

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL
held on Monday, November 29, 2021

Discussion: Council Standing Rules and Committee Assignments

Mayor Jordan started the meeting at 8:00 pm., held virtually via Zoom.

In attendance were Councilmembers Colin A. Byrd, Judith F. Davis, Brandon R. Gordon, Silke I. Pope, Rodney M. Roberts, Kristen L. K. Weaver, and Mayor Emmett V. Jordan.

City Staff: Timothy George, Acting City Manager, and Bonita Anderson, City Clerk.

Others in attendance: Bill Orleans and others.

Mayor Jordan initiated work session as follows:

- Review Council rules and proposed a significant change to the agenda.
- He suggested moving the “Petitions and Requests” section to the beginning of meetings for Public input, specifically between 7:30 and 8:00 PM.
- Mayor Jordan stressed that Council Rules govern the conduct of meetings and work sessions as established by City Charter and adhering to other procedural guidelines.
- At inception of each term, Council reviews rules to assess their efficacy and apply any modifications as necessary.
- Mayor Jordan proposed methods for the public to submit their petitions and requests to council or city clerk before or during meeting.
- Additionally, he expressed support for adding items onto Tuesday’s Agenda. Also implementing a system where one Council member must agree with another before new items can be placed on the agenda. Possibly discussing moving deadlines for Agenda items earlier and underscored the importance adequate documentation prior to Agenda addition.
- Suggestions for any to improvement of comfort and security modifications to the current format for conducting meetings could be explored via alternatives to Zoom.

Ms. Weaver inquired about the timing and structure of the petition segment during Council meetings. Specifically, she raised the question of whether petitions should be addressed prior to the start of the meeting or if the meeting should begin earlier to incorporate initial petitions into the regular agenda.

Ms. Weaver expressed her preference against using Teams, recommending instead the adoption of Zoom webinar for enhanced engagement.

Ms. Davis expressed opposition to the proposed changes handling petitions during meetings, emphasizing that currently, all attendees hear the petitions, which fosters public engagement. She raised concerns that the new setup would limit visibility to only Council, potentially reducing interaction. While acknowledging the Mayor's intention to streamline meeting minutes, she argued that managing petitioners and Council's responses is crucial.

Ms. Davis suggested limiting the number of proclamations and allowing comments after each to shorten meetings. She stressed the importance of concise communication, noting that succinct reports are more likely to be impactful. She agreed to discuss moving the agenda release date to a day earlier and recommended that Council members review the Rules of Order, suggesting that not all rules need revisiting. Additionally, she proposed clarifying that external parties can request meetings with Council.

Ms. Davis introduced a new rule for virtual meetings, advocating that Council members must always be present online, as the future of meetings will likely be hybrid rather than solely in-person.

Mr. Roberts expressed concerns changing the format could reduce interaction between the City Council and residents. He supported Ms. Davis's position stating the need to improve meeting management by limiting sessions to two (2) hours. He also suggested moving any unfinished Agenda items to the beginning of the next meeting.

Ms. Pope emphasized the need for increased efficiency in Council meetings, stating that an 8:00 p.m. start time is no longer feasible. She recommended that meetings begin at 7:00 p.m., allowing attendees 30 minutes to arrive and submit their petitions, with the actual Council session starting at 7:30 p.m. She agreed with the majority regarding the necessity for changes, citing that meetings tend to be too lengthy.

Ms. Pope also suggested last-minute agenda additions be addressed in a separate work session for public consideration.

Proposing that two council members agree to add items to the agenda. She then advocated for reviewing the agenda a week in advance. She concurred with Ms. Davis about the importance of Council members being visible on camera during meetings, recommending that cameras only be turned off briefly. She mentioned need for etiquette rules regarding camera use and dress code for Zoom meetings, referencing an email she previously sent on the topic.

Mr. Byrd thanked the Mayor for considering ways to streamline council procedures and expressed agreement with Ms. Pope on the need for earlier meeting start times, recommending 7:00 p.m. or 7:30 p.m. He emphasized the importance of accommodating each other's schedules, noting that having two meetings is reasonable and that many municipalities face similar productivity issues.

Mr. Byrd criticized the current practice of distributing the agenda on Fridays, stating that it leaves insufficient time to address errors. He proposed that the agenda be provided to council and the public one additional business day earlier for practicality. He suggested submitting agenda additions on Monday or Tuesday rather than Wednesday to allow for better preparation.

Mr. Gordon supported moving up the meeting time and allowing the public to pre-record their "Petitions and Requests." He criticized adding items to the agenda the day before meetings, stating timing doesn't allow for proper consideration. He underscored that agenda descriptions often lack sufficient detail, especially for items requiring Council action. He shared that comprehensive background information with supporting documents be provided. He also noted that with two (2) meetings scheduled each week, there is flexibility to postpone some items to the following week if necessary.

Information items:

Ms. Davis reminded Council that the deadline for comments on Prince George's Climate Action Plan is tomorrow proposing the City formally accepts the plan. While Council cannot vote on it now sending a letter of support with a vote to follow at the next meeting would suffice.

The Mayor endorsed Ms. Davis's proposal and confirmed its circulation among Council members.

The Council retreat is as follows:

- Scheduled to be held in Council Chambers @ 2:00 p.m.
- The focus team-building activities.
- Mr. Gordon supported the idea of a stand-alone retreat for this purpose.

Mr. George noted Ms. Novack from the Novack Group is only available for their meeting on December 4, 2021, an additional meeting likely in January, 2022. The proposed dates for reviewing the ARPA Plan and the Pre-Budget Meeting are set for January 20 or 22, 2022

Ms. Davis requested a pre-budget meeting to clarify proposed dates. The Mayor confirmed that the Saturday meeting will be in person and discussed legislative priorities, including MML and PGCMA. He noted potential delays with organizational priorities.

Mayor shared that the Council retreat details would be posted on the city's website and other channels, although attendance may be limited. Ms. Davis recommended attendees bring vaccination cards and wear masks. The meeting ended at 10:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Bonita Anderson

Bonita Anderson
City Clerk