

## **CITY COUNCIL OF SARATOGA SPRINGS RULES FOR CONDUCT AT PUBLIC MEETINGS**

### ***1. Statement of Purpose***

The conducting of public business at City Council meetings is a necessary responsibility of government. The right of every citizen to express his or her opinion on public matters at a public meeting must and shall be preserved. Elected officials must expect from time to time strong and direct commentary on their official actions. However, no person has the right to act in a manner that disrupts the orderly process of public business. These rules represent an effort to maintain proper procedure and order at public meetings for the benefit of all citizens.

### ***2. Regular Meetings and Agenda Meetings***

- a. The City Council will hold regular meetings at such times specified in the City Charter, or at such other times as the Council may determine. The City Council will hold agenda meetings at 9:30 AM the Monday before each regularly scheduled Council meeting, or at such other time as the Council may determine. All agenda meetings shall be publicly noticed and conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings Law.
- b. The purpose of an agenda meeting is:
  - 1) To clarify and confirm actions being proposed.
  - 2) To insure that adequate information and documentation shall be provided to the Council for review sufficiently prior to the regular meeting.
  - 3) Establish the basic steps needed prior to acting on a matter at the regular meeting, including but not limited to reviews by City staff, as well as to provide reports on costs, timing, budget impacts, and other relevant criteria.
  - 4) To include necessary descriptive words relevant to the proposed action, i.e. “discussion”, “vote”, “presentation”, etc.
  - 5) To establish a Consent Agenda for the regular meeting. The Consent Agenda shall include items that the Council shall determine to be submitted without further discussion at the regular meeting. The inclusion of an item in the Consent Agenda shall not preclude any Council member from moving to remove that item from the Consent Agenda and discussing it further at the regular meeting.

### ***3. Public Comment***

- a. Members of the public shall be given time to speak at every Council meeting during the designated public comment period, or at such other times as the Council shall establish.
- b. Each speaker shall step to the designated microphone and shall give his or her name and municipality of residence. Street addresses or apartment numbers may be voluntarily provided or may be requested by the Council in circumstances where such information is relevant to the matter being discussed. If a speaker declines to give identifying

information about himself or herself, that shall not of itself disqualify that person from speaking.

- c. Each speaker must be recognized by the Mayor or presiding officer.
- d. Each speaker shall be limited to 2 minutes.
- e. Each speaker shall speak only once in each public comment period.
- f. Speakers may not contribute or yield any remaining time they may have to another speaker.
- g. Fifteen (15) minutes at the beginning of every Council meeting shall be the regular public comment period. The Mayor or presiding officer shall have authority to extend the time of the beginning public comment period for good cause. The Council shall have authority to establish additional public comment periods during or after the meeting.
- h. Each speaker shall direct his or her remarks to the Council as a body, and not to any member thereof. This requirement shall not be construed, however, as preventing a speaker from commenting on the official work of a Council member.
- i. A speaker who is conducting himself or herself in accordance with these rules shall not be interrupted, except by the Mayor or presiding officer to indicate that the speaker's time is up.
- j. At the conclusion of the public comment period, or during the presentation of their agendas, Council members shall have the opportunity to respond to any inquiry or comment made by any speaker during the public comment period. Such responses shall be strictly limited to the inquiries or comments made by the speaker or speakers responded to. No speaker shall have the right to provide a rebuttal following a Council member's response.
- k. No speaker or other person shall engage in any conduct that prevents or impedes the Council, or any member thereof, from conducting public business. The Mayor or presiding officer shall have authority to direct any person engaging in such conduct to discontinue such conduct immediately, and if the person refuses to comply, to direct that person to leave the Council room or to cause his or her removal by a law enforcement officer.

#### ***4. General Rules of Procedure***

- a. The presiding officer at a Council meeting shall be the Mayor, or such officer as may be authorized by the City Charter to act as successor under the circumstances.

- b. Council members shall make every effort to avoid interrupting another Council member speaking. In situations where interruptions become frequent, the Mayor or presiding officer shall have authority to determine the order in which Council members will speak.
- c. All Council members shall limit their comments to the motion, item or other matter under discussion.
- d. A Council member who makes a motion shall have the first opportunity to speak on that motion.
- e. Matters not listed on the agenda for a meeting may not be finally acted on at that meeting, unless one or more Council members shall propose an unlisted matter be finally acted upon, and shall state on the record the reason why such matter was not listed on the agenda, and the Council shall, by motion and vote, find that immediate action on the matter is necessary.
- f. After all Council members have had an opportunity to speak on and discuss a matter, any Council member may move to close or limit debate on that matter by first stating his or her intent to so move and obtaining the floor for that purpose from the Mayor or presiding officer. Once the floor has been obtained and the motion made, it shall require a second and a 4/5 vote of the Council to pass.
- g. Officials shall address each other by their official titles of Mayor, Commissioner, or Supervisor.
- h. If the Mayor or presiding officer shall reasonably determine that the conduct of any person or persons impedes the Council from conducting public business and has become unmanageable, he or she shall have authority to declare an immediate recess for the purpose of restoring order. If order cannot be maintained following the recess, the Mayor or presiding officer shall then have authority to declare the council meeting adjourned for rescheduling at a future date.