

AJQ Guide to Quincy's City Council Rules

Column 1 reproduces rule text. Column 2 provides plain-English summaries (not quoted).

Original rule text	Plain-English summary (not quoted)
<p>Rule One: The President's Powers and Duties The President, or in their absence, the senior member in service, shall take the Chair at the hour appointed for the Council to meet and shall immediately call the members to order. In the absence of the President, the senior member in service shall assume the role of President pro-tern. If there is a question as to who the senior member is, then the President will be selected by ballot and plurality of votes shall elect from among the senior members. The Clerk will temporarily preside. The roll call shall then be called by the Clerk, who shall enter in the minutes of the meeting the names of the members present. In the absence of a quorum at the time appointed for a meeting, the members present may, by a majority vote, take a recess or recesses, and direct the Clerk to procure the attendance of absent members. No President shall serve more than two consecutive one-year terms.</p>	<p>Addresses: Presidential authority and responsibilities This rule establishes who runs City Council meetings and how that authority is transferred if the President is absent. It explains how meetings are called to order, how attendance is recorded, what happens if there is no quorum, and places a limit on how long any one councilor may serve as Council President.</p>
<p>Rule Two: Appeals from Decision of the President The President shall preserve decorum and decide all questions of order, subject to appeal to Council. In the case of an appeal from a ruling of the President, the question shall be: "Shall the decision of the President stand as the decision of the Council?" If a member transgresses the rules of the Council, the President shall, or any member, by addressing the President may call him to order, in which case he shall be seated, unless permitted to explain.</p>	<p>Addresses: Rulings on procedure and appeals This rule gives the Council President authority to decide questions of order and procedure during meetings, while allowing any councilor to appeal those rulings to the full Council.</p>
<p>Rule Three: Substitute Chairman The President may call any member to the Chair, but such substitutes shall not continue longer than one meeting. The President may express their opinion on any subject under debate without leaving the Chair.</p>	<p>Addresses: Temporary presiding authority This rule allows the Council President to temporarily designate another councilor to preside over a meeting for a single session.</p>
<p>Rule Four: Viva Voce and Rising Votes All questions shall be stated and put by the President. In case of a roll call vote, the President shall declare the result, after the Clerk has announced the number voting on each side. The results of viva voce votes shall be declared by the President without</p>	<p>Addresses: Voting methods and vote recording This rule explains how votes may be taken, announced, and verified, including voice votes, standing votes, and roll-call votes.</p>

reference to the Clerk. Where a rising vote is taken, the President shall count and announce the result. Where the result of a viva voce vote is in doubt, the President may, and on demand of any member, shall call for a division of the Council, which shall be taken by a roll call. It shall not be in order for members to explain their votes during the call of the roll. Any legislation pertaining solely to traffic matters before the Quincy City Council may be voted upon viva voce (by the voice), therefor not requiring a roll call vote. Any election to fill an office shall not require a nomination when the election is by roll call vote, as each member may vote for any eligible person whether nominated or not. If only a single nomination is made, the election shall proceed viva voce (by the voice), therefor not requiring a roll call vote.	
Rule Five: Seating Arrangements The President shall assign the seats of the Councillors and no member shall change their seat but by the permission of the President.	Addresses: Seating and chamber order This rule gives the President authority to assign seating arrangements and requires permission for changes.
Rule Six: Admission to Council Floor No person will be admitted within the rail in the City Council Chamber or in the member's lobby connected with said Chamber at any meeting of the City Council, except upon permission of the President or presiding officer of the Council.	Addresses: Access to the council floor This rule restricts who may enter the council floor during meetings unless permission is granted by the presiding officer.
Rule Seven: Committee Appointments All standing committees shall be appointed and announced by the President. Any other committee established by the Council shall be constituted pursuant to relevant council order or resolution	Addresses: Committee appointments This rule gives the Council President authority to appoint standing committees and announce their membership.
Rule Eight: Clerk and Employees The City Clerk and the Quincy City Council Clerk of Committees shall be residents of the City of Quincy and all other officers and employees of the City Council shall be under the supervision of the Council President during sessions of the City Council. Members · Duties And Privileges	Addresses: Council staff supervision This rule sets residency requirements for clerks and places council employees under the President's supervision during sessions.
Rule Nine: Addressing Chair Every member speaking to a question or making a motion shall address the Chair as	Addresses: How councilors speak during meetings

<p>"Mr. or Madame President," who shall thereupon pronounce the name of the member entitled to the floor. Members addressing Council shall confine themselves to the question under debate and avoid personalities.</p>	<p>This rule requires councilors to address the presiding officer and stay focused on the issue under discussion.</p>
<p>Rule Ten: Debate Limitation A member shall be allowed to speak on anyone subject for a period not to exceed fifteen (15) minutes. For matters coming before the Council in the first instance not being referred to committee and/or requiring a question-and-answer period, the foregoing limitations shall not apply. A member shall be allowed an additional five (5) minutes to speak after every other member choosing to speak has spoken.</p>	<p>Addreses: Limits on debate time This rule sets time limits for how long councilors may speak on a subject.</p>
<p>Rule Eleven: Speaking Decorum No member shall be interrupted while speaking, but by call to order for the correction of a mistake; nor shall there be any conversation among the members while a question is being stated, while a member is speaking, or a paper being read. If a member is speaking or otherwise transgresses the rules of the Council, any member may call him to order by addressing the President.</p>	<p>Addreses: Speaking decorum This rule prohibits interruptions, side conversations, and disorder during council proceedings.</p>
<p>Rule Twelve: Point of Order Any member on being called to order shall cease debate until the point of order is decided unless allowed by the President to explain.</p>	<p>Addreses: Points of order This rule requires debate to stop while a procedural objection is decided.</p>
<p>Rule Thirteen: Voting Every member present when a question is put may vote either "yes" or "no" or "present." A "present" vote shall be counted as a vote rather than a non-vote for purposed of determination if a majority of "yes" votes has been reached.</p>	<p>Addreses: Voting options This rule defines how councilors may vote and how certain votes are counted.</p>
<p>Rule Fourteen: Election of Officers A majority of all members elected to the Council shall be required to elect a President and Clerk of Committees.</p>	<p>Addreses: Election of council officers This rule requires a majority of all council members to elect internal officers.</p>
<p>Rule Fifteen: Tie Vote</p>	<p>Addreses: Effect of tie votes</p>

In case of a tie in votes on any proposal, the proposal shall be considered lost.	This rule provides that proposals fail if a vote results in a tie.
Rule Sixteen: Division of a Question On demand of any member, a question under consideration covering two or more points, shall be divided where the question admits of such division.	Addresses: Dividing proposals This rule allows a councilor to require that a proposal covering multiple issues be split into separate questions.
Rule Seventeen: Demand for Roll Call Upon demand of any member, made before the negative has been put, the roll shall be called for yeas and nays upon any question before the Council.	Addresses: Demanding roll-call votes This rule allows any councilor to require a roll-call vote under specified conditions.
Rule Eighteen: Motions and Procedure During Debate When a question is before the Council, no motion shall be entertained except: To adjourn To lay on the table The previous question To postpone to a time certain To refer To amend To postpone indefinitely Such motions shall be precedence in the foregoing order. A roll call may be ordered at any time to ascertain the number of members present.	Addresses: Permitted motions during debate This rule limits what motions may be made while a question is under debate and sets their order of precedence.
Rule Nineteen: Motion to Lay on Table A motion to lay on table shall preclude all amendments or debate on the subject under consideration. If the motion shall prevail, the consideration of the subject may be resumed only upon motion of a member voting with the majority and with the consent of a majority of all the members of the Council.	Addresses: Tabling matters This rule allows debate to be halted by laying a matter on the table and explains how consideration may later resume.
Rule Twenty: Motion to Adjourn When Not in Order •• Not Debatable A motion to adjourn shall be in order at any time, except as follows: (A) When repeated without intervening business or discussion. (B) When made as an interruption of a member while speaking. (C) When the previous question has been ordered. (D) While a vote is being taken. A motion to adjourn is debatable only as to the time to which the meeting is adjourned.	Addresses: Adjournment of meetings This rule defines when a motion to adjourn is allowed and whether it may be debated.
Rule Twenty-One: Written Proposals All proposed ordinances, orders and resolutions shall be in writing. No member shall be allowed to submit a written notice or resolution until they has read it in their place.	Addresses: Written proposals This rule requires all ordinances, orders, and resolutions to be submitted in writing and read before consideration.
Rule Twenty-Two:	

<p>Personal Privilege</p> <p>The right of a member to address the Council on a question of personal privilege shall be limited to cases in which their integrity, character or motives are assailed, questioned or impugned.</p>	<p>Addresses:</p> <p>Personal privilege</p> <p>This rule limits personal privilege remarks to situations involving a councilor's integrity or character.</p>
<p>Rule Twenty-Three:</p> <p>Suspension of Rule/Objection (A)</p> <p>SUSPENSION OF RULE</p> <p>Except as controlled by statute, any rule may be suspended by the votes of a majority or all the members of the Council without debate.</p> <p>(B) OBJECTION Any ordinance, order or resolution may be passed through all its stages of legislation at one session, provided that no member of the Council objects thereto; but if any member of the Council objects, the measure shall be postponed for that meeting. Rule twenty-three cannot be suspended.</p>	<p>Addresses:</p> <p>Suspension of rules and objections</p> <p>This rule allows most rules to be suspended by vote and allows any single councilor to object to same-session passage of legislation, automatically postponing the matter.</p>
<p>Council Procedure</p>	
<p>Rule Twenty-Four:</p> <p>Council Meetings</p> <p>Regular meetings of the Council shall be held in the Council Chamber (The Great Hall) the first and third Monday evenings of each month, commencing at 7:30PM and shall adjourn not later than 11:00PM. The Clerk of the Council shall notify the Councillors of all meetings of the Council by notice delivered personally or by an officer or sent by mail. Whenever the first or third Monday evening of the month is a holiday, the regular meeting shall be held on the first or third Tuesday evening of the month at 7:30PM, unless otherwise provided for by motion. During July and August, regular meetings shall be suspended. The Council may, by majority vote, dispense with any regular meeting, or change the day and hour of holding or adjournment of any regular meeting. No City Council meeting shall be scheduled on the eve of a preliminary or final election in the City of Quincy. These meetings will be held on the first Monday following said election. No meetings shall be scheduled on Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashanah. If those holidays fall on Monday, the Council meetings will be held on Tuesday.</p>	<p>Addresses:</p> <p>Regular meeting schedule</p> <p>This rule establishes the regular meeting calendar, holiday adjustments, and seasonal recesses.</p>
<p>Rule Twenty-Five:</p> <p>Special Meetings -- Notice</p>	<p>Addresses:</p> <p>Special meetings</p>

<p>The President of the City Council, or any four (4) members thereof, may at any time call a special meeting of the Council by causing written notices stating the time, place and purpose of the meeting and signed by the person or persons calling the same to be delivered in hand to each member of the Council, or left at his usual dwelling place, at least forty-eight (48) hours before the time for such meeting. There shall be held on the second Monday of each month a special meeting of the City Council for the purpose of holding public hearings. These special meetings shall be only for this purpose unless called for some other purpose, of which due notice shall be given as provided herein. Such meetings shall commence at 7:30PM. Whenever the second Monday evening of the month is a holiday, the special meeting shall be on the second Tuesday evening of the month at 7:30PM. During July and August these special meetings shall be suspended.</p>	<p>This rule explains how special meetings are called, noticed, and limited in purpose.</p>
<p>Rule Twenty-Six: Hearings The time devoted to public hearings at any meeting of the City Council shall not be more than three (3) hours at any one sitting. Any hearing not completed within the specified time may be continued to another meeting. Hearings which are authorized by the order of the Council shall have precedence and shall be followed by public presentations. Any individual appearing before the Council at a public hearing and claiming to represent another as agent or otherwise in the matter of being heard shall file with the Council a written authorization signed by the individual, organization or corporation whose interests such individual represents. Ten (10) minutes shall be allowed each speaker to express, their views on the matter being heard by the Council. In all hearings before the Council, the case of the petitioner shall be first submitted, except where the President of the Council rules otherwise.</p>	<p>Addresses: Public hearings This rule sets time limits, speaker limits, and order of presentation for public hearings.</p>
<p>Rule Twenty-Seven: Order of Business and Agenda At every meeting of the Council the order of business shall be as follows: Calling the roll members Moment of Silent Prayer for Divine Guidance Saluting the Flag under the direction of the presiding officer Communications and reports from the Mayor,</p>	<p>Addresses: Order of business This rule establishes the fixed sequence of council business and restricts changes without a majority vote.</p>

<p>other City Officers and City Boards Unfinished business of preceding meeting Reports of Committees Presentation of Petitions, Memorials and Remonstrances Motions, orders and resolutions That the time of the City Council meetings shall never be interrupted except for legally advertised and duly scheduled public hearing and meetings. Regular City Council meetings shall not be interrupted by committee business. The above order shall not be changed except by vote of a majority of the members of the Council and upon the motion to change the order, no debate shall be allowed. Agendas All items for the agenda including communications and reports from the Mayor, other City Officers and City Boards shall be submitted to the City Clerk no later than 9:00AM on Wednesday preceding the regular Council meeting. And provided that copy of said reports and agenda be delivered to the City Council no later than Thursday preceding the regular Council meeting. Late items require a 2/3 vote of the members of the City Council to be allowed at the Council meeting. Any item authorized for the agenda must be specified on the agenda, by whom it is introduced. The agenda will be prepared by the City Auditor, City Clerk, Mayor, reviewed by the Council President, and then prepared for presentation by the Council Office staff. The Council agenda is to include: All financial matters Ordinances Public Hearings Street acceptances and abandonments Council confirmations Matters proposed by City Councillors with supporting documentation subject to approval by the Council President For more information, please select a rule to expand the section. Agendas</p>	
<p>Rule Twenty-Eight: Presentation of Papers All papers addressed to the Council shall be presented by the President or by a member; and unless the Council shall otherwise determine they shall be read by the President or such other person as he may request, and be taken up in the order in which they are presented.</p>	<p>Addresses: Presentation of papers This rule governs how documents are presented and read before the Council.</p>
<p>Rule Twenty-Nine: Anonymous Communications Unsigned communications shall not be introduced in the Council.</p>	<p>Addresses: Anonymous communications This rule prohibits the introduction of unsigned communications.</p>

<p>Rule Thirty: Standing Committees There shall be appointed standing committees of the Council as follows: Finance to consist of nine (9) members Ordinance to consist of nine (9) members Oversight to consist of nine (9) members Community Engagement to consist of five (5) members Downtown and Economic Growth to consist of five (5) members Education to consist of five (5) members Environment and Public Health to consist of five (5) members Housing to consist of five (5) members Library and Historic Places to consist of five (5) members Munitech Information Management to consist of five (5) members Parks & Recreation to consist of five (5) members Public Buildings to consist of five (5) members Public Safety to consist of five (5) members Public Works to consist of five (5) members Rules to consist of five (5) members Senior Citizens to consist of five (5) members Veterans to consist of five (5) members</p>	<p>Addresses: Standing committees This rule lists the Council’s standing committees and their membership sizes.</p>
<p>Rule Thirty-One: Special Committees Special committees may be authorized at any time by majority vote and shall be appointed by the President to consider such matters as the Council may refer to them.</p>	<p>Addresses: Special committees This rule allows the Council to create special committees by majority vote.</p>
<p>Rule Thirty-Two: Committee Reports Every committee of the Council to which any subject may be referred, shall report thereon not later than the second regular meeting following the time such subject is referred to it, unless a shorter time is otherwise specified, or further time granted. In case the Chairman of any committee shall fail for ten (10) days from the time the subject has been referred to it, to call a meeting of the committee, a majority of the committee may call a meeting of said committee, Notice of all committee meetings must be given at least forty-eight (48) hours before the time for meeting, but meetings may be held at any time by unanimous consent of all the members of the committee.</p>	<p>Addresses: Committee reporting deadlines This rule sets timelines and notice requirements for committee meetings and reports.</p>
<p>Rule Thirty-Three: Committee Meetings Committees shall meet on the call of the Chair, or a majority of its members to be communicated by the Clerk of Committees</p>	<p>Addresses: Committee meeting limits This rule limits committees to matters formally referred by the Council.</p>

and meetings of the committees shall only be held to discuss and debate matters that have been referred to it by the City Council at a City Council meeting.	
Rule Thirty-Four: Chairman – Quorum The Chairman of a committee shall be the member named first, and the member named next shall be Vice Chairman. A majority of the members of a committee shall constitute a quorum.	Addresses: Committee leadership and quorum This rule defines committee leadership roles and quorum requirements.
Rule Thirty-Five: Failure to Report When a committee to which a matter is referred, with instructions to report at a time named in the order of reference, is not ready to report at such time, the matter so referred shall, unless further time be granted, be considered as though reported back without recommendation. In such case, the committee shall forthwith return to the Clerk the documents pertaining to the matter, and the matter shall take its proper place in the order of business.	Addresses: Failure to report This rule explains what happens when a committee fails to report back on a matter.
Rule Thirty-Six: Committee Reports The President of the Council, upon receipt of the Committee Report, shall call for the vote on the motion, petition or order as introduced so that the vote would be on the order, not on the committee report. Documents referred to in committee shall be returned with the report. Nothing in this rule shall be construed to prohibit the introduction of minority reports.	Addresses: Council action on committee reports This rule clarifies that Council votes are taken on the original proposal, not the committee report itself.
Rule Thirty-Seven: Relieving From Further Consideration Upon motion, the Council may, by a majority vote of all the members of the Council, relieve a committee of further consideration of a matter referred to it and order the same placed on the calendar.	Addresses: Removing matters from committee This rule allows the Council to reclaim a matter from committee consideration by vote.
Rule Thirty-Eight: Secretary to Committees The Clerk of Committees shall act as secretary to the several committees, and keep a record of the attendance and business transacted at their meetings.	Addresses: Clerk of Committees duties This rule assigns recordkeeping duties for committees.
Rule Thirty-Nine: Reference to Committees	Addresses: Referral to committees

All petitions, orders; resolutions and ordinances may be referred to appropriate committees for investigation and report.	This rule allows proposals to be referred to appropriate committees.
Rule Forty: City Solicitor The City Solicitor shall, either in person or by deputy, attend all meetings of the Council. Any member of the Council may at any time call upon the City Solicitor for an oral or written opinion to decide any question of law, but not to decide upon any parliamentary rules. They shall have a seat but no vote in the meetings of the governing board.	Addresses: Role of the City Solicitor This rule allows legal advice on questions of law while excluding parliamentary rulings.
Rule Forty-One: City Auditor The City Auditor shall, either in person or by deputy, attend all meetings of the Council. Any member of the Council may at any time call upon the City Auditor for oral or written opinions of the financial conditions of the City. They shall have a seat but no vote in the meetings of the governing board.	Addresses: Role of the City Auditor This rule allows the City Auditor to provide financial information to the Council.
Rule Forty-Two: Commissioner of Public Works The Commissioner of Public Works shall, either in person or by deputy, attend all meetings of the Council. Any member of the Council may at any time call upon the Commissioner of Public Works for oral or written opinions relative to their department. They shall have a seat but no voice in the meeting of the governing board.	Addresses: Role of the Commissioner of Public Works This rule allows departmental input without voting authority.
Rule Forty-Three: Planning Director The Planning Director shall, either in person or by deputy, attend all meetings of the Council. Any member may at any time call upon the Planning Director for oral or written opinions relative to their department. They shall have a seat but no vote in the meeting of the governing board.	Addresses: Role of the Planning Director This rule allows planning input without voting authority.
Rule Forty-Four: State of Federal Cooperation All proposals for projects which contemplate cooperation with, or financial participation by, the state or federal government, may be introduced to the Council by any member thereof or the Mayor. If a City board or department head desires to propose such a project, the proposal shall be filed with the President of the Council. The Council shall refer all proposals to Finance Committee and to the Chairman of the proper improvement	Addresses: State and federal cooperation This rule governs how projects involving state or federal participation are approved.

<p>committee. The committee shall report their recommendations to the Council. If the Council approves the proposal, it shall by resolution, authorize the Mayor to make application to the proper authority.</p> <p>Miscellaneous</p>	
<p>Rule Forty-Five: Permission to Address the Chair Persons other than members of the Council, City officials and news reporters, shall not be permitted upon the floor of the Council, or to address the Council, except upon introduction by a member of the Council with the consent of a majority of said Council. The Presiding Officer shall limit the time for the remarks of such person to five (5) minutes and such remarks shall be confined to the subject matter which is under consideration at that meeting. If anyone other than a City official desires to speak to a member of the Council while the Council is in session, the member, if agreeable to the request, shall leave their seat and retire to the rear of the Council Chamber or elsewhere until the conversation is finished.</p>	<p>Addreses: Public participation This rule governs when and how non-members may address the Council.</p>
<p>Rule Forty-Seven: By~Laws, Etc., of Council All by-laws passed by the Council shall be termed ordinances and the enacting style shall be, "Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Quincy," In all votes by which the Council expresses anything by order or command the form of expression shall be "Ordered," and in all votes by which the Council expresses opinions, principles, facts or purposes, the form shall be "Resolved."</p>	<p>Addreses: Legislative terminology This rule defines the formal language used for ordinances, orders, and resolutions.</p>
<p>Rule Forty-Eight: Communications from Mayor A list of the communications from the Mayor with their subject matter to be submitted to the Council shall be mailed at least two (2) days before the Council meeting to every City Councillor and to at least one (1) newspaper and one (1) radio station within the confines of our municipality.</p>	<p>Addreses: Mayor communications This rule requires advance notice and distribution of communications from the Mayor.</p>
<p>Rule Forty-Nine: Council Expression The City Clerk is authorized to convey the expression of interest shown by the Council on all occasions affecting its members and their families.</p>	<p>Addreses: Council expressions This rule authorizes the Clerk to convey expressions of interest on behalf of the Council.</p>
<p>Rule Fifty:</p>	

<p>Notification of Committee Meetings All Councillors are to be notified of all Committee meetings of the Council.</p>	<p>Addresses: Notice of committee meetings This rule requires councilors to be notified of committee meetings.</p>
<p>Rule Fifty-One: Council Orders When a Council body retires at the end of a two-year period, all Council orders in committee shall be placed on file by the Clerk of the Council.</p>	<p>Addresses: End-of-term filings This rule requires pending committee matters to be filed at the end of a council term.</p>
<p>Rule Fifty-Two: Publication The City Clerk shall determine the newspaper in the City in which shall be published any loan order or any ordinance and said publication shall be made in a newspaper of general circulation in the City.</p>	<p>Addresses: Publication requirements This rule assigns responsibility for publishing ordinances and loan orders.</p>
<p>Rule Fifty-Three: Amendment and Repeal None of the foregoing rules and orders shall be amended or repealed at any meeting unless a majority of the members consent thereto and a motion for that purpose shall not be made and acted upon at the same meeting.</p>	<p>Addresses: Amending the rules This rule prevents rules from being amended and adopted at the same meeting.</p>
<p>Rule Fifty-Four Parliamentary Procedure The Council shall be governed by "Robert's Rules of Order Revised" in all questions of parliamentary practice not provided for by special rules or orders.</p>	<p>Addresses: Parliamentary authority This rule adopts Robert's Rules of Order where local rules are silent.</p>