



# CITY OF LAUREL, MARYLAND

RESOLUTION NO. 4-2024

## A RESOLUTION OF THE LAUREL CITY COUNCIL TO APPROVE THE REWRITE OF THE COUNCIL STANDING RULES

*Sponsored by Council President James Kole*

**WHEREAS**, the Laurel City Council review and amend their Standing Rules from time to time; and

**WHEREAS**, after a review by Council President James Kole and the full City Council, the attached Laurel City Council Standing Rules have been rewritten in their entirety; and

**WHEREAS**, City Council Resolution No. 1-2020, a resolution to approve the amended Standing Rules for the Laurel City Council, adopted January 27, 2020, is superseded upon the passage of Resolution No. 4-2024.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, by the Mayor and City Council of the City of Laurel, Maryland, that the Laurel City Council Standing Rules are hereby adopted.

**AND, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that this Resolution shall take effect on the date of its adoption.

ADOPTED this 25<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2024.

ATTEST:

SARA A. GREEN, CPM, CMC  
City Clerk

JAMES KOLE  
President of the City Council

APPROVED this 25<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2024.

KEITH R. SYDNR  
Mayor

**CITY OF LAUREL  
STANDING RULES FOR THE LAUREL CITY COUNCIL**

**RULES OF ORDER**

1. Regular Meetings of the City Council shall be held on the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 6:00 p.m. except as follows: (1) No meetings held during the Month of August when the City Councilmembers are on summer break; (2) when a meeting date falls on a holiday, such meeting shall be held on Wednesday, (3) Other days as directed by the President of the City Council.
2. Three members present and voting shall constitute a quorum to conduct official business.

**OPEN MEETINGS**

3. Regular Meetings, Work Sessions and Special Meetings of the Mayor and City Council shall be open for the public to observe except when such meetings are held in closed session pursuant to the provisions of the City Charter and Title 4 of the General Provisions Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland, Open Meetings Act.

**NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING OR WORK SESSIONS**

4. An agenda for a special meeting or work session to be held, together with the date, time, and location, as well as the purpose of such meeting or work session, shall be posted on the City Website within 48 hours of such meeting or work session.

**ELECTION OF PRESIDENT**

5. The City Council shall nominate and elect by majority vote one (1) of its members as President of the City Council annually at the second Mayor and City Council meeting in November.
6. The City Council shall appoint one member of the Council to serve as the President Pro Tempore for the same term as the President.

**DUTIES - PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL**

7. The President shall take the chair at the scheduled hour, call the members to order and, on the appearance of a quorum, proceed with business.
8. In the absence of the President, the President Pro Tempore of the Council, who is present at the meeting, shall call the Council to order and preside over meetings until the President resumes the Chair. When both the President and President Pro Tempore are absent, the Councilmember with the most seniority will preside over the meeting.
9. If two (2) or more of the Councilmembers have the same seniority the three (3) remaining City Councilmembers shall appoint, by motion, a President Pro Tempore to conduct such meetings or work sessions.
10. The President shall preserve decorum and order, may speak to points of order in preference to other members, and shall decide all questions of order, subject to an appeal by the Council. The President shall declare all votes and may vote in all cases.
11. The President may call the President Pro Tempore to preside over a full Council meeting for reasonable purposes.
12. It shall be the duty of the City Council to examine and approve the records of each meeting. It shall, likewise, be the duty of the President or the President Pro Tempore to sign all legislative matters which have been passed at any meeting.
13. The President shall preside over all meetings of the Council, and shall have all the powers, duties, functions, obligations and rights of any other member of Council, including the right to vote.
14. The President shall arrange seating for the members of the City Council. The President and Mayor shall always sit in the center seats of the dais.

## AGENDAS

15. The City Clerk shall prepare the agenda for each regular meeting, special meetings, and work sessions at least seven (7) days prior to each regular and special meeting and work session, the President, or in their absence the President Pro Tempore, shall approve and provide each member of the Council and the Mayor with a copy of the agenda for the forthcoming meeting.
16. The President or in their absence the President Pro Tempore may add or delete items from the agenda prior to the preparation of the agenda by the City Clerk at the discretion of the President.
17. The agenda of a Council meeting shall be subject to approval of the President and be posted in the same location as public meeting notices.

## CONDUCT AND DECORUM OF MEMBERS

18. When a member speaks, they shall address the presiding officer and shall confine their remarks to the question under consideration. While speaking, members shall avoid personalities, and no member shall directly or indirectly impugn another member or conduct themselves in a manner unworthy or unbecoming of a Mayor or City Councilmember.
19. The "presiding officer" is properly addressed as President (surname). The use of Mr., Ms., Madame, or Mx. President is also acceptable.
20. No member of Council or member of the assembly may speak, unless they are first recognized by the presiding officer.
21. All Councilmembers and the Mayor shall be dressed appropriately. The dress code for all regular meetings is Business Formal. No hats shall be worn during the meeting, with exception given to those worn for religious purposes.
22. The Mayor shall be addressed by members and the public as "Mayor (surname)." "Your Honor," or the use of Mr., Ms., Madame, or Mx. Mayor is also acceptable.
23. Members of the Council shall be addressed according to their preference as "Councilmember/Councilperson/Councilman/Councilwoman(surname)" or "Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. (surname)." First names shall not be used in the Council Chamber or at other meetings of the Mayor and City Council.
24. No member shall be interrupted while speaking except by their consent or by a point of order or point of information.
25. If a member repeatedly violates any of the rules of the Council or disrupts the orderly procedure of the Council, the presiding officer, after warning the member of such violations, shall call the member to order, and a member so called to order shall lose the right to speak on the pending subject matter but shall not be prevented from voting. A member so called to order shall remain silent until the presiding officer returns to the member their rights to the floor.
26. When a matter is being debated, no member may occupy more than five (5) minutes for each point under debate. No member shall speak a second time on the same matter until after all members have had a chance to speak. On general matters of discussion, and under the members' Council Report no Councilmember shall occupy more than five (5) minutes when speaking on a particular subject.
27. No member shall vote on any matter or serve on any committee where their private interest is immediately distinct from that of the public.
28. No member shall leave, unless it is an emergency, without permission of the presiding officer if their presence is necessary to make a quorum.
29. The reading of any paper, email, letter or text, if objected to by any member, shall be decided by the Council President.
30. No member or member of the public shall stand up, to the inconvenience of others, while a member is speaking; pass unnecessary messages between the presiding officer and the member speaking; stand in the area in front of the chair; or stand at the City Clerk's desk while a roll call is in progress.

## STANDING COMMITTEES – CITY COUNCIL

**31.** The Mayor shall appoint Councilmembers to each Standing Committee or Commission of the City. In some cases, the Councilmember shall serve as the Chairperson. This is to be done annually after the second meeting in November.

#### **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**32.** The business of all regular meetings of the City Council shall be transacted in the following order:

- a. Call to order
- b. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America
- c. Roll Call
- d. Approval of Minutes
- e. Report of the Mayor and City Council
- f. Appointments/Reappointments (other than Department Heads, which shall be listed as separate agenda items) (if any)
- g. General Public Hearing
- h. Agenda Items
- i. Adjournment

**33.** Reading of the Minutes -- An electronic copy of the minutes shall be transmitted to the full Council and Mayor, at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance of any vote regarding those minutes.

**34.** The Agenda order may be changed, at any meeting, by the Council President or by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and, upon motion to change the order of business, no debate shall be allowed.

#### **PUBLIC HEARING**

**35.** Members of the public are invited to speak at each regular Council meeting. There will be a period to speak in public comment via remote participation whenever practicable, to be managed by the City Clerk's Office. Members of the public will follow the below rules of Public Hearing- Procedure. In order to promote fair and open discussion, once a public hearing is called to order, the presiding officer shall recognize members of the public who may speak in the order of recognition. Public hearings shall not be divided into time periods for proponents and opponents to speak.

**36.** Members of the public shall state their first and last name and address of residence for the record. If the speaker is uncomfortable providing their house number, they may provide their street name or neighborhood for the record.

**37.** All comments are to be addressed to the Mayor and Council as a whole, not to individual members.

**38.** Speakers may speak about any topic relating to the City of Laurel.

**39.** Each speaker is limited to three (3) minutes. Time may not be donated to another speaker. If five (5) or more members of the public in attendance either in person or virtually, wish to speak on the same subject, they may choose a single representative who may speak for five (5) minutes.

**40.** The time limit shall also apply for all written comments that will be read aloud. Written comments requiring more than the time limit may be given to the City Clerk. The Clerk will transmit copies of written comments to the Council and include them in the official record of the meeting.

**41.** The public comment period is the time for the public to offer comments, not ask questions for which they expect to be answered. The Mayor, Council, and City Staff will not answer questions posed during this time. If an individual has specific questions, they shall be submitted in writing to the City Clerk for an appropriate response.

**42.** Demonstrations, such as clapping, cheering, boozing, are not allowed. They disrupt the meeting and inhibit a speaker's free speech rights.

**43.** PowerPoint presentations, recordings, or props from the public as part of public comment(s) are not allowed. Such presentations may be submitted to the City Clerk to distribute to the Council after the meeting.

**44.** Public comment will not be held during work sessions or special meetings of the Council.

**45.** If any member of the public causes a disruption during any meeting or fails to comply with these guidelines or the reasonable instructions of the presiding officer, they will be asked to leave the meeting, or they may be ejected from the Chamber.

#### **REPORT OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

**46.** The report is to be used to present any item or fact of interest by the City Council, report current or future events, and to permit the Mayor and staff to report on conditions in and on the City or departments; answers may be given to constituent questions from previous meetings, accept and read commission/committee reports, and to make presentations, and give awards. **Each member is limited to 5 minutes unless the City Council President allows the member more time.**

#### **LEGISLATIVE PROCEEDINGS**

**47.** All pending matters before the Council shall be presented by the President; and shall be read by the President, City Clerk or such other person as the President may request. They shall be acted upon in the order in which they are presented unless the Council shall otherwise direct.

**48.** All nominations/appointments made by the Mayor, subject to the confirmation of the Council, shall, when received by the Council, be placed on the Council agenda for confirmation at the next regular meeting.

**49.** Any proposed legislation from time-to-time may require a brief statement setting forth fiscal impact, which will be requested by the President to the Administration.

**50.** All matters involving the appropriation of monies in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, the intra-departmental transfer of monies from one account of the City to another, shall be referred to the President of the City Council for their action.

**51.** All ordinances and resolutions shall be distributed by the City Clerk to all members of the Council, the Mayor, the City Administrator, for the meetings at which the ordinance or resolution is introduced. Whenever any member of the Council is absent from such a meeting, the City Clerk shall ensure the member is provided with the meeting information.

**52.** If the Council so desires, any pending ordinance or resolution may be referred to the Mayor, any member, to any standing or special commission/committee for study or recommendations, to the City Solicitor, or to the City Administrator for study, recommendations, redrafting, etc.

**53.** Every member present, when a question is put forth, shall vote either "Yes", "No", or "Abstain". Each member casting a vote of "Yes" or "No" may make a brief statement explaining the reasons for their vote before their roll call vote is completed. Comments on an abstention shall not be in order. Abstentions are considered as not casting a vote and shall not be included in the vote count.

**54.** Unless otherwise ordered, votes shall be taken by Roll Call vote by the City Clerk.

#### **INTRODUCTION AND PASSAGE OF LEGISLATION**

**55.** *INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATION* - Ordinances, Resolutions, Charter Resolutions, and other legislation shall be introduced to the Council only in written or printed form.

**56.** *INTRODUCTION OF APPROPRIATIONS* - All ordinances except ordinances making appropriations and ordinances codifying or rearranging existing ordinances or enacting a code of ordinances, shall be confined to one subject, and the subject or subjects or all ordinances shall be clearly expressed in the title.

**57.** Ordinances making appropriations shall be confined to the subject of appropriations.

**58.** No ordinance, resolution, or other legislation may be introduced for first reading by any member of the City Council until after being reviewed by the City Attorney and placed on the agenda by the Council President.

**59.** No ordinance or resolution shall be passed until it has been read on two (2) separate days. Any reading of an ordinance, resolution or other legislation shall be by title only unless a full reading is required by a majority of the members of the City Council. The vote shall be taken upon the passage of all ordinances, resolutions or other legislation and entered into in the minutes of the proceedings.

**60.** No motion shall be stated, debated or put unless it is seconded.

**61. EMERGENCY ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS** - When a motion to suspend the rules to dispense with the requirements for reading of ordinances and resolutions on two (2) separate days fails to receive an affirmative vote of the majority of members, the ordinance or resolution shall go over to the next regular meeting of the Council. (See Rule No. 92 regarding Suspension of Rules.)

**62. PRECEDENCE OF MOTIONS** - When a question is before the Council, no motion shall be entertained except; (a) to fix the hour of adjournment, (b) to adjourn, (c) to lay on the table, (d) for the previous questions, (e) to postpone to a certain time, (f) to refer, (g) to amend, (h) to postpone indefinitely. These motions shall have precedence in the order indicated. Any such motion, except a motion to amend, to postpone to a certain time, to refer, and to postpone indefinitely, shall be put to a vote without debate.

**63. AGENDA OUT OF REGULAR ORDER**- The presiding officer may at any time permit a member to introduce an agenda item out of the regular order.

**64. MOTION TO ADJOURN, WHEN NOT IN ORDER, NOT DEBATALE** - A motion to adjourn shall be in order at any time, except as follows: (a) when repeated without intervening business or discussions; (b) when made as an interruption of a member while speaking; (c) when the previous question has been ordered; and (d) while a vote is being taken. A motion to adjourn is not debatable.

**65. MOTION TO LAY ON THE TABLE** - A motion to lay on the table shall preclude all amendments or debate on the subject under consideration. If the motion prevails, the consideration of the subject may be resumed at any time by a majority vote under new business, at a subsequent meeting unless the motion was date specific.

**66. THE PREVIOUS QUESTION** - When the previous question is moved and seconded by one other member, it shall be put as follows: "Shall the main question now be put?" There shall be no further amendment or debate, but debate pending amendment shall be put in their order before the main question. If the question, "Shall the main question now be put?" be approved by a majority of the members present, the main question shall then be voted upon. If the question is decided in the negative, then the main question remains before the Council.

**67. DIVISION OF QUESTION** - If a question contains two or more divisible propositions, the presiding officer, upon request of a member, may divide the same.

**68. AMEND AN AMENDMENT** - A motion to amend an amendment shall be in order, but one to amend an amendment to an amendment shall not be introduced. An amendment modifying the intention of a motion shall be in order, but an amendment relating to a different matter shall not be in order.

**69. MOTION TO POSTPONE** - All motions to postpone to a certain time, except a motion to postpone indefinitely, may be amended as to time. If a motion to postpone indefinitely is adopted, the principal question shall be declared lost.

**70. RECONSIDERATION** - (1) A motion to reconsider can only be made by a member who voted on the prevailing side. It may be seconded by any member. (2) A majority vote is required to pass a motion for reconsideration. (3) Reconsideration of legislation can only occur during the meeting where the adoption or defeat of the legislation occurred. (4) No legislation shall be reconsidered after going into effect.

**71. POINT OF ORDER** – A point of order may be called for by any Councilmember, if the President has neglected a rule, or neglected to enforce a rule of the meeting. The Councilmember calling for the Point of Order shall state the specific rule(s) alleged to have been broken or not enforced.

**72. PERSONAL PRIVILEGE** – A point of personal privilege may be requested by a Councilmember or the Mayor to speak on a particular matter of personal interest. The Councilmember must explain the nature of the request. The personal privilege must be approved by the President. Personal privilege shall not be used for political purposes.

**73. PROCEDURE IN ABSENCE OF RULE** - In the absence of a rule to govern a point of procedure, the practice approved of in the most recent edition of **Roberts Rule of Order** shall prevail.

**74. TIE VOTES** - In case of a tie in the vote on any proposal, the proposal shall be considered lost.

#### **APPEAL**

**75.** Any member may appeal to the Council of a ruling on the decision of the presiding officer. The member making the appeal may briefly state their reason for appeal, and the presiding officer may briefly explain their ruling, but there shall be no debate on the appeal. The presiding officer shall put the question, "Shall the decision of the presiding officer be sustained?" If a majority of the members present vote "Yes", the ruling of the presiding officer is sustained; otherwise, it is overruled.

#### **VIRTUAL AND VIDEO MEETINGS**

**76. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSIONS** – the first Wednesday of each Month will be virtual, unless changed by the President of the City Council to be In-Person.

**77. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL MEETING** – the first regular meeting (2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of Month) of the Mayor and City Council shall be virtual, and the second meeting (4th Monday of Month) will be held In-Person at the Joseph R. Robison Laurel Municipal Center.

**78.** City Councilmembers shall sign on to their computer at least fifteen (15) minutes prior to the scheduled meeting to ensure virtual settings are working well.

**79.** City Councilmembers shall keep their cameras on during the entire meeting.

**80.** Councilmembers, Mayor, and City Staff shall be in a secure, stationary, and professionally appropriate location during the virtual meeting. Councilmembers, Mayor, and City staff shall follow the dress code outlined in Rule 21.

**81.** The President and in the President's absence, the President Pro Tempore, has the right to turn off any Councilmember, Mayor or other City staff who, after being informed by the presiding officer that they are in violation of any of the Council Rules, continues to violate Council Rules, by directing the Clerk to mute the member in question in the virtual meeting.

**82.** When a virtual meeting occurs, speakers shall email or call the City Clerk's Office and request to be added to the speaker sign-up sheet no later than 2:00 pm the day of the meeting. Public participation shall be enabled in accordance with Rules 35-45.

**83.** Councilmembers, the Mayor and other City staff must utilize a video feed when participating in a virtual meeting. If a Councilmember or Mayor loses video and audio feed during a meeting, no vote shall occur on any matter until after such time that a recess has occurred to troubleshoot the problem. If the Councilmember or Mayor has a video and audio feed that has not been reestablished within 10 minutes of recessing, the members shall proceed with any vote that has to be taken.

**84.** If the City Clerk loses video and audio feed during a meeting, the Alternate Host to the Clerk shall call the roll and record all votes taken.

## FILLING A TERM OF A VACANCY ON THE COUNCIL

85. In the event the Council must elect a person to complete the term of a Councilmember in accordance with City Charter, Article 300-Government, Section 319 -Vacancies: City Council, the procedure for filling such vacancy shall be as follows:

- a. Public Notice informing the public that the vacancy exists, and a new Councilmember is being sought shall be posted by the City Clerk within ten (10) days of the vacancy, an official press release shall be issued by the City and when possible, notice shall be given by immediate publication once in a newspaper of local circulation for not less than two (2) weeks on the City's website homepage.
- b. Individuals interested in filling the vacancy (hereinafter "Applicants") shall contact the City Clerk to confirm that they reside in the appropriate voting ward and by 12:00 pm on the 15th day following the Public Notice, applicants shall submit a letter of intent, resume, Candidate Financial Disclosure, and Candidate Affidavit to the Office of the City Clerk.
- c. Applicants who have complied with all the requirements of the City Charter shall be invited to a special meeting of the full Council; at which time all applicants will be given an opportunity to be interviewed by the Council. The public will be able to view the interviews in-person or live streamed on Laurel TV. Public testimony will not be permitted.
- d. Certified candidates will first report to the Council Chamber at which time all electronics including cell phones, smart watches, etc. will be collected and held for safe keeping until the candidate's interview is complete.
- e. Candidates will be sequestered in Meeting Room 2 and the order that candidates will be interviewed will be determined by random draw prior to the start of interviews.
- f. Candidates will be interviewed one at a time.
- g. There will be ten (10) questions asked by the Council and each candidate will be asked the same set of questions.
- h. Candidates will have two (2) minutes to answer each question.
- i. Each candidate will be allowed two (2) minutes after the questions are complete to make a closing statement.
- j. After a candidate's interview, they will be permitted to retrieve their electronics from staff and may either join the audience in the Council Chamber or leave the Municipal Center.
- k. After all applicants have been given an opportunity to address the Council, the presiding officer shall open the floor and entertain a motion made by one of the sitting Councilmembers to nominate one of the interviewed candidates for appointment to fill the vacancy.
- l. The motion shall be seconded by another sitting Councilmember. If the motion prevails and is seconded, the Clerk shall conduct the roll call vote. If the candidate receives the majority of the vote, that candidate shall be the successful candidate and fill the vacant seat for the remainder of the existing term. A motion that fails to receive a second shall be considered lost.
- m. If the first motion is not successful, the presiding officer shall once again open the floor to nominations, except that no candidate shall be motioned for a second time until all candidates have been motioned for nomination at least once and the process detailed in k. and l. above shall be repeated until a candidate is appointed to fill the vacancy.
- n. In the event that no applicant receives a majority of votes after at least five (5) cycles, the Council may table voting and continue with the process at the next scheduled meeting of the City Council or by majority vote of the Council, the Council may ask the Mayor to break the tie.

## **CITY COUNCIL – BOARDS/COMMISSION/COMMITTEES**

**86.** All boards, commissions, and committees of the City and the function, authority, responsibilities, and the number of members and reports required of the boards, commissions, committees, and other pertinent information necessary for the proper functions of the commission/committee, shall be set forth by the City Council. Board, Commission and committee appointments shall be announced as an agenda item.

**87. POWERS OF BOARDS/COMMISSIONS/COMMITTEES** - No commission/committee of any kind shall have the power to employ any person for, or on behalf of the City or to incur any expense. The commission/committee may request the City Administrator and all Department Heads via the City Clerk to furnish information and assistance which may be granted provided it is pertinent to the matter before the commission/committee and is not in violation of provisions of the Charter or policies established by the Council.

**88. REPORTS** - Commission/committees shall submit reports from time-to-time as requested by the City Council. All reports shall be in writing and provided to the City Clerk in electronic format or if in hardcopy enough copies shall be provided for each member of the Council, Mayor and City Administrator.

**89. OPEN MEETINGS** - All meetings of Boards, Commissions, and Committees shall be open to the public except when the Board, Commission or Committee, by a vote of the majority of its members, goes into a closed session in accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act. Notice of closed sessions shall be given in accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act.

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

**90. SUSPENSION OF RULES**- Any rule may be **suspended by an affirmative vote of the majority of the members present**. When a motion to suspend a rule is made, the specific rule for which suspension is sought must be cited in the motion and the reason stated on the record.

**91.** Any rule may be amended or repealed by a vote of a majority of all the members of the Council, but the motion for such a purpose shall not be made and acted upon at the same meeting.

**92.** Recording, photographing and videotaping - The authority for these procedures/rules is stated in Md. Ann. Code, General Provisions Article § 3-303(b). The standard to be applied is one of reasonableness so as not to disrupt the Meeting. The citizen or member of the press must request permission before the Meeting of the Council President to proceed in this manner.

**93.** The use of the Council Chamber, or the Council Committee Room, shall not be granted to any person or organization without the permission of the City Clerk. Said request shall be in writing, and the City Clerk shall keep a suitable calendar noting the permitted uses hereon.

**94. DEMONSTRATION OR DISORDER AMONG BYSTANDERS**- If any confusion, demonstration, or disorder arises in the Council Chambers or at other locations of Mayor and City Council meetings, and virtual meetings, the presiding officer may, upon their own initiative or upon the request of any member, enforce order. If the offending person or persons be a spectator, they may be ejected from the meeting. If any member of the City Council shall object to the ruling of the presiding officer, he/she has the right to appeal to the Council as provided in Rule 75.

### Revised/Actions

Rewrite in full, November 25, 2024, Resolution No. 4-2024