

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. Agenda Meetings

- a) The City Council will hold agenda meetings at 10:00 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 attorneys, the Risk and Safety Officer, and other 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.

3. 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 speak in order and shall make every effort to avoid interrupting another Council member’s speaking. In situations where interruptions become frequent, the Mayor shall have authority to determine the order in which Council members will speak.
- c) Officials shall address each other by their official titles of Mayor, Commissioner, or Supervisor.

4. 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 must step to the designated microphone and must give his or her name and street address. Individual house or apartment numbers are not required.
- 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 on each subject.
- 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 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, 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. 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.