

# **BOROUGH OF FOREST HILLS**

## **RULES FOR COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

**APPROVED: JULY 17, 2002**

**REVISED BY MOTION: March 17, 2004 and March 17, 2010**

## **COUNCIL COMMITTEE RULES**

1. Each committee chair controls each committee's meetings. There are 6 standing committees as outlined in item 13 below and a Committee of the Whole
2. The president of council is an ex-officio member of each committee and may participate in discussions but cannot vote on committee decisions and must request the floor from the committee chair when speaking. However, the president of council chairs the Committee of the Whole and participates fully as a member of that committee. The Mayor is an ex-officio member of the public safety committee and the Committee of the Whole and may be asked to participate in other committees at the discretion of the committee chair. The Mayor may not vote on committee decisions.
3. The 6 Standing Committees will entertain opinions, comments and suggestions from other members of council present and from the audience in this manner:
  - A. Committee members complete their discussion and questions first.
  - B. The committee chair asks the mayor and other members of council present if they choose to comment following the committee's deliberations
  - C. The committee chair asks borough employees or contract employees present to comment following other members of council.
  - D. The committee chair asks any members of the audience who may wish to make a comment or ask a question to do so last.
  - E. Committee members make a decision on an item
  - F. Exceptions to this order may be made by the chair should he/she feel that it is important for either a member of the audience, an employee or another person present to be heard on the matter at hand early in the discussion. This process may be affected by the establishment of the Committee of the Whole. Consideration on limiting discussion in each of the 6 standing committees in light of the establishment of the Committee of the Whole may affect this procedure.
4. In debating an item, each committee member speaks once first until every committee member has the opportunity to speak. The same should be true of others who speak as indicated above.

5. In order that all members are prepared for discussion of committee business, items may only be added to a committee agenda if submitted to the manager 3 days prior to the committee meeting.
6. If last minute changes are made by the committee chair, the manager will forward these additional items via email to council no later than Noon on the day of the committee meeting.
7. Any member of council or the mayor may request that an item be added to a committee's agenda provided this time restriction is followed. Exceptions may be made in case of emergency.
8. In order for a motion to be placed on council's monthly business meeting, a majority of committee members present must agree. Voting may be informal and motions need not be formally proposed. If one or more members of a committee is absent, the chair may ask other members of council present to fill in as a committee member on an interim basis.
9. The Borough Manager shall prepare the agendas for all committee meetings and will provide an outline or draft of each meeting at least 24 hours in advance of the committee meeting.
10. If the committee chair is absent, the meeting will be run by the committee member with the most seniority.
11. Committees will discuss items on their agenda one at a time. Discussion will be limited to the agenda item being considered and the chair may stop a member from speaking who deviates from the agenda.
12. Parliamentary procedure (*as outlined in council meeting rules*) will be followed only to the extent that the chair needs to maintain order and keep committee business moving. Meetings will be considered informal, generally, except that the chair is ultimately responsible for the direction of the meeting and for halting debate or discussion when he/she deems that comments have become repetitive or add little to the ongoing discussion and only prolong the length of time of the meeting.
13. The following committees shall be established by council and will be limited to discussion of business to the categories listed (the first 6 listed are considered "standing committees"):
  - A. Borough Property - all aspects of recreation and recreational programs, the physical structure of all borough buildings, parks and storage facilities

- B. Finance - budget and financial operations of the borough and its departments
- C. Operations and Policy - Administrative and legislative departments, meetings and parliamentary procedure, election of officers, borough solicitor, library & historical issues, trash & recycling, environmental issues, agreements and contracts unless on a topic covered by another committee (exception: when another committee refers the agreement or contract to the operations & planning committee or when two or more committees could properly address the topic), areas not covered by other committees, marketing (including newsletter and web site), strategic planning initiatives.
- D. Public Safety - police department, fire department, ambulance services, joint communications or communication operations among emergency services personnel, emergency management.
- E. Public Works - public works department, water and sewage infrastructure, roads, streets and alleys, borough engineer, Wilkinsburg-Penn Joint Water Authority, trees, interaction with Environmental Advisory Council (for issues that relate to water and sewage issues).
- F. Planning & Zoning - planning, zoning and code enforcement issues, economic & community development, revitalization and all related issues including main street/downtown development, interaction with Community Development Corporation, Planning Commission, Zoning Hearing Board and Environmental Advisory Council (for issues that relate to planning, zoning, code enforcement and development)
- G. Committee of the Whole - composed of the entire Council sitting as a legislative study committee. As described in Robert's Rules, a committee of the whole is used to allow "informal consideration" of an item or items enabling the full assembly to give "detailed consideration to a matter under conditions of freedom approximating those of a committee." Roberts Rules allows some exceptions and limitations which would not apply to a legislative body such as council under the Sunshine Act. See item 15 below for operations of the Committee of the Whole and item 16 for adjustments to other committees based on the implementation of the Committee of the Whole.

14. Generally, guest speakers asked to make a presentation at committee meetings

are limited to 5 - 10 minutes. The committee chair has discretion in this matter, however.

15. Committee of the Whole – Rules and Activities:

- A. The President of Council shall chair the committee. In his/her absence, the committee would be chaired by the Vice President of Council or the President Pro Tem.
- B. Follows all other rules for committees as established in this document.
- C. Meets on the date established following the meeting date of the six standing committees
- D. Membership consists of all councilpersons and the Mayor as an ex officio member. The Manager may participate fully in discussions along with any guests welcomed by the committee.
- E. Members of the public in attendance are permitted to speak following the same procedures outlined for public participation in the Rules for Council Meetings at a time to be established by the committee chair.
- F. The Committee of the Whole:
  - 1) Considers issues not properly brought before a single committee or that involve multiple committees
  - 2) Considers issues recommended to it by each of the six standing committees
  - 3) Includes a manager's update period at the beginning as does all other committees
  - 4) Does not permit voting of any kind other than in disposing of an item as noted below
- G. Each item discussed in committee shall be brought to a conclusion with one of the following methods for disposition:
  - 1) Referred to the full council for consideration and either a vote or a report at the business meeting under whichever committee an item is assigned by the Committee of the Whole
  - 2) Referred to the Committee of the Whole for consideration in the following or subsequent months
  - 3) Referred to another committee for further work as assigned by the

Committee of the Whole

- 4) Referred to an employee for further information
- 5) Referred to a member of council, committee chair or subcommittee formed by the Committee of the Whole for further review or study

16. The establishment of a Committee of the Whole affects the six standing committees in the following manner:

- A. Standing committees meet briefly on the days and times established by council with the Committee of the Whole the last committee to meet during a given month.
- B. Because council shall meet in a Committee of the Whole, the standing committees shall consider limiting discussion on agenda items so as to avoid duplicate discussion taking place under the Committee of the Whole
- C. The duties of each standing committee will remain as shown in the current committee rules and all standing committees will continue to operate as shown in the current committee rules
- D. Standing committees are directed to quickly dispose of items by either:
  - 1) Referring to the Committee of the Whole
  - 2) Referring to the full council for a vote (with a brief report, if necessary, at the Committee of the Whole) or to the council business meeting to be listed under general report on that meeting's agenda, which, in either case, allows for review by the full council
  - 3) Referring to a future meeting of the same committee
  - 4) Referring to an employee for further information
  - 5) Referring to a member of council for further review/study

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