COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURE

Adopted January 8, 2024, Amended March 25, 2024, Amended May 20, 2024, Amended January 27, 2025, Amended December 15, 2025

I. Meetings - General Information

A. Types of Meetings of the Council

1. Regular Meetings: Regular Meetings shall be held on the second and fourth Monday of each month except City holidays, and such additional days as the Council may determine. The Council may cancel any meeting on an affirmative vote of at least three (3) members if, and only if, this vote is held at least seven (7) calendar days before the canceled meeting. The reason for cancellation shall be stated in the motion to cancel and shall be recorded in the Minutes. The Mayor shall cancel any session scheduled for a date when City Hall is closed for business. Notice of cancellation shall appear prominently on the City's website and Facebook page, in a conspicuous location at City Hall, and by any other means of notification available to the City that the Council deems appropriate as quickly as possible.
2. Regular Work Sessions shall be held on the third Monday of each month as needed. The same rules shall apply regarding cancellation in Item 1 of this section. Alternate Work Sessions may be scheduled when the third Monday coincides with a holiday when City Hall is closed or as needed. Seven (7) calendar days' notice shall be given.
   All Work Sessions, except when subject to a Closed Meeting, shall utilize video conferencing platforms, such as Microsoft Teams, with live streaming activation.
   a) Appendix A shall guide the Council in conducting effective Work Sessions.
3. Special Meetings
   a) Special Meetings may be called by the Mayor, giving a minimum of seven (7) calendar days' notice to the Council. Alternatively, two (2) or more Council members may request a Special Meeting by sending a written or email communication to the Mayor and City Clerk. If two (2) or more members of the Council make a written request to the Mayor for a Special Meeting, the Mayor shall call a Special Meeting within five (5) calendar days after receiving the request.
   b) The Mayor shall give a minimum of seven (7) calendar days' notice prior to any Special Meeting of the Council unless, in the judgment of the Mayor or of the Council members requesting a Special Meeting, an Emergency Meeting is required.
   c) Emergency Meetings: Reasonable notice shall be given to the public in accordance with the State of Maryland Open Meetings Act.
4. Closed Meetings: Meetings may be closed upon the affirmative vote of at least three (3) members of the Council in accordance with the State of Maryland Open Meetings Act.

B. Time and Place of Meetings

1. All Regular Meetings of the Council shall be scheduled to convene at City Hall at 7:00 PM unless a different time or place shall be authorized by the affirmative vote of at least three (3) members of the Council.
2. No meeting shall continue past the hour of 11:00 PM unless these Rules of Procedure are suspended.

C. Quorum

1. Three (3) members of the Council, which may include the Mayor, constitute a quorum

for the transaction of business.

D. Voting
   1. All voting, except on procedural motions, shall be by roll call, which shall be recorded in the Minutes. Each member of the Council shall be called to vote. The Mayor shall be called last to cast a vote and shall only vote to break a tie, which includes establishing a third vote in favor of a motion if the remainder of the quorum only consists of two (2) Council members. The Council may elect to table an agenda item for consideration until a future meeting if only two (2) Council members and the Mayor are present to conduct business. Any member may explain his or her vote prior to casting.
   2. No ordinance shall be approved, nor any action taken upon an ordinance without the favorable votes of a majority of the whole number of members of the Council.
   3. The Mayor may only make a motion to close a meeting in accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

E. Presiding Officer: The Mayor shall be the presiding officer of all meetings of the City Council. In the absence of the Mayor, the Council President shall preside for the tenure of the meeting.
   1. During the Legislative Session of the Agenda, the Mayor shall recognize the Council President for legislative matters of the Council. The Council President may offer for introduction, resolutions or ordinances of the Council and advance legislation.

F. Rules of Procedure: The current edition of Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern all parliamentary proceedings except where they are in conflict with these Rules or other laws applicable in this City.

G. Notice of Meetings
   1. The City Clerk shall give such notice as required by law of all Council Meetings, hearings, and sessions in accordance with the State of Maryland Open Meetings Act.
   2. Notice shall be prominently displayed on the City's website, on the City's Facebook page, in a conspicuous location on City Hall and by any other means of notification available to the City that the Council deems appropriate.

H. Public Comment
   1. The general public is encouraged and invited to attend all meetings of the City Council; however, no person shall be allowed to address the Council until the appropriate time on the Agenda and then after recognition by the Mayor or the Presiding Officer. Not more than three (3) minutes shall be given to any individual speaking unless the Council determines otherwise. Section H.1 does not apply to Closed Meetings in accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act.
   2. Any person speaking shall state the following: name, home address, and organization represented, if applicable.
   3. The Mayor or the Presiding Officer, independently or upon motion of the Council, may order the removal of any person who disrupts the business of the Council, after warning.
   4. All comments shall be directed to the Mayor or the Presiding Officer and shall not be addressed to others in attendance unless permitted by the Mayor or the Presiding Officer.
   5. Members of the Council will not be expected to immediately respond to any subject brought to their attention. The Mayor may respond or may permit individual members of the Council to respond.

II. Council Agenda
   A. The Mayor shall ensure that an appropriate agenda is prepared for each Council Meeting, to include all matters requested by a member of the Council and delivered to the Council members at least four (4) days preceding the meeting by email, in writing, or other media in advance of the meeting. Items that are determined by the Mayor or a majority of the Council that require emergency action may be added to the agenda at any time with notification delivered to the entire Council.
      1. The Legislative Session shall be set by the Council President in collaboration with the Mayor and Council members. All pieces of legislation shall have at least two (2) sponsors. The Council President shall circulate Administrative legislative requests to the Council for sponsorship prior to introduction. The Mayor and City Clerk shall be notified whenever a piece of legislation has secured the adequate sponsors for introduction.
      2. The Legislative Session shall be divided into two sections: Legislation Under Consideration and Pending Legislation. Legislation Under Consideration is for ordinances and resolutions that have action items before the Council during the meeting such as introduction, amendments, or adoption. Pending Legislation is for ordinances and resolutions that have been introduced but have no action by the Council during that meeting.
   B. Copies of the Agenda will be available for the public at the meeting. The Agenda will be posted on the City's website and other accepted public notification sites as indicated within these Rules of Procedure.

III. Meeting Order of Business
   A. Call to Order
   B. Roll Call
   C. Opening Prayer
   D. Pledge of Allegiance
   E. Approval of the Minutes
   F. Statement of Closed Meeting
   G. Presentations
   H. Public Hearings
   I. Public Comment (each person may speak up to 3 minutes)
   J. Legislative Session
      1. Legislation Under Consideration
      2. Pending Legislation
   K. Unfinished Business
   L. New Business
   M. Updates from Staff
   N. Public Comment (each person may speak up to 3 minutes)
   O. Business of the Council
      - Liaison Reports
   P. Business of the Mayor
   Q. Announcements
   R. Closed Meeting – TBD
   S. Adjournment

IV. Council Minutes

A. Minutes of the Council shall be maintained by the City Clerk. A copy of the approved Minutes shall be posted in their entirety on the City's website, available to the public at City Hall for inspection during normal working days of the City Government and by any other means of publication available to the City that the Council deems appropriate.

B. All votes by roll call shall be recorded in the Minutes.

V. Motions in Meetings

A. When a motion has been made and seconded, the Mayor shall restate the motion. Motions may be made orally or in writing, but a motion shall be reduced to writing only upon request of the Mayor or Presiding Officer. Motions shall, whenever possible, be stated affirmatively. Prior to being voted upon, the maker and seconder may withdraw their respective procedural actions.

B. Recusal: No member shall vote on any question when prohibited by the City's Ethics Ordinance.

VI. Suspension and Amendment of Rules

A. Except as otherwise provided, these Rules may be suspended by a vote of three (3) members of the Council present at the meeting, subject to the requirements of the Charter or other law.

B. These rules may be amended by an affirmative vote of four (4) Council members in office at any regular meeting on notice of the amendment proposed at a meeting at least seven (7) calendar days prior.

C. These rules shall continue in effect from year to year without necessity for re-adoption except that, upon election of a new Mayor and Council, rules are to be adopted by that Council, per the Charter.

VII. Liaisons

A. The Council President shall nominate and the Council by majority vote shall approve one or more of its members as liaisons to Aberdeen City Government bodies and to non-governmental bodies as designated.

B. The Council liaisons shall report to the Council at the first meeting of each month during the Agenda Items, "Business from Council Members" or "Business from the Mayor." The report shall include:

1. Name of the body
2. Meetings held since last report
3. Scheduled meeting dates within next 60 days
4. Business conducted at last meeting
5. Announcements from the body

C. There may be liaisons to the following:

1. Economic Development Commission
2. Aberdeen Fire Department
3. Aberdeen Main Street
4. Parks & Recreation Board
5. Planning Commission
6. Aberdeen Chamber of Commerce
7. Aberdeen Historical Museum
8. Harford County Council
9. Boys & Girls Clubs of Harford & Cecil Counties– Aberdeen Branch
10. Maryland General Assembly

11. Aberdeen Proving Ground
12. Harford County Public Schools
13. Heritage Trust

Appendix A: Work Session Structure:

Work Sessions are intended as opportunities for the body to deliberate openly and remain focused on clear goals and objectives. This could be setting a direction based off of information shared, outlining a vision, presenting a solution to a pending matter, providing collaborative feedback, and/or asking questions to relevant city matters. These are also opportunities to discuss draft or pending legislation subject to the request of the Mayor or any Council member. Work Sessions are not intended simply for visual presentation purposes such as PowerPoints unless the Council is being asked to provide feedback or ask questions to a presentation previously shared electronically or via hard copy. In person presentations may be considered on a case by case basis.

In order to better prepare and maximize the available time, Work Session agendas should be prepared for public viewing by close of business Thursday before a regularly scheduled Monday meeting. Good faith efforts shall be made to provide all supporting documents for discussion by this deadline as well.

Effective Work Sessions keep to the items on the agenda unless an emergency or time sensitive item requires attention. Agenda items should be given a designated amount of time to consider/ discuss during the meeting in an effort to stay focused on the matters prepared. Not all items on the agenda may require the same amount of time nor should conversations be cut off at the precise moment of designated time. This is simply a tool to help keep the agenda within a 2-hour window. If time allows, other matters may be brought to the body's attention including updates from the Mayor. This does not apply to any Closed Session that may be included on the agenda.

Preparing for a Work Session is a team effort between the Mayor, Council and staff. Requested Work Session topics for Monday work sessions should be shared with at least the Mayor and Council President no later than close of business on the Tuesday prior to the scheduled meeting whenever possible, with supporting documents provided no later than noon on the Thursday before the meeting. When a Work Session is scheduled on a day other than a Monday, the deadlines shall shift one day forward (weekend days shall not count towards these deadlines so long as 48 hours are provided for the release of the agenda). These rules do not apply to Emergency Sessions where good faith efforts shall be made to share information in advance. It is expected that the Mayor and all Council members will have reviewed all supporting documents in advance of the meeting and, when able, will have submitted questions to the body and appropriate staff in advance in an effort to save time and receive the most appropriate response during the meeting.

At the end of each Work Session, all participants should have a clear understanding of next steps, objectives, and any assigned work due, if applicable. Work Sessions shall be held on the third Monday of each month as needed and can be scheduled at other times subject to need and if a third Monday coincides with a holiday that City Hall is closed. Notice of, or request for a Work Session, shall be subject to the approved Council Rules of Procedure.