

Motion 4. Call to Follow the Agenda. The motion must be made at the first reasonable opportunity, or the right to make it is waived for the out-of-order item in question.

Comment: This motion is patterned on the call for the orders of the day in *RONR*. It differs in that it may be debated; also, unless the motion is made when the item of business that deviates from the agenda is proposed, the right to insist on following the agenda is waived for that item.

Motion 5. To Suspend the Rules. The council may not suspend provisions of the rules that state requirements imposed by law on the council. For adoption, the motion requires a vote equal to two-thirds of the actual membership of the council, excluding the mayor, unless he or she may vote in all cases, and vacant seats.

Comment: This motion is generally the same as the *RONR* motion to suspend the rules, except that it is debatable and amendable. It is in order when the council wishes to do something that it may legally do but cannot accomplish without violating its own rules. The motion permits the council to exercise greater flexibility and perhaps informality than adhering strictly to the rules might allow. For example, the council might use this motion to allow it to consider an agenda item out of order, without formally amending the agenda that it had adopted.

A motion to suspend the rules requires approval by two-thirds of the actual membership of the council to pass. Note that the mayor is counted for purposes of determining two-thirds of the council only if he or she has the right to vote on all questions, and that vacant seats are excluded in making the two-thirds determination.

The two-thirds requirement is imposed since some council actions by statute require a two-thirds vote to pass. These actions could not be undone through a suspension of the rules unless two-thirds of the council wished to undo them.

The procedure described will pose some problems on a three-member council, because the rule can be manipulated so as to prevent one member from participating in the council's deliberations. Frequent use of the motion to prevent one member from presenting his or her proposals to the council or from speaking on an issue before the council is of doubtful legality. A three-member council may decide to require a unanimous vote for this motion to pass.

Motion 6. To Go into Closed Session. The council may go into closed session only for one or more of the permissible purposes listed in G.S. 143-318.11(a). The motion to go into closed session shall cite one or more of these purposes and shall be adopted at an open meeting. A motion based on G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1) shall also state the name or citation of the law that renders the information to be discussed privileged or confidential. A motion based on G.S. 143-318(a)(3) shall identify the parties in each existing lawsuit concerning which the council expects to receive advice during the closed session, if in fact such advice is to be received.

Comment: The requirements for this motion are found in G.S. 143-318.11(c). They include extra requirements for motions based on G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1), and for those motions based on G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3) that concern a closed session where the council expects to receive advice about an existing lawsuit or lawsuits. G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1), cited in the rule, allows closed sessions “[t]o prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential pursuant to the law of [North Carolina] or the United States, or not considered a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes.” Part of G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3), also cited, allows the council in closed session to “consider and give instructions to an attorney concerning the handling or settlement of a claim, judicial action, mediation, arbitration, or administrative procedure.”

Motion 7. To Leave Closed Session.

Comment: This motion provides a procedural mechanism for returning from closed session to an open meeting. Under the open meetings law, public bodies probably must return to open session once they have concluded their closed session business, even if they have no other business to transact except adjourning the meeting.

Motion 8. To Divide a Complex Motion and Consider It by Paragraph. The motion is in order whenever a member wishes to consider and vote on subparts of a complex motion separately.

Comment: This motion is the same as the two motions division of a question and consideration by paragraph in *RONR*, except that it is debatable.

Motion 9. To Defer Consideration. The council may defer a substantive motion for later consideration at an unspecified time. A substantive motion the consideration of which has been deferred expires 100 days thereafter unless a motion to revive consideration is adopted. If consideration of a motion has been deferred, a new motion with the same effect cannot be introduced while the deferred motion remains pending (has not expired). A member who wishes to revisit the matter during that time must take action to revive consideration of the original motion [Rule 18(b), Motion 14], or else move to suspend the rules [Rule 18(b), Motion 5].

Comment: This motion allows the council temporarily to defer consideration of a proposal. It may be debated and amended. A motion that has been deferred dies if it is not taken up by the council (via a motion to revive consideration, Rule 18(b), Motion 14) within a specified number of days of the vote to defer consideration. One hundred days is merely a suggested period of time. Note the restriction on making a new motion with the same effect while a motion remains deferred.

This motion should be distinguished from the motion to postpone to a certain time or day (Rule 18, Motion 11). A matter that has been postponed to a certain time or day is brought up again automatically when that time arrives. Council action (approval of a motion to revive consideration) is required, however, before the council may again consider a substantive motion of

which the consideration has been deferred under this motion.

Motion 10. Motion for the Previous Question. The motion is not in order until there have been at least 15 minutes of debate, and every member has had an opportunity to speak once.

Comment: This motion differs from the motion of a similar name in *RONR*. The *RONR* motion is always in order, is not debatable or amendable, and requires a two-thirds vote for adoption. Thus it may be used to compel an immediate vote on a proposal without any debate on the issue. Such a device may be necessary to preserve efficiency in a large assembly. With a small board, however, a minimum period of debate on every proposal that comes before it strikes a better balance between efficiency and effective representation by all council members. Since every member will have an opportunity to speak, the debate may be ended by a majority vote. Twenty minutes is merely a suggested period of time.

Note that this rule avoids the practice followed by some boards of allowing any member to end debate by simply saying "call the question," without the council actually taking a vote on that procedural issue. Such a practice is contrary to regular parliamentary procedures. In addition, it allows individual members to impose their will unilaterally on the group, in defiance of the principle of majority rule on which these rules are based.

Motion 11. To Postpone to a Certain Time or Day. If consideration of a motion has been postponed, a new motion with the same effect cannot be introduced while the postponed motion remains pending. A member who wishes to revisit the matter must either wait until the specified time, or move to suspend the rules [Rule 18(b), Motion 5].

Comment: This motion allows the council to postpone consideration to a specified time or day and is appropriate when more information is needed or the deliberations are likely to be lengthy. It should be distinguished from the motion to defer consideration (see *Comment* to Rule 18(b), Motion 9). Note the restriction on making a new motion with the same effect while a postponed motion remains pending.

Motion 12. To Refer a Motion to a Committee. The council may vote to refer a substantive motion to a committee for its study and recommendations. Sixty days or more after a substantive motion has been referred to a committee, the introducer of the substantive motion may compel consideration of the measure by the entire council, whether or not the committee has reported the matter to the council.

Comment: This motion is the same as the motion of the same name in *RONR*, except that the right of the introducer to compel consideration by the full council after a specified period of time prevents using the motion as a mechanism to defeat a proposal by referring it to a committee that

is willing to "sit" on it. If the council does not use committees, this motion is unnecessary.

Motion 13. To Amend. (a) An amendment to a motion must be pertinent to the subject matter of the motion. An amendment is improper if adoption of the motion with that amendment added would have the same effect as rejection of the original motion. A proposal to substitute completely different wording for a motion or an amendment shall be treated as a motion to amend.

(b) A motion may be amended, and that amendment may be amended, but no further amendments may be made until the last-offered amendment is disposed of by a vote.

(c) Any amendment to a proposed ordinance or policy shall be reduced to writing before the vote on the amendment.

Comment: This motion is similar to the motion to amend in *RONR* except for the additional requirement to write down amendments to longer, typically more complex items such as ordinances or resolutions, discussed below.

The restriction on amendments stated in part 13(a), second sentence, of the provisions concerning this motion should be read narrowly; it is intended only to prevent an amendment that merely negates the provisions of the original motion. The intent of such an amendment can be achieved in a simpler and more straightforward manner by the defeat of the original proposal. Pertinent amendments that make major substantive changes in the original motion are quite proper.

Some councils allow a "substitute motion" when major changes in a motion are proposed. Such a motion is in effect a type of amendment. To avoid confusion, "substitute motions" are not allowed under these rules. All proposals for changes in a motion or in an amendment are treated as motions to amend, no matter how major their potential effect.

Part 13(b) of the rules governing this motion limits the number of proposed amendments that may be pending at one time to two, in order to reduce confusion. Amendments are voted on in reverse order; that is, the last-offered amendment, which would amend the first amendment, is voted on first. Once the last-offered of the two pending amendments is disposed of, an additional amendment may be offered.

Part 13(c) of the rules for this motion imposes an additional writing requirement for amendments to ordinances and other, sometimes lengthy, documents such as orders, policies, or resolutions. While the council may choose the types of items to which it wishes the writing requirement to apply, the rule assumes that amendments to proposed ordinances, like the ordinances themselves, should be in written form before they are voted on, both because of the importance of ordinances and to make it easier to maintain the required ordinance book (see G.S. 160A-78) and the minutes of the council accurately [see G.S. 160A-72 and 143-318.10(e)]. Similarly, amendments to orders, policies, and resolutions should be in written form before they are voted on, because of their significance and to make it easier to record them in the minutes.

Some councils may have a practice of requiring the person making the original motion to approve

of any proposed amendments to that motion. Such a practice is not recommended. Once a motion has been offered to the council, it is up to the council to decide whether or not it should be changed by amendment. If the person making the motion does not favor a proposed amendment, he or she is free to vote against it. And so long as the original motion has not been voted on and no amendment to it has passed, the introducer is free under these rules to withdraw it (see Rule 20). If a motion has been withdrawn, the council members are generally free to make their own separate motions on the same subject.

Motion 14. To Revive Consideration. The board may vote to revive consideration of any substantive motion earlier deferred by adoption of Motion 9 of Rule 18(b). The motion is in order at any time within 100 days after the day of a vote to defer consideration. A substantive motion on which consideration has been deferred expires 100 days after the deferral unless a motion to revive consideration is adopted.

Comment: This motion replaces the motion "to take up from the table" in *RONR* and was renamed in order to avoid confusion. This motion may be debated and amended, whereas the motion in *RONR* may not. If the motion to revive consideration is not successful within the specified number of days of the date on which consideration was deferred, the substantive motion expires. Its subject matter may be brought forward again by a new motion. One hundred days is merely a suggested period of time; the number of days specified here should be the same as in Rule 18(b), Motion 9.

Motion 15. To Reconsider. The council may vote to reconsider its action on a matter. The motion to do so must be made by a member who voted with the prevailing side (the majority side except in the case of a tie; in that case the "nos" prevail) and at the meeting during which the original vote was taken, including any continuation of that meeting through recess [or adjournment] to a time and place certain. The motion cannot interrupt deliberation on a pending matter, but is in order at any time before final adjournment of the meeting.

Comment: According to *RONR*, the motion may be made at the same meeting as the vote being reconsidered or on the next legal day and may interrupt deliberation on another matter. To avoid placing a measure in limbo, these rules restrict the availability of the motion to the same meeting as the original vote, including any continuation of that meeting if it is recessed or adjourned to a time and place certain pursuant to Rule 2(c) and Rule 18(b), Motion 2. If a member wishes to reverse an action taken at a previous meeting, he or she may generally make a new motion having the opposite effect of the prior action. Note that in some cases reversal may not be possible; for example, where rights have vested because of the original vote, or where a binding contract has already been signed in reliance on that decision. The motion to reconsider is permitted under these rules only when action on a pending matter concludes.

Motion 16. To Rescind or Repeal. The council may vote to rescind actions it has previously taken or to repeal items that it has previously adopted. The motion is not in order if rescission or repeal of an action is forbidden by law.

Comment: Each meeting of a city council is in many respects a separate legal event. Unless

prohibited by law, a council may at a subsequent meeting "undo" action taken at a previous meeting.

It should be noted for the sake of technical correctness that while *RONR* and these rules treat the motion to rescind as a procedural motion because it acts upon a substantive motion, it is probably more correct in many ways to regard the rescission motion as a new substantive motion in its own right. The motion that it changes is a substantive motion that was adopted at a previous meeting. The substantive action has been completed, and the motion is no longer really "alive" to be modified procedurally as it was at the meeting at which it was adopted.

The motion to rescind is in order only for those measures adopted by the council that can legally be repealed or rescinded. It is not intended to suggest that the council may unilaterally rescind a binding contract, or may repeal an action where a person's rights have already vested.

Motion 17. To Prevent Reintroduction for Six Months. The motion shall be in order immediately following the defeat of a substantive motion and at no other time. The motion requires for adoption a vote equal to two-thirds of the actual membership of the council excluding the mayor, unless he or she may vote in all cases, and vacant seats. If adopted, the restriction imposed by the motion remains in effect for six months or until the next organizational meeting of the council, whichever occurs first.

Comment: This is a "clincher" motion to prevent the same motion from being continually introduced when the subject has been thoroughly considered. There is no comparable motion in *RONR*, although the objection to consideration of a question accomplishes much the same purpose.

Because this motion curtails a member's right to bring a matter before the council, the required vote is two-thirds of the actual membership of the council, excluding the mayor, unless he or she is entitled to vote on all matters, and excluding vacant seats. This supermajority requirement is imposed because such a two-thirds vote is needed for the council to adopt certain items. The same number of votes should be required if the council is to forbid dealing further with such an issue. Thus if a council has seven members, a nonvoting mayor, and no vacant seats, five members (enough to equal two-thirds or more of seven) must vote for the motion. If the same council has one vacant seat, four members (two-thirds of six) must vote for it.

As with every other motion, a clincher motion may, in effect, be dissolved by a motion to suspend the rules [see Rule 18(b), Motion 5]. Six months is merely a suggested time; the council may shorten or lengthen the time as it sees fit. In order to give a new council a clean slate, the motion is not effective beyond the next organizational meeting of the council.

Rule 19. Renewal of Motion

A motion that is defeated may be renewed at any later meeting unless a motion to prevent reintroduction has been adopted.

Comment: As noted in the *Comment* to Rule 18(b), Motion 16, in North Carolina each meeting of

a city council is in many respects a separate, new event. Thus, while matters of old business may be carried over from one meeting to another, it is also the case that matters that are disposed of at one meeting may be brought up again at a subsequent meeting through a new motion, unless a motion to prevent reintroduction was previously adopted [Rule 18(b), Motion 17].

Rule 20. Withdrawal of Motion

A motion may be withdrawn by the introducer at any time before it is amended or before the presiding officer puts the motion to a vote, whichever occurs first.

Comment: *RONR* provides that once a motion has been stated by the presiding officer for debate, it cannot be withdrawn without the assembly's consent. Such a procedure is unnecessary for a small board. However, this rule does prohibit withdrawing motions after they have been amended. Once a motion has been amended, it is no longer the same motion as was made by the introducer, so it is no longer his or hers to withdraw.

Rule 21. Duty to Vote

Every member must vote unless excused by the remaining members according to law. A member who wishes to be excused from voting shall so inform the presiding officer, who shall take a vote of the remaining members. No member shall be excused from voting except upon matters involving the consideration of his or her own financial interest or official conduct. In all other cases, a failure to vote by a member who is physically present in the council chamber, or who has withdrawn without being excused by a majority vote of the remaining members present, shall be recorded as an affirmative vote.

Comment: This rule states most of the requirements of the first paragraph of G.S. 160A-75.

Rule 22. Introduction of Ordinances

A proposed ordinance shall be deemed to be introduced on the date the subject matter is first voted on by the council.

Comment: G.S. 160A-75 provides that an ordinance may not be finally adopted at the meeting at which it is introduced except by a two-thirds vote of all the actual membership of the council, excluding vacant seats and not including the mayor unless he or she has the right to vote on all questions before the council. The statute also specifies that an ordinance is deemed to be introduced "on the date the subject matter is first voted on by the council." A "vote on the subject matter" is not defined; some authorities think that a vote on the ordinance itself is required, while others think that any vote pertaining to the ordinance's subject matter (for example, a vote to refer the subject of an ordinance to a committee for further study) is sufficient to satisfy the definition. The city attorney should be consulted for guidance on this matter.

Rule 23. Adoption of Ordinances and Approval of Contracts

(a) **Generally.** An affirmative vote equal to a majority of all the members of the council not excused from voting on the question in issue (including the mayor's vote in case of an equal division) shall be required to adopt an ordinance, to take any action that has the effect of an ordinance, or to make, ratify, or authorize any contract on behalf of the city. In addition, no ordinance or action that has the effect of an ordinance may be finally adopted on the date on which it is introduced except by an affirmative vote equal to or greater than two-thirds of all the actual membership of the council, excluding vacant seats, and not including the mayor unless he or she has the right to vote on all questions before the council. No ordinance shall be adopted unless it has been reduced to writing before a vote on adoption is taken.

Comment: This rule paraphrases the special voting requirements in the second paragraph of G.S. 160A-75 for adoption of ordinances and approval of contracts. (Special voting rules for authorizing or committing the expenditure of public funds are also found in this paragraph. In most cases, however, these latter requirements are superseded by the more specific provisions of G.S. 159-17 detailed in Rule 24.)

See Rule 22 and the accompanying *Comment* for the definition of "introduction" of an ordinance. Although it may seem obvious that ordinances should be in writing before they are voted on (see, for example, the requirements of Rule 4(a) concerning copies of proposed ordinances), this requirement is stated explicitly so that there can be no doubt on the matter. See also Procedural Motion 13 in Rule 18(b) concerning amendment of ordinances, and G.S. 160A-76(a) for requirements for franchises, including the requirement of adoption of franchise ordinances at two regular meetings.

b) **Zoning Protest Petitions.** An affirmative vote equal to three-fourths of all the members of the city council shall be required for an ordinance making a change in a zoning regulation, restriction, or boundary to become effective, if a valid protest petition is received in accordance with the requirements set out in G.S. 160A-385(a) and G.S. 160A-386. This rule shall not apply in those cases excepted by G.S. 160A-385(a).

Comment: This paragraph states the three-fourths vote requirement of G.S. 160A-385(a), which applies when neighboring property owners, as defined in the statute, protest a proposed rezoning and file a proper petition with the city clerk in a timely manner under G.S. 160A-386. Some zoning changes such as initial zonings of property added to the ordinance's coverage, and certain amendments to adopted special or conditional use districts, are not covered by the three-fourths vote requirement. These exceptions are specified in G.S. 160A-385(a). The three-fourths rule applies to zoning ordinances *only*.

Rule 24. Adoption of the Budget Ordinance

Notwithstanding the provisions of any city charter, general law, or local act:

- (1) Any action with respect to the adoption or amendment of the budget ordinance may be taken at any regular or special meeting of the council by a simple majority of

- those present and voting, a quorum being present;
- (2) No action taken with respect to the adoption or amendment of the budget ordinance need be published or is subject to any other procedural requirement governing the adoption of ordinances or resolutions by the council; and
 - (3) The adoption and amendment of the budget ordinance and the levy of taxes in the budget ordinance are not subject to the provisions of any city charter or local act concerning initiative or referendum.

During the period beginning with the submission of the budget to the council and ending with the adoption of the budget ordinance, the council may hold any special meetings that may be necessary to complete its work on the budget ordinance. Except for the notice requirements of the open meetings law, which continue to apply, no provision of law concerning the call of special meetings applies during that period so long as (a) each member of the board has actual notice of each special meeting called for the purpose of considering the budget, and (b) no business other than consideration of the budget is taken up. This rule does not allow, and may not be construed to allow, the holding of closed meetings or executive sessions by the council if it is otherwise prohibited by law from holding such a meeting or session.

Comment: This rule is G.S. 159-17 with minor modifications. G.S. 159-17 also provides that no general law, city charter, or local act that is enacted or takes effect after July 1, 1973, may be construed to modify, amend, or repeal any portion of this law unless it expressly so provides by specific reference to it. Since the notice requirements of the Open Meeting Law continue to apply to meetings held to work on the budget ordinance, the only practical effect of the second paragraph of this rule is to eliminate the need for any special notification of council members concerning such meetings. Many councils find it useful procedurally when working on the budget simply to recess or adjourn a single meeting several times until they have finished their work [see Rule 2(c)].

Rule 25. Special Rules of Procedure

The board may adopt its own special rules of procedure, to be specified here.

Comment: Some boards may wish to provide special rules for certain situations, either because of statutory requirements or other concerns.

Rule 26. Closed Sessions

The council may hold closed sessions as provided by law. The council shall only commence a closed session after a motion to go into closed session has been made and adopted during an open meeting. The motion shall state the purpose of the closed session. If the motion is based on G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1) (closed session to prevent the disclosure of privileged or confidential information or information that is not considered a public record), it must also state the name or citation of the law that renders the information to be discussed privileged or confidential. If the motion is based on G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3)

(consultation with attorney; handling or settlement of claims, judicial actions, or administrative procedures), it must identify the parties in any existing lawsuits concerning which the public body expects to receive advice during the closed session. The motion to go into closed session must be approved by the vote of a majority of those present and voting. The council shall terminate the closed session by a majority vote.

Only those actions authorized by statute may be taken in closed session. A motion to adjourn or recess shall not be in order during a closed session.

Comment: This rule states some of the requirements of G.S. 143-318.11(c) for calling closed sessions. In particular, note the special requirements for motions to call closed sessions that are based on G.S. 143-318.11(a)(1) or, in some cases, on G.S. 143-318.11(a)(3). No attempt is made here to set forth all of the provisions of the open meetings law concerning the purposes for which closed sessions may be held and the actions that may be taken in closed session; specific information can be found in G.S. 143-318.11(a). Note, however, that adjournment is not an action authorized by statute to be taken during a closed session. Minutes and general accounts of closed sessions are discussed in Rule 30.

Rule 27. Quorum

A majority of the actual membership of the council plus the mayor, excluding vacant seats, shall constitute a quorum. A majority is more than half. A member who has withdrawn from a meeting without being excused by majority vote of the remaining members present shall be counted as present for purposes of determining whether or not a quorum is present.

Comment: This is G.S. 160A-74, with the addition of the usual definition of "majority." Note that the mayor is counted for quorum purposes regardless of whether he or she has the right to vote on all questions.

Rule 28. Public Hearings

Public hearings required by law or deemed advisable by the council shall be organized by a special order (adopted by a majority vote) that sets forth the subject, date, place, and time of the hearing as well as any rules regarding the length of time allotted for each speaker, and other pertinent matters. The rules may include, but are not limited to, rules (a) fixing the maximum time allotted to each speaker; (b) providing for the designation of spokespersons for groups of persons supporting or opposing the same positions; (c) providing for the selection of delegates from groups of persons supporting or opposing the same positions when the number of persons wishing to attend the hearing exceeds the capacity of the hall (so long as arrangements are made, in the case of hearings subject to the open meetings law, for those excluded from the hall to listen to the hearing); and (d) providing for the maintenance of order and decorum in the conduct of the hearing.

All notice and other requirements of the open meetings law applicable to council

meetings shall also apply to public hearings at which a majority of the council is present; such a hearing is considered to be part of a regular or special meeting of the council. These requirements also apply to hearings conducted by appointed or elected committees of the council, if a majority of the committee is present. A public hearing for which any notices required by the open meetings law or other provisions of law have been given may be continued to a time and place certain without further advertisement. The requirements of Rule 2(c) shall be followed in continuing a hearing at which a majority of the council is present.

The council may vote to delegate to city staff members, as appropriate, the authority to schedule, call, and give notice of public hearings required by law or the council. The council shall provide adequate guidelines to assist staff members in fulfilling this responsibility, and it shall not delegate the responsibility in cases where the council itself is required by law to call, schedule, or give notice of the hearing.

At the time appointed for the hearing, the mayor or his or her designee shall call the hearing to order and then preside over it. When the allotted time expires or when no one wishes to speak who has not done so, the presiding officer shall entertain or make a motion to end the hearing.

Comment: City councils may be required or may desire to hold public hearings from time to time concerning particular matters. G.S. 160A-81 provides that public hearings may be held at any place within the city or within the county where the city is located. It also gives the council the authority to adopt reasonable rules governing the conduct of the hearing (specifically including the type of rules listed here) and to continue public hearings without further advertisement.

Public hearings, like other council meetings, are also subject to the notice, continuation, and other requirements of the open meetings law, if a majority of the council is present at the hearing, since legally such a hearing is part of a meeting of the board. Appointed or elected committees of the council are also covered by this law. These requirements are reflected in this rule. In keeping with the spirit of the open meetings law, the rule requires that all persons desiring to be present at a hearing covered by that law be given the opportunity to listen to the proceedings—outside the meeting room, if necessary—if the room is too small to accommodate all of them. Informational hearings that involve less than a majority of the council and that do not involve a council committee are discussed in the *Comment* to Rule 29.

Some councils allow staff members to schedule, call, and give notice of public hearings on the council's behalf. This rule allows for that practice, except where otherwise limited by law, but it also requires an explicit delegation of authority by the council and clear guidelines for the exercise of the delegated authority. Courts are often very particular about the procedural requirements for public hearings. It is important that the council insure that staff members are not acting "on their own" but with properly delegated authorization from the council, when they schedule, call, and give notice of public hearings.

Some councils vote to open and close public hearings, while others simply allow the mayor or other presiding officer to declare the hearing open and closed. Either practice is acceptable, and the council may choose either option as its rule.

Rule 29. Quorum at Public Hearings

A quorum of the council shall be required at all public hearings required by state law. If a quorum is not present at such a hearing, the hearing shall be continued until the next regular council meeting without further advertisement.

Comment: G.S. 160A-81 implies that a quorum of council members is necessary for a public hearing by providing that a hearing shall be deferred to the next regular meeting if a quorum is not present at the originally scheduled time. If, however, the council decided to hold a public hearing that was not required by state law to gather a consensus of public opinion on an issue, it could hold the hearing at several sites, with a few members in attendance at each place. Such a hearing would not be subject to the quorum requirement of G.S. 160A-81. Note also that if a majority of the council was not present at such a hearing, it would not be subject to the notice, continuation, and other requirements of the open meetings law, unless the council members conducting the hearing were a majority of an appointed or elected council committee (see Rule 32).

Rule 30. Minutes

Full and accurate minutes of the council proceedings, including closed sessions, shall be kept. The board shall also keep a general account of any closed session so that a person not in attendance would have a reasonable understanding of what transpired. These minutes and general accounts shall be open to inspection of the public, except as otherwise provided in this rule. The exact wording of each motion and the results of each vote shall be recorded in the minutes, and on the request of any member of the council, the "ayes" and "nos" upon any question shall be taken. Members' and other persons' comments may be included in the minutes if the council approves.

Minutes and general accounts of closed sessions may be sealed by action of the council. Such sealed minutes and general accounts may be withheld from public inspection so long as public inspection would frustrate the purpose of the closed session.

Comment: G.S. 160A-72 requires that full and accurate council minutes be maintained, and G.S. 143-318.10(e) requires that full and accurate minutes be kept of all official meetings of all public bodies, including closed sessions [G.S. 143-318.11(a)]. The minutes are the official legal record of council actions and are a matter of public record. To be "full and accurate," they must include all actions taken by the council and must note the existence of conditions needed to take action, such as the existence of a quorum. However, the minutes need not record the council's discussion.

Particular comments by members or other persons may be included in the minutes if the council so desires. Since the council usually takes action by motion (Rule 10), all motions that are made must be included in the minutes, along with a record of the motions' disposition. G.S. 160A-72 also allows any member to request that the minutes include a record of how each member voted (the "ayes and nos").

Under the open meetings law, the council must also keep a "general account" of what transpires in closed sessions, so that a person not in attendance would have a reasonable understanding of what transpired. This wording probably requires that a somewhat more detailed account of these

sessions be kept than would typically be found in the minutes, especially if the minutes record only actions and conditions needed to take action. The council should consult the city attorney and the bulletins mentioned in the next paragraph concerning what general accounts of closed sessions should include.

Finally, the rule includes the permission granted in G.S. 143-318.11(e) to withhold minutes and general accounts of closed sessions from public inspection for as long as necessary to avoid frustrating the purpose of the closed session. The council should vote to seal these records if it wishes to do so or is advised to do so by its attorney. It must also provide for their unsealing, either by council action or by action of an agent of the council such as the city attorney, if and when the closed session's purpose would no longer be frustrated by making these records public. For a discussion of the legal requirements for minutes and general accounts of closed sessions, see the following publications by David M. Lawrence: "1997 Changes to the Open Meetings and Public Records Laws," *Local Government Law Bulletin* 80 (August 1997) and "The Court of Appeals Addresses Closed Sessions for Attorney-Client Discussions," *Local Government Law Bulletin* 93 (March 2000).

Rule 31. Appointments

The council may consider and make appointments to other bodies, including its own committees, if any, only in open session. The council may not consider or fill a vacancy among its own membership except in open session.

The mayor shall not have a right to vote on appointments that come before the council.

Rather than proceeding by motion, the council shall use the following procedure to make appointments to various other boards and offices: The mayor shall open the floor for nominations, whereupon the names of possible appointees may be put forward by the council members. The names submitted by individual council members shall be debated. When the debate ends, the mayor shall call the roll of the members, and each member shall cast his or her vote.

The voting shall continue until one nominee receives a majority of the votes cast, whereupon he or she shall be appointed. If more than one appointee is to be selected, then each member shall have as many votes in each balloting as there are slots to be filled, and votes from a majority of the members voting shall be required for appointment. During each balloting, a member may cast all of his or her votes or fewer than all of them, but he or she shall not cast more than one vote for a single candidate.

Comment: The first paragraph of this rule states some of the requirements of the open meetings law concerning appointments by the council. If the council wishes to vote by written ballot, it should consult Rule 15, which states the requirements of the open meetings law for use of written ballots by public bodies.

As noted in the *Comment* to Rule 7, under G.S. 160A-69, mayors generally have the right to vote only when there are equal numbers of votes in the affirmative and the negative. In an election where appointees are being chosen, no "yes" and "no" votes are cast, and a mayor who votes only

to break ties cannot vote. On the other hand, a mayor who is allowed by law to vote on all questions can vote for appointments, just as he or she can vote for anything else.

The procedure outlined uses nominations, rather than a motion and vote for each individual candidate. A nomination procedure allows all council members an opportunity both to propose and to vote for their preferred candidates, and it avoids situations such as the following.

Suppose that the Colorful City Council uses motions to appoint persons to various positions. After being recognized by the mayor, council member Smith moves to appoint candidate Green. This causes a quandary for council member Jones. She likes candidate Green, but her first preference is candidate Black. However, she is afraid that if candidate Green is defeated, another council member may be recognized to nominate candidate White, whom she dislikes intensely, before she is recognized to nominate candidate Black. Should she vote for candidate Green, improving his chances of winning, or hold out for the chance to do battle with White's nominator in catching the mayor's eye?

By contrast, if the Colorful Council were to follow the nomination and election procedure, it could avoid such fights and give everyone a chance to vote for the candidate of their choosing.

Several councils use an appointment committee. The committee receives nominations from the council members, reviews the nominees' qualifications, and reports its recommendations to the full council. This procedure is provided for by the optional language in the second paragraph of the rule. Many councils also use public advertisements to solicit applications for appointment from citizens.

If an appointment committee is used, at least one other voting option besides those listed in the rule is available for multiple appointments to a single board. The council may require the appointment committee to submit a slate containing as many nominees as there are vacancies to be filled on a particular board. Each council member then votes for or against the slate as presented.

See Rule 32 concerning the applicability of the open meetings law to all council committees, including the appointment committee.

Rule 32. Amendment of the Rules

These rules may be amended at any regular meeting or at any properly called special meeting that includes amendment of the rules as one of the stated purposes of the meeting, so long as the amendment is consistent with the city charter, general law, and generally accepted principles of parliamentary procedure. Adoption of an amendment shall require an affirmative vote equal to or greater than two-thirds of all the actual membership of the council, excluding vacant seats, and not including the mayor unless he or she has the right to vote on all questions before the council.

Comment: City councils may generally amend their rules of procedure whenever they choose, so long as the amendment, like the rules being amended, is consistent with the city charter, general law, and generally accepted principles of parliamentary procedure. G.S. 160A-71(c). Because certain board actions require a two-thirds vote (see, for example, some of the requirements in Rule


23(a), which implements G.S. 160A-75), that standard must also be met to approve an amendment to these rules, which are the guidelines under which such actions are taken.

Rule 33. Reference to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*

To the extent not provided for in these rules, and to the extent it does not conflict with North Carolina law or with the spirit of these rules, the council shall refer to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised*, to answer unresolved procedural questions.

Comment: *RONR* was designed to govern a large legislative assembly, and many of its provisions may be inappropriate for small boards. Nevertheless, it is a good source of parliamentary procedure; care should simply be taken to adjust *RONR* to meet the needs of small governing boards such as city councils.

Adopted this the 9th day of December, 2013 by motion of Councilmember Bush, seconded by Councilmember Burris, and carried by a vote of 4 for and 0 against.



Terry Benson, Mayor Pro Tem



Judy Colgate, City Clerk