



City Council Rules Committee
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

January 14, 2015

City Council Chambers

12:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Councilor St. Hilaire - Committee Chair, Councilors Bennett, Bouchard and Matson. Councilor Grady Sexton was absent and excused.

Staff Members Present: City Clerk Janice Bonenfant and City Solicitor Jim Kennedy.

Mayor Jim Bouley was also present.

Committee Chair Councilor St. Hilaire called the meeting to order at 12:11 p.m. explaining that members were meeting in follow-up to a November 2014 Council referral to the Rules Committee. He further explained that the referral was a communication from Mayor Bouley requesting that the Rules Committee review the current Rules of the City Council amending as appropriate to either clarify sections of current rules and/or amend to address any existing processes that are not clearly defined. Committee Chair Councilor St. Hilaire further stated that this specific meeting was to be one hour or less, focusing on setting a future meeting date and establishing what specific sections of the current Rules of the City Council members wished to review in detail and potentially amend.

Councilor St. Hilaire recognized Mayor Bouley who was in attendance at the meeting asking him to share his thoughts and ideas about the sections within the current rules that he was concerned about and/or the sections that inspired his referral.

Mayor Bouley addressed members indicating his hope was that the Rules Committee would review all sections of the current Rules of City Council amending as necessary to: 1) include any current practices not outlined; 2) clarify any areas that the committee felt needed additional definition; and 3) amending, if applicable, any areas that may change as the automated agenda system is implemented.

Committee members discussed the current Rules of the City Council identifying the following sections as areas they wish to discuss in detail and potentially amend. Section 3 (6), (7), (9) and (16), Section 4 (1) A, Sections 5, 6A, 6B, 7, 12 and 15.

Members further discussed that any amendments to the current Rules of the City Council should model the City Charter as well as the City's ethics ordinance.

Committee Chair Councilor St. Hilaire asked Solicitor Kennedy to research and clarify the current Rule 6A as outlined within the current rules document, specifically asking him to determine if this section follows state statutes.

Solicitor Kennedy was also asked to research whether or not a member of City Council present at a given meeting could abstain from voting. Discussion followed among members wondering what, if any, impact abstaining from voting would have on the many items that require 2/3's vote of the whole Council membership for approval. Members also asked Solicitor Kennedy to define quorum and 2/3's vote required. Brief discussion took place as to whether or not the required two-thirds vote of the City Council definition should be clearly defined within the Rules of the City Council as it is within the City Charter.

Members discussed potential additions to the Rules of the City Council documents: 1) potentially adding a section within the rules that states the Mayor, as Chair of the City Council, has the ability to move items around at a given Council meeting without a formal vote of the City Council. An example would be when the order of public hearings is changed at a given meeting to accommodate a large crowd of residents wishing to speak on a given topic; 2) potentially adding, within the Council Rules, the process that is now followed specific to removing items from the consent agenda. Members of City Council contact the City Clerk by noon on Council meeting day notifying her that they wish to pull specific items off the consent agenda for discussion. Pulling items in advance alerts specific staff members to be present at a given meeting to address any concerns by the member pulling the specific item; 3) clarifying what the comments section is to be used for. An example was given that on many occasions items are pulled from the consent agenda just to thank staff for their hard work; perhaps clarifying that members of Council do not need to pull a given item, delaying the vote on that specific item, just to thank staff for their work.

Committee Chair Councilor St. Hilaire noted that it was time to wrap up the meeting as the allotted one hour meeting time had passed. Brief discussion took place as to what days of the week worked best for committee members to meet. Members agreed that Wednesday's at noon, as long as the meetings were only an hour, worked. Next meeting was tentatively set to be held Wednesday, February 11, 2015 at noon.

The time being 1:11 p.m., Committee Chair Councilor St. Hilaire asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilor Bennett moved to adjourn and the motion passed with no dissenting votes.

A true copy; I attest:

Janice Bonenfant
City Clerk