourn, so after the motion and second a vote must be held.¹⁶

- **Motion to recess or adjourn to a time and place certain:**¹⁷ This motion also proposes an end to the meeting and takes precedence over all the motions below if it passes.

Commentary

However, unlike the motion to adjourn, it may interrupt the discussion of a pending substantive issue. Thus, this motion can be used by the council if they want to stop the meeting before a final decision is made on a substantive motion.

- **Motion to take a brief recess:**¹⁸ This motion proposes a break in the meeting and is subject only to an amendment as to the length of the break.

Commentary

This motion may be made at any time except when one of the motions above is pending. The presiding officer, however, may call a brief recess at any time without a motion. There is no debate on this motion.¹⁹

- **Call to follow the agenda:**²⁰ This motion attempts to steer the council back on course if they deviate from the agenda. If it is not raised the first time they stray from the agenda, the motion is waived and unavailable.

Commentary

The speaker may be interrupted for this motion, and it may be debated, as there may be limited times when deviation from the agenda is necessary.

- **Motion to suspend the rules:** This motion allows the council to do things that are legally allowable but may violate the council's **own** rules. (Rules imposed by state law or the charter cannot be suspended).

Commentary

The motion to suspend the rules is debatable and amendable.²¹ It is available to give the council more flexibility and to reduce needless formalities. This may be another situation where a 2/3 vote or other

¹⁶ Rosenberg's Rules, *supra* note 1, at 3.

¹⁷ Bell, *supra* note 2, at 17, cmt.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 17.

¹⁹ Rosenberg's Rules, *supra* note 1, at 3.

²⁰ Bell, *supra* note 2, at 18.

²¹ Rosenberg's Rules, *supra* note 1, at 4.

supermajority should be required, as it is an effort to override existing rules. The rules are in place for a reason, so the higher percentage of support may prevent the rules from being suspended in order to infringe on an individual's right to voice an opinion or vote his or her conscience.

- **Motion to go into closed session:**²² This motion coincides with the law regarding Open Meetings in O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et. seq. If during a meeting the council needs to go into closed session for one of the limited purposes listed in the statute, a member may make this motion to go into closed session.²³
- **Motion to leave closed session:**²⁴ This motion allows the council to return from a closed session into an open meeting, either to conclude any business or simply to adjourn the open meeting.
- **Motion to divide a complex issue and consider it by paragraph:**²⁵ This motion allows debate and discussion, amendments, and voting to occur on a large issue in smaller increments.

Commentary

As a word of caution, this motion should be used only in the case of long motions or complex issues where confusion is possible. For example, if the city designated money in the budget to fund a new park and there was opposition to the park, there may be a motion to divide and vote on that budget item instead of the budget as a whole. Then, if the park funding was approved, the budget could be considered. If the park funding failed, the budget could be amended and then voted on.

- **Motion to defer consideration/Motion to Table:**²⁶ These motions allow the council to leave the decision on the issue for another day. Consideration of a motion may be deferred to a specified date and place or indefinitely.

Commentary

It is suggested to set a time limit for the motion to expire if not revived, perhaps 90 days.²⁷ At expiration the issue is automatically off the

²² *Id.* at 18-19.

²³ For more information, see GEORGIA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION, GOVERNMENT IN THE SUNSHINE (6th ed. 2004).

²⁴ *Id.* at 19.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*; Rosenberg's Rules, *supra* note 1, at 3.

²⁷ Bell, *supra* note 2, at 19.

table and no motion is required to dispose of it. After expiration, however, the motion may be made anew. The motion is debatable and amendable.²⁸

- **Motion to end/limit debate (Move the previous question):**²⁹ This motion allows a member to suggest that discussion end and voting occur.

Commentary

This motion is not in order until all members have had the opportunity to speak at least once. The council may also choose to impose a minimum time requirement before a motion to end debate is made. For a typical 3 to 5 member board, 15 minutes may be ample time for discussion of one motion and to allow each member a chance to speak, whereas more time is likely needed for a larger council. These times are completely arbitrary, however, and the council may choose to set whatever time it deems appropriate, or to set no time limit at all. When made, this motion is not debatable, but is again a good candidate for a 2/3 or other supermajority vote requirement.³⁰

- **Motion to Refer a Motion to a Committee:**³¹ If the council believes it would be better served to let a committee first consider the substantive motion, it may move to refer to committee.

Commentary

When the committee reports to the council on the issue, a second is not required, whether it is generally required or not. The individual who made the substantive motion may compel consideration of the issue to the entire council if the committee has not reported back within a specified period of time, such as sixty days. If the council does not use committees, this motion is unnecessary. This motion, if used, is both debatable and amendable and requires only a majority vote.

- **Motion to amend:**³² This motion must be related to the subject matter of the original motion and may not be phrased in a way that is contrary to the original motion.

Commentary

If passing the amended motion would defeat the original motion, the amendment is disallowed, but this is interpreted very narrowly; only amendments that explicitly reject the original motion are prohibited. Up to two amendments may be on the floor at one time; the first motion to

²⁸ Rosenberg's Rules, *supra* note 1, at 3-5.

²⁹ Bell, *supra* note 2, at 20; Rosenberg's Rules, *supra* note 1, at 4.

³⁰ Rosenberg's Rules, *supra* note 1, at 4.

³¹ Bell, *supra* note 2, at 21.

³² *Id.*

amend changes the original motion, and the second motion to amend must relate to the first amendment.

After a motion to amend is made, only that motion may be debated, and the original motion is not discussed until the disposition of the amendment. Motions to amend must then be voted on in reverse order as needed; the second motion to amend will be voted on, then the first motion to amend, then the original motion if necessary.

Discussion and debate are important for everyone to voice their opinions and come to a consensus, so it is best practice for complete debate and discussion to occur before motions to amend are made. This is not always necessary, however, such as in the case of short, technical amendments.

When there is opportunity for confusion, it is best practice to put the amendments in writing. To the extent that the community has the ability, complex amendments should be subjected to writing for even the public audience, perhaps by projection, flip chart, or photocopies. In the case of long or complex documents, a motion to divide the complex issue (described above) may be used, but it should be used sparingly.

If a motion to divide is made, there may be no more than two motions to amend on each paragraph, and voting will follow the order discussed above. Only after all the motions on the paragraph have been resolved may the next paragraph be open for motion and discussion.³³

- **Motion to revive consideration:**³⁴ This motion allows the council to consider a tabled or deferred issue before it expires under the time specified above under motion to defer consideration.

Commentary

The motion may be debated and amended. If this motion doesn't occur within the specified period, the issue expires and may be brought up only on a new motion.

- **Motion to reconsider:**³⁵ This motion allows an issue considered earlier in the meeting to be reconsidered.

³³ “Substitute motions” are sometimes used when the suggested changes may potentially have a major effect. The council may choose to still use substitute motions; however, in the interest of simplicity and to avoid confusion, all proposals for changes, regardless of their potential consequences, are deemed “motions to amend”.

³⁴ *Id.* at 22.

³⁵ *Id.* at 23.

Commentary

The motion may only be made by someone who voted with the prevailing side and must occur in the same meeting as the original vote, with a meeting continued by adjournment to a time and place certain being considered the same meeting.³⁶

- **Motion to prevent reconsideration:**³⁷ A defeated motion may be reintroduced at later meetings. This can be prevented for a specified period of time set by the council, perhaps six months, through a motion to prevent reconsideration.

Commentary

This motion must occur immediately after the original motion is defeated and must be approved by a majority, but the council may choose to set it at 2/3 of the members because it limits the ability to bring motions. The only way this motion may be overcome is through a motion to suspend the rules. This motion may seem unnecessary since an issue that only one councilmember has interest in can often be avoided by simply requiring a second.

However, each time the motion is repeated, time is wasted, so in a situation when the issue is clearly not considered important, a motion to prevent reconsideration can help avoid potential problems. Under Georgia state law, defeated zoning proposals may not be considered for at least six months³⁸; likewise, it makes sense to prevent reconsideration of defeated issues for a similar period.

- **Withdraw the motion:**³⁹ The person who made the motion may interrupt the speaker to withdraw his or her motion at any time during discussion or before it is amended, whichever comes first.

Commentary

In the case of motions to amend, they may be withdrawn only by the person making the motion to amend and only in the order in which they may be voted on (reverse order, beginning with the amendment to the amendment). The motion is deemed automatically withdrawn upon a motion and a second; no vote is needed.

³⁶ Rosenberg's Rules, *supra* note 1, at 4.

³⁷ Bell, *supra* note 2, at 23.

³⁸ O.C.G.A. § 36-66-4(c).

³⁹ Bell, *supra* note 2, at 24; Rosenberg's Rules, *supra* note 1, at 5.

Decorum

The above motions represent the vast portion of procedures needed so that the legislative body may function. However, it may occasionally be necessary to interrupt a meeting for a reason aside from what is going on in the meeting, such as the temperature of the room or noise outside; the “points” discussed below may be used to get the floor in those situations.

- **Point of inquiry:**⁴⁰ An individual may raise a point of inquiry if a simple clarification of a motion is needed. The individual must first be recognized by the presiding officer. This point should be used sparingly and only in the case of confusion as to the intent or substance of a motion.
- **Point of privilege:**⁴¹ The speaker may be interrupted before he or she finishes her motion or issue by a “point of privilege”. Points of privilege are used if an individual needs to interrupt for a reason that is unrelated to the issue at hand but that may interfere with the general atmosphere of the meeting. An interruption that a door should be closed because of outside noise would be an example.
- **Point of order:** An individual may also interrupt the speaker because the meeting is being conducted inappropriately in some way. For example, if a third motion to amend is made, and only two are permitted, the individual would say “point of order”, and the presiding officer would then say “state your point”.

In the interest of orderly and efficient meetings, the council may choose to implement some discretionary rules on decorum into their procedure guide. When implementing such rules, it is important to respect the First Amendment rights of citizens to free speech and to petition the government for redress of grievances. However, the courts have repeatedly recognized that these rights are not absolute and do not provide individuals license to disrupt government operations. Notably, the right to petition does not include the right to participate in all open government meetings and the right to free speech is only violated when the restricted speech is constitutionally protected and the government’s justification for the restriction is insufficient.⁴² Thus, a city council can limit public participation in council meetings to required public hearings. However, the better practice is to designate some portion of each public meeting for time-limited comments by members of the public on matters that are relevant and within the authority of the body being addressed. A countervailing concern is that to allow members of the public to comment on each agenda item as it is considered and allow the same members of the public to continue to address the council or commission throughout the meeting essentially allows these non-elected individuals to participate in debate as members of council.

⁴⁰ Rosenberg’s Rules, *supra* note 1, at 5.

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² See *Perry Education Ass’n. v. Perry Local Educators’ Assn.*, 460 U.S. 37 (1983); *Scroggins v. City of Topeka*, 2 F.Supp.2d 1362 (D. Kansas 1998)

When a city council permits public comment on agenda items or other matters directly relevant to city business, the council has created a designated public forum and it may enact content-neutral time, place and manner restrictions on speech and expressive conduct which are narrowly drawn to achieve a significant government interest and allow sufficient alternate channels of communication.⁴³ A city council should consult and work with their city attorney to draw up meeting guidelines that are constitutionally sound but responsive to the need to conduct orderly meetings and conserve public resources.

- **Time Limit on Speakers:** This helps to keep discussion of issues timely and on point. Also, if a time limit is established in advance and applied consistently, it is less likely that an individual will feel personally attacked if he or she is asked to yield the floor at the end of the allotted time. The legislative body may choose to apply the limit to elected officials only or to both officials and members of the public as well. The body may also choose to not allow public comment except in the limited circumstances mandated by Georgia law, such as zoning and budget hearings.⁴⁴
- **Politely addressing council and citizens:** A policy on respect for the council and citizens may also help meetings to be more orderly and productive. Such a policy may require individuals to refrain from using the public meeting as a forum for rude, slanderous or disruptive personal attacks on others, and may allow the chair to take the floor away from individuals who act unruly.⁴⁵ Individuals may further be prohibited from private discourse or other distractions, and any such acts may be stopped by the presiding officer.⁴⁶
- **Focus on relevant matters.** The council can adopt a policy limiting public comment to matters that are on the agenda for consideration or, more broadly, to matters that are directly related to the business of the body being addressed. The policy may also prohibit redundant or repetitive comments to save time and provide time for a variety of viewpoints.
- **Abstention:** As stated earlier, cities are strongly encouraged to adopt a policy prohibiting abstention in the absence of a conflict of interest. Otherwise, it is possible that abstention could be abused to strategically cripple a council or otherwise impair the conduct of business. A city may choose to require all those

⁴³ *Id.*; see *City of Madison, Joint School Dist. v. Wisconsin Employment Relations Comm'n.*, 429 U.S. 167 (1976); *Jones v. Heyman*, 888 F.2d 1328 (11th Cir. 1989).

⁴⁴ See also O.C.G.A. § 36-66-4 and 26-66-5 (public hearing for zoning decision and each side gets 10 minutes); O.C.G.A. § 36-72-7 (public hearing regarding development of abandoned cemeteries); O.C.G.A. § 36-81-5 (public hearing regarding budget); O.C.G.A. § 36-73-2 (public hearing regarding proposed contracts for regional facilities); O.C.G.A. § 36-90-3 (public hearing regarding cable franchises).

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ RULES OF PROCEDURE, NEW MEXICO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE (unpublished manuscript).

in attendance to vote unless there is a conflict of interest, with the conflict recorded in the minutes.⁴⁷

SAMPLE COUNCIL MEETING

Mayor: With a quorum present I now call to order this meeting of the Blackacre City Council, Monday, February 19, 2007. You should all have a copy of the agenda before you. Are there any changes to the agenda?

[Silence]

Mayor: Yes, Mr. Brown.

Councilmember Joe Brown: Mr. Mayor, I move we accept the agenda as presented.

Councilmember Bob Jones: Second

Mayor: All in favor? [*“Aye”*] Any opposed? [*Silence*]. The agenda has been adopted. Let’s move on to the minutes. Each of you should have received a copy of last meeting’s minutes. Mr. Brown.

Councilmember Joe Brown: I move we approve the minutes as written.

Councilmember Bob Jones: Second.

Mayor: All in favor? [*“Aye”*] Any opposed? [*Silence*]. The minutes have been approved as sent out. Moving on down the list. Is there any old business? Ms. Doe.

Councilmember Jane Doe: Mr. Mayor, I move we revive consideration of the purchase of new police cars.

Councilmember Joe Brown: Point of order. Mr. Mayor, we discussed that issue 8 months ago—it wasn’t revived in the 6 month time period so it expired.

Mayor: Mr. Brown is correct, I’m afraid we cannot revive consideration. Yes, Councilmember Doe?

Councilmember Jane Doe: Then I move we buy 10 new police cars.

Mayor: Is there a second?

⁴⁷ RULES OF PROCEDURE, NEW MEXICO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE (unpublished manuscript).

Councilmember Joe Brown: Mr. Mayor, I call to follow the agenda. The issue of police cars is nowhere on this agenda.

Mayor: Ok, there is a call to follow the agenda. Is there a second?

Councilmember Bryan Green: Second.

Mayor: Any discussion? Mr. Brown.

Councilmember Joe Brown: Yes, well I think that there's a reason we have an agenda—it's so we can get out of this meeting quicker. Plus, we discussed it 8 months ago, so it can't suddenly be so important that we have to deviate from the agenda to consider it. Besides, there's just no money to do that right now. We simply don't have the funds for more police cars. It's up to the police department to come up with some sort of plan to deal with those situations with the resources they have—their job is to be prepared.

Mayor: Councilmember Smith?

Councilmember Daisy Smith: Well, I think we should deviate from the agenda to consider the issue of police cars. 8 months ago we weren't so sure we needed them. But last month, we had 3 robberies going on at the same time. The criminals could have been caught if we had had enough police cars to get officers to the scenes in time, but instead we had to choose 2 of the stores to go to because there weren't enough cars. This is a time when it is necessary to stray from the agenda.

Mayor: Any other discussion? [Silence]. Then let's take a vote. All in favor of deviating from the agenda? [3 Ayes]. All opposed? [2 Nays]. Ok, we'll consider the issue of police cars. Ms. Doe?

Councilmember Jane Doe: Yes, well as I said before, there is a real need for some more police cars, to protect our families and citizens. It is unacceptable when criminals go free because we're too cheap to buy new cars.

Mayor: Mr. Brown?

Councilmember Joe Brown: Mr. Mayor, like I said before—we already considered this, after we had a study done that said we didn't need more cars, we needed our officers to be more vigilant. There's no money to spare for this and, according to the expert group we hired, no need.

Mayor: Any other discussion? Anyone that hasn't spoken yet? Ok, Ms. Doe.

Councilmember Jane Doe: That study was done before these robberies took place, and how on earth would the officers have prevented it by being more "vigilant"? Predict it would happen and jog over to the store to be there in time to catch the crooks?

Mayor: Mr. Green?

Councilmember Bryan Green: Mr. Mayor, I move we end debate. Everyone has gotten a chance to speak at least once if they want to, and we've been talking about police cars for over 15 minutes.

Mayor: Is there a second?

Councilmember Daisy Smith: Second.

Mayor: All in favor to end debate? *[4 Ayes]*. Any opposed? *[1 Nay]*. Motion carries. We will now vote on the motion on the floor, regarding the purchase of 10 new police cars. All in favor? *[2 Ayes]*. Any opposed? *[3 Nays]*. Ok, we will not be buying new police cars at this time. Yes, Councilmember Smith?

Councilmember Daisy Smith: I move that we prevent reconsideration of this issue about police cars for six months.

Mayor: Is there a second?

Councilmember Joe Brown: Second

Mayor: All in favor? *[4 Ayes]* Any opposed? *[1 Nay]*. Ok, motion to prevent reconsideration carries. Next on the agenda—an issue we need to discuss with our attorney about the zoning lawsuit. Is there a motion? Councilmember Doe.

Councilmember Jane Doe: I move we go into closed session.

Mayor: Second?

Councilmember Joe Brown: Second.

Mayor: All in favor? *[unanimous Ayes]*. Any opposed?

[Mayor and Council leave for 15 minutes, then return to the room.]

Mayor: Is there a motion?

Councilmember Bob Jones: I move we leave closed session.

Councilmember Bryan Green: Second.

Mayor: All in favor? *[unanimous Ayes]*. Any opposed? Ok, next order of business—the new statues in the park. Any motions? Councilmember Doe.

Councilmember Jane Doe: Yes, I know we need to discuss the statues, but I move that we first take a brief 10 minute recess.

Councilmember Daisy Smith: Second.

Mayor: Ok, we have a motion to take a brief recess. Since we have a motion and a second, I'll just call a brief recess—I agree it's probably needed. We'll reconvene in 10 minutes.

[10 minutes later]

Mayor: Ok, back to business. Can I have a motion? Councilmember Green?

Councilmember Bryan Green: Mr. Mayor, I move that we spend \$1,000 to put three statues in our park in honor of our town founders.

Mayor: Ok, is there a second? Councilmember Smith?

Councilmember Daisy Smith: I move to amend the motion to spend \$2,000 on the statues.

Mayor: Ok, there's been a motion to amend. Is there a second on the motion to amend? Councilmember Doe.

Councilmember Jane Doe: I move to amend the motion to spend \$500 on three statues.

Mayor: Ok, there's another motion to amend on the table. Is there a second? Councilmember Brown.

Councilmember Joe Brown: I move to amend the motion to spend only \$500 on the statues, but instead of honoring the town founders, we should dedicate the statues to women who fought for women's suffrage.

Mayor: Ok, there's a third motion to amend. Is there a second on Councilmember Brown's motion?

Councilmember Bryan Green: *[without being recognized by the chair]* I move to appeal the procedural ruling of allowing Councilmember Joe's amendment. There may only be 3 motions on the floor at a time, the original motion and 2 amendments, so this third amendment is not allowed.

Mayor: Is there a second on Councilmember Green's motion? Mr. Jones?

Councilmember Bob Jones: Second.

Mayor: All in favor? [4 Ayes]. Any opposed? [1 Nay]. Motion carries, Councilmember Brown's amendment was out of order. Ok, is there a second on Councilmember Doe's motion to amend to spend only \$500 on the three statues? Councilmember Brown?

Councilmember Joe Brown: Second.

Mayor: Any discussion? Ms. Doe?

Councilmember Jane Doe: Since we don't have the money for new police cars, we certainly don't have the money for statues.

Mayor: Any other discussion? Being none, let's vote. All in favor of amending the motion to allot \$500 for the statues? [3 Ayes]. All opposed? [2 Nays]. Motion carries. The original motion is amended to allot \$500 for the purchase of the statues and there is no reason to vote on the motion to amend to \$2,000. Now, on to the issue at hand—is there a second for the original motion, to spend money, now set at \$500, to erect 3 statues honoring the town founders? Councilmember Smith?

Councilmember Daisy Smith: Second.

Mayor: We have a motion and a second—all in favor? [4 Ayes] Any opposed? [1 Nay]. Motion carries. Councilmember Doe.

Councilmember Jane Doe: I move to reconsider the issue of police cars, since we're spending money on statues.

Mayor: Your motion is out of order. A motion to prevent reconsideration has already passed. Next order of business: erecting 20 new traffic lights. Ms. Doe?

Councilmember Jane Doe: I move to divide this complex issue and consider it paragraph by paragraph.

Mayor: Is there a second?

Councilmember Joe Brown: Second.

Mayor: Any discussion? Councilmember Bob Jones.

Councilmember Bob Jones: Mayor, this is not a long or confusing issue—it will waste time to divide it.

Mayor: Any other discussion? Hearing none, let's vote. All in favor? [1 Aye]. Any opposed? [4 Nays]. Ok, motion to divide the issue fails. Back to the issue of new traffic lights. Is there a motion? Councilmember Jones.

Councilmember Bob: I move we put up 20 new traffic lights.

Mayor: Councilmember Doe?

Councilmember Jane Doe: I move we refer that to a committee for research to make sure it's necessary before we act.

Mayor: Is there a second on the motion to refer the traffic light issue to committee? Councilmember Brown.

Councilmember Joe Brown: Second

Mayor: All in favor? [*1 Aye*]. All opposed? [*4 Nays*]. Motion fails. Now back to the original motion. Councilmember Doe.....

Councilmember Jane Doe: I move that we table discussion of the traffic lights until we can consult the DOT.

Mayor: Is there a second? Councilmember Brown.

Councilmember Joe Brown: Second.

Mayor: All in favor? [*5 Ayes*] All opposed? [*silence*]. Motion carries, we'll table the discussion of the new traffic lights until we can talk to DOT. Is there any other new business? Councilmember Jones.

Councilmember Bob Jones: I move we pass an ordinance to take any dogs that bark loud enough to cause people to call my house.

Councilmember Jane Doe: Point of inquiry—what do you mean take?

Councilmember Bob Jones: I mean we confiscate them and either send them out of town or put them to sleep.

Councilmember Daisy Smith: Point of order—I think that may be a violation of property rights and illegal.

Councilmember Bob Jones: I withdraw the motion.

Mayor: Yes, Councilmember Smith?

Councilmember Daisy Smith: I move we adjourn.

Councilmember Bryan Green: Second

Mayor: I think that is an excellent idea. All in favor? [*unanimous ayes*]. Meeting adjourned.