

RULES OF ORDER FOR CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

These rules of order are meant to promote an atmosphere of courtesy and decorum appropriate for the efficient discussion of city business. It is the responsibility of the Mayor (and the members of the City Council) to maintain that atmosphere of courtesy and decorum. The Mayor should always ensure that debate and discussion focus on the item and the policy in question, not on the personalities of the participants in the discussion. Debate on policy is healthy; debate on personalities is not. In order to assist in the creation and maintenance of that atmosphere the following rules shall govern all city council meetings:

1. **Request to Speak.** Audience members who wish to speak during the Citizen Comment section must first complete a speaker card/sheet and submit it to the City Secretary before the beginning of the meeting. Before an audience member may speak, they must first be recognized by the Mayor or Councilmember acting on the Mayor's behalf. Upon recognition, the person requesting to speak shall hold the floor and shall make their point clearly and succinctly. All speakers shall be limited to three (3) minutes. Persons making irrelevant, personal, impertinent, overly redundant or slanderous remarks may be barred by the Mayor or Councilmember acting in the Mayor's place from further comment before the Council during the meeting. The Mayor has the right to silence a speaker if the discussion becomes too personal, too loud, too crude, irrelevant, impertinent, redundant, or slanderous.
2. **Public Hearings.** During Public Hearings, the applicant will be asked to speak first for the amount of time needed to describe the topic. Persons desiring to speak in favor or opposition to an item in a Public Hearing will be given three (3) minutes to make their statements. To the extent possible, speakers shall refrain from repeating testimony which has already been given. Speakers are to address their comments to the Mayor and Council.
3. **Order.** If a person fails to request to speak before speaking, the Mayor shall rule them "out of order" and remind them that they do not have the floor. While the Council is in session, all Councilmembers must preserve order and decorum. A person shall neither, by conversation or otherwise, delay or interrupt the proceedings or the peace of the meeting, nor disturb any other person while speaking or refuse to obey the orders of the Mayor.
4. **Decorum.** Every person desiring to speak shall address the entire Council and shall not single out a member of the Council, the audience or a staff member. Speakers shall confine themselves to the question under debate, avoiding all personal attacks and indecorous language. Any person making personal, profane, slanderous, or threatening remarks or who becomes disruptive while addressing the Mayor and/or the City Council, or while attending the City Council meeting, may be removed from the Council chambers.
5. **Interruptions.** A Councilmember, once recognized, shall not be interrupted when speaking unless it is to call him or her to order, or other such interruption expressed below. If the Councilmember, while speaking, is called to order, he or she shall cease speaking until the question of order is determined, and if the Councilmember is found to be in order, he or she shall be permitted to proceed speaking.

Allowable interruptions, or points of order, are as follows:

- a. **Point of Privilege.** The proper interruption would be: "Point of Privilege." The Mayor would then ask the interrupter to "state your point." Appropriate points of privilege relate to anything that would interfere with the normal comfort of the meeting. For example, the room might be too hot or cold, or a fan motor might interfere with a council member's ability to hear.
- b. **Point of Order.** The proper interruption would be: "Point of Order." The Mayor would then ask the interrupter to "state your point." Appropriate points of order relate to anything that would not be considered appropriate conduct of the meeting. For example, if the Mayor called for a vote on a motion that permits debate without allowing any discussion.

c. Motion to Appeal. If the Mayor makes a ruling that a member of the city council disagrees with, that member may appeal the ruling of the Mayor by stating “motion to appeal.” If the motion is seconded and after debate if it passes by a simple majority vote, the ruling of the Mayor is reversed.

d. Withdraw a Motion. During the debate and discussion of a motion, the original maker of the motion on the floor, at any time, may interrupt the speaker to withdraw his or her motion. The motion is immediately deemed withdrawn and discussion on the motion shall cease. Council members are free to make the same motion or another motion.

e. Call the Question. To end a debate immediately, the question is called ("I call the question") and needs a second. The Mayor calls for a vote to end debate. A vote is held immediately (no further discussion is allowed). A two-thirds vote is required for passage. If it is passed, the motion on the floor is voted on immediately.

6. **Enforcement of Rules and Procedures**. The following provisions may be used to enforce the good order and decorum of the meeting. The action may be taken by the Mayor under his or her own action, or upon a motion to enforce by any Councilmember.

a. Warning. The Mayor may order any person (Councilmember, staff member or audience member) in violation of these rules to be silent.

b. Removal. If, after receiving a warning from the Mayor, the person continues to disturb the meeting or breach the peace and good order of the meeting, the Mayor may recess the meeting or order the person to leave the meeting. If the person does not leave the room after order from the Mayor, the Mayor may order the sergeant-at-arms to remove the person.

c. Sergeant-at-Arms. The sergeant-at-arms shall be the highest-ranking police officer in attendance at the Council meeting, or such other officer designated for that purpose. Upon instruction of the Mayor, it shall be the duty of the sergeant-at-arms to remove from the meeting any person who intentionally disturbs the proceedings of the City Council. A violation of these rules may be deemed an attempt to disrupt, obstruct, and/or interfere with a lawful meeting. Any person who obstructs or interferes with the meeting by physical action or verbal utterance, with the intent to prevent or disrupt the meeting, may be subject to prosecution under state law for disrupting a meeting if their acts substantially impair the ordinary conduct of a meeting. (Section 42.05, Texas Penal Code)

d. Motion to Enforce. Any Councilmember may move to require the Mayor to enforce these rules and the affirmative vote of a simple majority of the Council shall require the Mayor to do so. A motion to enforce is an allowable interruption and is not debatable.

6. Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem Absent. If the mayor and the mayor pro tem are absent, the councilmember present with the most years in service as an elected official for the city of Willow Park may be appointed by a majority of the council present to preside.