

City of Brunswick

Mayor & Council Rules for Procedure

Adopted March 25, 2025

Mayor Nathan Brown
Mayor Pro Tem Brian Sandusky
Council Member John Caves
Council Member Andy St. John
Council Member Eric Smothers
Council Member Angel White
Council Member Daniel Yochelson

City Administrator Julie Martorana
Assistant City Administrator Jeremy Mose
Director of Administration/City Clerk Carrie Myers

Table of Contents

Purpose and Adoption	Page 2
1. Orientation of New Council Members	Page 2
2. Roles and Responsibilities	Page 2
3. Rules of Decorum	Page 3
4. Types of Meetings	Page 3
5. In Private Encounters and Personal Account Usage	Page 4
6. Meeting Agendas	Page 5
7. Meeting Recordings and Minutes	Page 6
8. Council Member Attendance at Meetings	Page 6
9. Council Member Virtual Attendance at Meetings	Page 6
10. Parliamentary Procedure	Page 6
11. Citizen Participation and Comments at Meetings	Page 7
12. Relationships and Interactions	Page 8
13. Non-Interference with Administrative Function & Services	Page 9
14. Attendance/Participation at Other City Functions	Page 9

Purpose and Adoption

Section 208 of the City Charter states that “The Council shall determine its own rules and order of business.” The purpose of this document is to establish such rules of procedure for the Mayor and Council of the City of Brunswick. This document shall be reviewed, at minimum, following each non-special election after all members have been administered the oath of office and when a quorum is present. Following discussion and any amendments, the document shall be adopted by Resolution.

1. Orientation of New Council Members

After new members are elected, the City Administrator and Clerk will host an orientation program that provides an opportunity for members to learn about government operations, tour City facilities, and meet key staff members. The City is a member of the Maryland Municipal League, which provides additional training opportunities for new members.

2. Role and Responsibilities

The Mayor shall:

- Act as the official head of the City for all ceremonial purposes
- Chair Mayor and Council Meetings and set agendas for the same
- Call for special meetings
- Recommend new committees/commissions and committee/commission members as appropriate for Council approval
- Be recognized as spokesperson for the City
- Sign documents on behalf of the City
- Make proclamations

The Mayor Pro Tem shall:

- Perform the duties of the Mayor if the Mayor is unable to perform his/her duties
- Chair Council Meetings at the request of the Mayor
- Represent the City at ceremonial functions in the absence of the Mayor
- Have all the powers of the Mayor in the event of resignation or incapacitation of the Mayor until such time as a new Mayor is sworn in

All Council Members shall:

- Be familiar with the City Charter, Code of Ordinances, and adopted policies and practices
- Participate in City Council meetings and other public forums
- Attend ceremonial functions
- Serve as a liaison to certain City commissions or committees or outside organizations, as determined by the Mayor

- When conducting public business, each member of the City Council has one vote

3. **Rules of Decorum**

As elected representatives of the City of Brunswick, the Mayor and Council are expected to preserve appropriate decorum. The following rules of decorum shall be observed during all official meetings, while in City facilities, or while attending public City events:

- Avoid using foul language or discussing subject matter that is inappropriate to the occasion.
- Dress appropriately for the setting. Hats are prohibited during meetings.
- Address each other and members of the public respectfully.
- Be respectful of time.
- Do not interrupt others who have the floor and hold questions until the speaker yields the floor.
- Avoid making promises or inappropriate representation on behalf of the City Council or City government.
- When discussing City business with individuals or groups in non-official encounters, strive to present factual information and avoid presenting opinion as fact.

4. **Types of Meetings**

All meetings of the Mayor and Council shall be open to the public, and citizens shall have a reasonable opportunity to be heard in accordance with such rules and regulations as the Council may determine, except that the meetings may be closed to the public in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

The City Clerk shall give such notice as required by law of all Council meetings, hearings, and sessions in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. Notice shall be displayed on the City's website and social media pages.

Regular Meetings

Regular meetings shall be held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of each month beginning at 6pm at City Hall, unless otherwise noted. The Mayor reserves the right to reschedule or cancel a meeting with sufficient notice to Council Members and the public, based on scheduling conflicts or business needs of the City. Sufficient notice is defined hereafter as at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled meeting, unless extenuating circumstances render such notice impossible.

Virtual Meetings

Virtual meeting shall be held in place of regular meetings at the request of the Mayor whenever necessary, such as cases of inclement weather. All participants shall attend virtually. Sufficient notice to Council Members and the public shall be made, including meeting access codes provided to the public.

Special Meetings

Special Meetings may be called by the Mayor with sufficient notice to Council Members and the public. No official action shall be taken at any Special Meeting unless the item has been published on an agenda prior to the meeting.

Workshops

Workshops may be held to accommodate work sessions or other informal meetings; however, no final action may be taken at such a meeting. Workshops may be called by the Mayor with sufficient notice to Council Members and the public.

Joint Meetings

Joint Meetings between the Council and the governing bodies of other governmental and non-profit units may be called by the Mayor with sufficient notice to Council Members and the public.

Closed Meetings

Closed Meetings may be held only for the reasons authorized in the Open Meetings Act. Closed Meetings may be called by the Mayor with sufficient notice to Council Members and the public. The Council must meet in open session, state the purpose of the Closed Meeting, and vote to close the session. A separate set of confidential minutes shall be taken by the Clerk, or designee.

Attendance at Closed Meetings shall be limited to the Mayor, Council Members, and only those persons necessary to the agenda topic.

Members unable to attend a Closed Meeting in person but still wishing to participate can only do so through video conferencing with their camera on. No other persons should be in audio or video range during the meeting. Participation via voice call is prohibited.

Public Hearings

The purpose of a Public Hearing is to permit public input and discussion. The Public Hearing topic shall be introduced and explained, and members of the public shall each be given three minutes to speak, unless otherwise determined by the Mayor. Speakers must state their name and address for the public record.

Social Gatherings

Genuine social gatherings of a majority of the Council will not constitute an official meeting. City business shall not be discussed at social gatherings, especially if a quorum of the Council is present.

5. In Private Encounters and Personal Account Usage

No binding policy decisions shall be made outside of a public meeting. The use of official City or private email, text messaging, or social media messaging is reviewable in a public information request or through a subpoena in a lawsuit. Therefore, a file should be maintained just like any other correspondence. The sender should avoid sending to multiple Council Members to eliminate the perception of an electronic meeting. The use of private email where non city

business discussions occur does not come under the same scrutiny. Written notes, voicemail messages, email, social media messages, and text messages should be treated as potentially public communication.

6. Meeting Agendas

Agenda Preparation

An agenda for each meeting shall be prepared by the City Clerk or designee, with confirmation of the Mayor. Council Members wishing to have an item added to an agenda shall request so in writing to the Mayor. Such requests shall contain the signatures of a majority of the Council Members.

Items shall only be added to an agenda through noon on Thursday prior to a Council Meeting. Back-up documentation including staff and Council liaison reports sent after this deadline shall not be included in the meeting back-up packet.

Agenda Content

An agenda shall be comprised of the following sections:

1. Call to Order, Pledge, and Roll Call
2. Mayors' Remarks
3. Approval of Minutes
4. Citizens' Forum - The Mayor shall read the following statement prior to Citizens' Forum:
"During Citizens' Forum members of the public are given the opportunity to speak and present their comments. Individuals are required to state their name and address for the public record and are given three minutes to speak. Comments made during this time should be directed to the Mayor. While citizen comments are encouraged, members of the council and staff will not be expected to immediately respond to any subject brought up. The Mayor may respond or permit individual members to respond. Citizens with specific questions requiring dialog are encouraged to set up an appointment with the appropriate individuals."
5. Introduction and Adoptions of Ordinances and Resolutions
6. Staff Reports/Council Liaison Reports
7. Consent Agenda
8. Unfinished Business
9. New Business
10. Adjournment

Agenda Distribution

Agenda packets with supporting documentation shall be prepared and distributed to all Council Members by the Friday preceding each regular meeting of the Council at latest, except where extenuating circumstances render distribution by that time impossible. Copies of the agenda and supporting documentation shall be made available through direct emails to the Mayor, Council, and staff, and the City's website and social media sites. The Mayor and all Council Members shall carefully review agenda packets prior to each meeting.

7. Meeting Recordings and Minutes

Whenever possible, meetings shall be recorded and made available to view live or streamed to the public through the City's website or any other means deemed appropriate.

Minutes shall be taken by the Clerk, or designee, for all meetings and shall include a general synopsis of the proceedings, with each motion and vote recorded. Minutes shall be approved by the Council at the first regular meeting of each month for all meetings held the preceding month. Meeting minutes shall be posted on the City's website upon approval.

8. Council Member Attendance at Meetings

Council absences or late arrivals shall be reported to the Mayor or designee in advance of meetings, except where extenuating circumstances render advance notification impossible. At the start of each Council meeting, the Mayor or designee shall call the roll. Multiple unexcused absences may be considered a failure to exercise the duty of office under Section 209 of the City Charter.

9. Council Member Virtual Attendance at Meetings

If a Council Member wishes to attend a meeting virtually, the member must notify the Mayor or designee by close of business the day prior to a meeting so proper arrangements may be made.

When attending a meeting virtually, Council Members must do so through video conferencing with their camera on. Audio connections shall remain muted until a Council Member attending virtually is ready to speak. Council Members attending meetings virtually shall conduct themselves in the same manner they would do if attending in person.

10. Parliamentary Procedure

Presiding Officer/Parliamentarian/Roberts Rules of Order

The Mayor shall serve as presiding officer and parliamentarian for the City Council. He shall decide all questions of parliamentary procedure in accordance with the parliamentary rules contained in *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Enforcement of Order

The Chief of Police, or designee, acts as the sergeant-at-arms. It shall be the duty of the sergeant-at-arms to carry out all instructions of the Mayor to preserve the peace and maintain order and decorum during meetings.

A portion or all of the public may be removed from the meeting site if willful disruption makes conducting the meeting unfeasible.

Making a Motion and Voting Procedures

- Council Members shall address the Mayor and gain recognition prior to making a motion or engaging in debate.
- Once the Mayor has recognized the Council Member, a motion may be proposed.
- Prior to any discussion, another Council Member must second the motion.
- After a motion has been made and seconded, the Mayor shall call for any further discussion or debate.
- If during discussion a Council Member wishes to amend a motion, the member may do so with the same Council Member seconding the amendment.
- The Mayor restates the motion and puts the motion to a vote.
- If a vote does not unanimously pass, the Mayor may call for a roll-call vote to ensure accurate record keeping by the Clerk.
- A Council Member may abstain from voting on an issue but may remain present to make up a quorum. A Council Member may also recuse or withdraw from an entire proceeding, especially if a conflict of interest exists. In this case the Council Member shall state why they are recusing at the beginning of a discussion and refrain from taking any part in the discussion or vote.
- If a vote ties, the Mayor is allowed to break the tie in all cases, except that of an ordinance passage.
- Each agenda item requiring a vote shall be voted on separately, except in the case of items on the Consent Agenda. One motion may be made to pass all Consent Agenda items at the same time. If any member of the Council wishes to discuss an item on the Consent Agenda, a request must be made and granted by the Mayor, or by vote of the majority of Council Members, to remove the item and vote on it separately later in the meeting.

Other Meeting Protocol

- Once recognized by the Mayor, a Council Member shall not be interrupted while speaking.
- A Council Member shall not speak more than once on a particular subject until all Council Members have had the opportunity to speak.
- Council and Staff shall address Council Members as “Council Member,” followed by their last name.
- Side conversations and disruption are prohibited when a meeting is underway.
- Distractions such as mobile phones and eating are prohibited for Council Members during meetings.
- Council Members should honor efforts by the Chair to focus discussion on current agenda items.

11. Citizen Participation and Comments at Meetings

Each regular Council Meeting shall provide for reserved time for audience participation. Each member wishing to speak shall do so from the podium after being called forth by the Mayor and shall state their name and address for the official record. Speakers are limited to three minutes

each. The Clerk shall maintain the official time and notify speakers when their time is up. All comments shall be directed to the Mayor and shall not be addressed to others in attendance unless permitted by the Mayor.

The Mayor, in his sole discretion, may allow members of the audience to speak at times other than the reserved time.

While citizen comments are encouraged during meetings, members of the Council and staff will not be expected to immediately respond to any subject brought to their attention. The Mayor may respond or permit individual members to respond. Citizens with specific questions requiring dialog are encouraged to set up an appointment with the Mayor, staff, or relevant Council Member.

Citizens unable to attend a meeting, but who wish to provide a comment, may do so by sending an email to the Mayor, Council, or staff prior to the meeting time. Such comments will be included in the record of the meeting if the sender so requests.

12. Relationships and Interactions

City Administrator

The City Administrator is the chief administrative and personnel officer of the City. All dealings with the City Administrator, whether in public or private, should acknowledge the authority of the City Administrator in administrative matters.

The City Administrator acknowledges that the final responsibility for establishing policy direction of the City is held by the City Council.

Staff

Council Members shall acknowledge the expertise of staff in their respective areas. Council Members shall be respectful and professional when dealing with staff. Council Members shall avoid discussing City business or raising questions of staff members when not in an official setting or capacity. Council Members shall not seek political support from any City employee.

City Attorney

Individual Council Members shall not seek interactions with the City Attorney. The City Attorney shall advise the City Council through interactions with the City Administrator or designee. A majority of the Council may call for the City Attorney to advise the Mayor and Council as a body.

Boards and Commission Members

Volunteer members of Boards and Commissions are valuable to the City. Council Members shall interact with volunteers in a manner respectful of the position to which the individual was appointed.

Public/Social Media

Council Members shall interact with members of the public in a respectful manner.

Media

The Mayor is the official spokesperson for the City. The Mayor should be made aware whenever a Council Member has spoken to members of the media.

Public Agencies

If a Council Member is representing the City in a matter before another public agency, they must support and advocate for the official City position on an issue, not a personal viewpoint. The Mayor shall be made aware if a Council Member is seeking to represent the City's position to another agency.

13. Non-Interference with Administrative Functions & Services

Council Members comprise the Legislative branch of City government. The Council retains the authority to accept, reject, or amend staff recommendations on policy matters.

Staff comprises the Administrative branch of government and shall understand their primary function as executing Council policies and actions. Staff take directions and guidance from the City Administrator's office.

Council Members shall work through the City Administrator's office when dealing with administrative services of the City. In return, staff will make every effort to respond in a timely and professional manner to all requests for information or assistance made by Council Members to the City Administrator. Only the Mayor may direct the City Administrator's office to carry out specific tasks or scheduling.

14. Attendance/Participation at Other City Events

The role of Council Members extends beyond City meetings. Attendance, participation, and assistance at City events is encouraged and appreciated.