



TOWN OF MANSFIELD
TOWN COUNCIL RULES OF PROCEDURE
Adopted 2/8/2021

BE IT RESOLVED, that under the authority of Section C302 of the Town Charter, the Town Council of the Town of Mansfield does hereby establish its Rules of Procedure as follows. These rules are in effect for the term of office of the Council and shall be adopted at the organizational meeting. Procedural matters not covered by the Town Charter or these Rules of Procedure will be determined by the Mayor, or by the Deputy Mayor in the absence of the Mayor, in accordance with the most recent edition of “Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised.” Ordinarily, the “In Brief” version of Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised will be used.

Rule 1 – Organizational Meeting

Each newly elected Council shall meet for organization at the next regular meeting of the Town Council following the municipal election. During this Organizational Meeting the Town Council shall elect, by a majority vote of all Council members, one of their number to serve as Mayor, who shall preside at Council meetings, and one of their number to serve as Deputy Mayor, who shall serve in the Mayor’s temporary absence. If both are absent, the Council may designate from its membership a temporary presiding officer. At this Organizational Meeting, the Council shall also fix by Resolution the time and place of its regular meetings for the following two-year period, which meetings shall be held at least once a month as required by the Charter. The appointment of a Town Attorney may also take place at this meeting, but said appointment shall take place no later than one month after the election of the Council.

Rule 2 –Meetings

- a) All meetings shall be held in compliance with the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act, Connecticut General Statutes sections 1-200, et seq.
- b) The presence or electronic participation of five members of the Council is necessary for a quorum. Each Council member is asked to notify the Mayor or the Town Manager as soon as possible if the member expects to be absent
- c) Special Meetings of the Town Council may be called by the Mayor, or on the written request of at least three members of the Council, filed with the offices of the Town Manager and Town Clerk not less than 36 hours (excluding Saturday, Sunday, legal

holidays and any day on which the Office of the Town Clerk is officially closed) in advance of such meeting, which request must specify the date, time and business to be transacted at any such Special Meeting. The Town Clerk shall post a notice in the Office of the Town Clerk indicating the time, place and business to be transacted, and copies of this notice shall be served by mail or personally upon each Council member and the Town Manager or left at their usual place of abode at least twenty-four (24) hours prior thereto. The notice shall be placed on the Town's website at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

- d) Emergency Special Meetings may be called by the Mayor or the Town Manager in case of an emergency with at least two hours' notice given to Council members, without complying with the posting of notice requirement, but a copy of the minutes of every such Emergency Special Meeting shall be filed with the Town Clerk not later than 72 hours following the holding of such meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, C.G.S. section 1-225 (d).
- e) Work Sessions are by definition of the Freedom of Information Act, Special Meetings of the Council. In order to preserve the informal and relaxed atmosphere that encourages exchange between members of the Town Council, town government and invited participants, Work Sessions will generally be held prior to the Regular Meeting. Work Sessions may be scheduled by the Mayor or by majority of vote of the Council. All requirements of the Freedom of Information Act that pertain to Special Meetings shall be observed for Work Sessions. Work Sessions will be held to discuss, review, research or explore topics for possible later action. No formal votes may be taken, except for a vote to go into Executive Session.
- f) Joint meetings and hearings may be held with the governing bodies of other governmental entities or agencies and such joint regular or special meetings may be held in the jurisdiction of either body.
- g) Ceremonial presentations to individuals or groups that may include refreshments, may be scheduled prior to the Regular Meeting time in accordance with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act. A notice that the presentation will take place prior to the Regular Meeting will be included on the agenda for that meeting.
- h) The Town Clerk is the Clerk of the Council and shall, in accordance with the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act, keep for public inspection minutes of all its proceedings, including all roll call votes and indicating deliberations, discussions and actions which shall be the official record of Council proceedings. The journal shall be authenticated for each meeting by the signature of the Mayor or Deputy Mayor in the absence of the Mayor. Notes from the meeting indicating all actions shall be available to the public within 48 hours after the meeting and the minutes shall be available and posted on the website within 7 days of the meeting.

- i) The Freedom of Information Act prohibits a quorum of Council members from engaging in discussion about substantive Council business via email.

Rule 3- Agenda of Council Meetings

- a) The Town Manager, in consultation with the Mayor, shall prepare the agenda
- b) Unless altered by a two-thirds vote of the Council, the regular order of business shall be as follows:
 - 1. Call to Order
 - 2. Roll Call
 - 3. Approval of Minutes
 - 4. Public Hearing (if scheduled)
 - 5. Opportunity For Public to Address the Council
 - 6. Report of the Town Manager
 - 7. Reports and Comments of Council Members
 - 8. Consent Agenda (*All consent agenda items are considered routine by Town Council and will be enacted by motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless a Council member requests an item be removed and considered separately.*)
 - 9. Old Business
 - 10. New Business
 - 11. Reports of Council Committees
 - 12. Departmental and Advisory Committee Reports
 - 13. Petitions, Request and Communications
 - 14. Future Agendas
 - 15. Executive Session (if scheduled)
 - 16. Adjournment
- c) Prior to or during the discussion on each item on the agenda the Mayor may call upon the Town Manager, designated staff or other appropriate person for the purpose of background presentation of business to be discussed. Council members may address questions to these individuals.
- d) Unless extenuating circumstances occur, the agenda and all supporting material shall be delivered to the Council not later than the Friday preceding each regular meeting of the Council.
- e) Every effort will be made to ensure that copies of the agenda, minutes and related material distributed with the packet will be made available on the Town's website no later than noon on the Friday preceding each regular meeting of the Council.
- f) Recurring Old Business items shall have an end date to be determined by the Council.

Rule 4 – Public Participation

a) Regular Meetings and Special Meetings

The Town Council welcomes comments from the public. At this time, in accordance with Governor Lamont’s Executive Order 7B as amended from time to time and social distancing guidelines recommended by the CDC to slow community spread of COVID-19, public comments will be accepted via email or USPS mail, or live by phone or virtual platform. Specific instructions for public participation by any of the above means shall be posted at the top of each Town Council agenda.

b) Public Hearings

Public hearings are an opportunity for members of the public to address the Town Council on a specific issue. Public comments may be presented orally or in writing. Written statements received by the Town Clerk prior to the public hearing will be noted on the record and distributed to Council members either in the packet or that evening. Both these letters and written statements presented by speakers during the public hearing shall become part of the minutes. All members of the public so speaking shall identify him/herself by name and address, and if the speaker is speaking for a group or organization, she/he may so state. Public comment at public hearings is limited to five minutes per speaker unless otherwise modified by the Council at the beginning of the hearing.

c) Work Sessions

Work Sessions are an opportunity for the Council, Town Government and invited participants to discuss issues. An opportunity for public comment, other than invited participants, may be set-aside either at the beginning or the end of the Work Session to hear from members of the public who have comments pertaining to the issue at hand.

Rule 5 – Decorum

All meeting participants including Councilors, members of the public and staff should confine their remarks to the substance of the issue at hand. Participants should avoid discussing personalities and not impugn the motive, character or integrity of any individual. The Town Council supports the right of a resident to criticize its local government, but this should be done appropriately and responsibly, with civility and discretion. All participants should address their remarks to the Mayor and maintain a civil tone. These rules of conduct shall also apply to all written correspondence.

Disorderly and disruptive conduct will be handled in accordance with Freedom of Information Act, C.G.S. Section 1-232.

Rule 6- Introduction and Public Hearing of Ordinances

- a) Section C307 of the Charter of the Town of Mansfield provides that “All ordinances introduced by a member of the Council shall be in written form and shall be limited to one subject, which shall be clearly stated in the title.” A copy of the ordinance shall be filed

with the Town Clerk who shall follow the procedures for copying, distribution and notice of the proposed ordinance set forth in Town Charter section C307.

- b) Section C308 of the Town Charter requires that the Town Council shall hold at least one public hearing before any ordinance shall be passed. The Council may also hold more than one public hearing on a proposed ordinance prior to taking final action.
- c) Prior to the Town Council scheduling a public hearing regarding a proposed ordinance, the Town Manager shall present a written fiscal impact analysis to the Council.
- d) The Town Council may discuss a proposed ordinance but may not amend, adopt or reject it on the day the first public hearing is convened in accordance with Section 308 of the Town Charter. This provision may be suspended by a majority vote.

Rule 7- Motions

- a) When a motion is made and seconded it shall be stated by the Mayor or the Town Clerk, if requested. If the motion is made in writing, it shall be read aloud prior to being debated. The motion so made and seconded will be in possession of the Council and subject to amendments or withdrawal.
- b) Motions shall be reduced to writing when requested by the Mayor or by a majority of the whole Council.
- c) When a motion is under debate, no further motion shall be received except to adjourn, to recess, to table, for the previous question, to limit, extend or close debate, to postpone to time certain, to refer to committee, to amend or to postpone indefinitely, which motions shall have precedence in the order indicated.
- d) Motions to adjourn, to lay upon the table and for the previous question shall be decided without debate.
- e) Motions to postpone to a definite time and to limit, extend or close debate at a specific time shall be decided without debate, except with respect to the time fixed, which shall be subject to amendment altering the time.
- f) Motions to refer, to postpone indefinitely or to amend shall be debatable, but only with respect to such a referral, postponement or amendment, and not with respect to the subject matter of the main motion.
- g) Any amendment must be germane to the motion.
- h) Motions to table, to postpone to time certain or to postpone indefinitely, once having been decided, shall not be reconsidered at the same meeting, whereas a motion to refer a matter to a committee can be reconsidered only at the meeting of the vote. Any other motion can be reconsidered only at the same or next succeeding meeting of the Council.

- i) Any motion to reconsider shall be in order only upon motion by a member participating in the prevailing vote of the original motion. Motions to adjourn or to reconsider the previous question shall not be reconsidered.
- j) Any motion under debate, which consists of two or more independent propositions, may be divided by a majority vote of the whole Council.

Rule 8 - Debate

- a) During discussion or debate, no Councilor shall speak unless recognized by the Mayor.
- b) Councilors shall confine their remarks in debate to the pending question.
- c) Any Councilor who knows in advance of a meeting that he /she wishes to obtain certain data or have a question answered, or wishes specific figures or expenditures, or the like, should, insofar as possible, inform the Town Manager in writing of the nature and details of the inquiry, so that the Town Manager will have the opportunity to have the answer available at such meeting.
- d) Any member who realizes or anticipates that he/she has or will have a conflict of interest with respect to a matter before the Council for consideration should announce his or her intention to abstain from voting on the matter as soon as the conflict becomes apparent, and should thereafter refrain from further discussion of or involvement in the matter.

Rule 9 – Standing Committees and Other Committees

- a) There shall be the following standing committees of the Council
 - Committee on Committees
 - Finance Committee
 - Personnel Committee
- b) The Council may create or dissolve committees of the Council by resolution.
- c) The Mayor shall appoint members of the Council to such committees and shall designate the chair of each. The Mayor may announce any adjustments in membership or chairmanship at a regular Council meeting with such changes to be effective at the next regular committee meeting.
- d) All Councilors shall be ex-officio members of the committees to which they are not assigned, but do not have the authority to make motions or to vote.
- e) The Mayor shall make recommendations for appointments of Council members to committees other than the three standing committees of the Council to the Council as a whole for review and consideration.

- f) The agenda for each meeting is set by the supporting staff in consultation with the chair. A meeting may be cancelled by the chair. The chair may schedule special meetings of the committee in consultation with other committee members. An opportunity for public comment shall be included in the agenda, either at the beginning or the end of the meeting, in accordance with the rules governing Public Participation.

Rule 10 – Executive Session

Executive Sessions will be limited to those subjects allowed pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. The reasons for such a session and persons to attend shall be publicly stated. A two-thirds vote of the members of the Council present and voting shall be necessary in order to go into Executive Session.