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**To:** Mayor Nelson and Members of the City Council

**From:** Daniel R. Buchholtz, MMC, Administrator, Clerk/Treasurer

**Date:** September 21, 2024

**Subject:** Parliamentary Procedure

This memorandum provides an overview of the parliamentary procedure that governs City Council meetings. These rules are essential to ensure that meetings are conducted in an orderly, fair, and efficient manner. The City of Spring Lake Park follows procedures outlined in *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, with certain variations as specified in the Spring Lake Park City Code (SLPC 3.04.010). This memorandum highlights those key procedures and the role of the Mayor as the presiding officer.

## Purpose of Parliamentary Procedure

The purpose of parliamentary procedure is to provide a structured method for discussing and deciding upon City business. It ensures that all members have an equal opportunity to participate, promotes orderly debate, and facilitates clear decision-making, while also protecting the rights of the majority and the minority.

## Key Principles

1. **Majority Rule:** Decisions are based on a majority vote, while ensuring the rights of the minority are respected.
2. **Equal Rights of Members:** Each Councilmember has the right to speak, make motions, and vote.
3. **Orderly Debate:** The presiding officer controls the flow of the meeting to ensure discussions are conducted in an orderly and respectful manner.
4. **Transparency:** All actions are made through clear motions, and all votes are recorded.

## Role of the Presiding Officer (Mayor)

Under SLPC 3.04.010(C), the Mayor serves as the presiding officer at all Council meetings. In the Mayor's absence, the Acting Mayor shall preside. If both are absent, the City Administrator, Clerk/Treasurer shall call the meeting to order, and the Councilmembers present shall select one of their members to serve as a temporary presiding officer.

As the presiding officer, the Mayor is responsible for preserving order, enforcing the rules of procedure, and ruling on all questions of procedure and order. These rulings are subject to the final decision of the Council if an appeal is made by a member. The Mayor may also make motions and speak on any issue, but if any Councilmember demands, the Mayor must vacate the chair and designate another Councilmember to preside temporarily.

### **Appeal Process**

If any Councilmember disagrees with a procedural ruling made by the presiding officer, they may appeal to the Council. This appeal must be sustained by a majority of the members present, including the presiding officer.

### **Main Components of Parliamentary Procedure**

#### **1. Motions and Debate**

Decisions by the Council are made through motions. As a variation from *Robert's Rules of Order*, motions in Spring Lake Park do not require a second. Any motion made may be debated, and debate may be limited by a successful motion to limit debate.

#### **2. Procedure for Debate**

Once a motion is introduced, the presiding officer manages the debate, ensuring that all members have an opportunity to speak and that discussions remain on topic. Members may raise a "Point of Order" to challenge any breach of rules or decorum. Examples of this include violation of agenda or order of business, disruptive or inflammatory language, interruptions during debate, failure to stay on topic, conflict of interest. The presiding officer must rule on this point or put it to a Council vote if appealed.

#### **3. Voting Process**

Voting on motions occurs after the debate has concluded. The presiding officer calls for a vote, typically by roll call. The outcome is recorded in the meeting minutes.

### **Maintaining Decorum**

The presiding officer plays a critical role in maintaining decorum throughout the meeting. As noted in SLPC 3.04.010(C), the presiding officer is responsible for enforcing order and ensuring that discussions remain focused and respectful. All members must avoid using inflammatory language, personal attacks, or disruptive behavior. This ensures that discussions remain professional and that the business of the City can be conducted efficiently and without distraction.

### **Addressing Violations of Decorum by Councilmembers**

If a Councilmember uses inflammatory language or disrupts the meeting, any member may raise a Point of Order to bring attention to the violation. The presiding officer must then address the issue, reminding the offending member to maintain proper decorum. If the violation persists, the

Council may impose disciplinary measures, such as limiting the member's participation in the debate.

### **Handling Violations of Decorum by the Presiding Officer**

Should the presiding officer violate the rules of decorum by using inflammatory language or engaging in inappropriate conduct, the following process should be followed:

**1. Point of Order Against the Presiding Officer:**

Any Councilmember may raise a Point of Order to challenge the presiding officer's conduct. Under SLPC 3.04.010(C), such an appeal must be addressed by the Council. The presiding officer's ruling on the appeal may be overturned by a majority vote.

**2. Temporary Reassignment of Presiding Role:**

If necessary, the Council may temporarily assign the presiding role to the Acting Mayor or another Councilmember to restore order and maintain decorum. As this action requires a suspension of the rules under *Robert's Rules of Order*, this action requires a 2/3 majority of the City Council.

### **Resources**

I have included a Parliamentary Procedure "cheat sheet" to assist the City Council in utilizing *Robert's Rules of Order* effectively.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 763-784-6491.

## Robert's Rules of Order – City Council Cheat Sheet

Motion	Purpose	Debatable?	Amendable?	Vote Required	Can Interrupt?
<b>Main Motion</b>	Introduce new business or proposal	Yes	Yes	Majority	No
<b>Amend</b>	Modify wording or provisions of a motion	Yes	Yes	Majority	No
<b>Postpone to a Certain Time</b>	Delay consideration until a specific time	Yes	Yes	Majority	No
<b>Postpone Indefinitely</b>	Kill the motion without direct vote	Yes	No	Majority	No
<b>Refer to Committee</b>	Send motion to committee for further review	Yes	Yes	Majority	No
<b>Lay on the Table</b>	Set motion aside temporarily	No	No	Majority	No
<b>Limit or Extend Debate</b>	Set or extend debate time	No	Yes	2/3 Majority	No
<b>Call the Question (Close Debate)</b>	End debate and move to vote	No	No	2/3 Majority	No
<b>Reconsider</b>	Revisit a decision made earlier in the same meeting	Yes	No	Majority	No
<b>Appeal the Ruling of the Chair</b>	Challenge a ruling by the presiding officer	Yes (brief)	No	Majority	Yes
<b>Suspend the Rules</b>	Temporarily suspend specific rules	No	No	2/3 Majority	No
<b>Point of Order</b>	Call out a breach of rules or decorum	No	No	No vote (Chair rules)	Yes
<b>Division of the Assembly</b>	Request a clearer vote count	No	No	No vote (Requires revote)	Yes
<b>Request for Information</b>	Ask for information or clarification	No	No	No vote (Chair responds)	Yes
<b>Adjourn</b>	End the meeting	No	No	Majority	No
<b>Recess</b>	Take a short break	No	Yes	Majority	No
<b>Withdraw a Motion</b>	Remove a motion from consideration	No	No	Majority (if motion on the floor)	No