

To All,

As you know a committee was appointed to work on updating our current Meeting Rules & Regulations. Along with our committee we had input from Donna Thompson and her group, both previous and current council members, a local attorney, business owners and just plain old hard-working residents.

Please find enclosed our final draft of the Council & Public Civility Policy. I have also enclosed the 2014 Rules of Procedure and Order of Business and Meetings Ordinance, that was created by David Syfan, our previous city attorney. This ordinance was paid for by the City and according to him is consistent with the provisions of our current charter.

Since we all, as a council, are trying to save money and do what is right for our citizens, I think we should readopt this ordinance. With the addition of Roberts Rule of Order, I am confident we will be able to complete the balance of this year as we work to reorganize our outdated charter which was adopted in 1989.

My goal is to finalize and get Council approval at our March meeting. Please review and let me know your thoughts and any adjustments you would like to see.

Mike

# **City of Blue Ridge Code of Civility Policy**

## **Council**

- **Be considerate of others and treat all with respect. Refrain from using insults, profanities or other disparaging remarks in person or in written communication (including email, text, or published articles).**
- **Roberts Rules of Order (Simplified version will be used as out of order, point of order, motion, discussion, unanimous consent, etc.)**
- **Clapping, whistling, heckling, gesturing, loud conversations, and other disruptive behavior is prohibited.**
- **Council shall avoid personal attacks, abusive language and redundancy.**
- **All cell phones shall be turned off during meetings or left in vehicle. (When on vibrate people in the audience can hear the vibrations and it is distracting to other Council members. This will also prohibit texting between other Council Members and people in the audience or at home.)**
- **Create an atmosphere of respect and civility where individual members, City staff and the public are free to respectfully express their ideas and work to their full potential.**
- **Be prepared and do your homework. No member should attend a meeting that requires an important vote on a topic/subject concerning the wellbeing of the City without being prepared.**
- **A Council member should never participate in the deliberation of or vote on any matter involving his/her financial or personal interest (family).**
- **Have the City's best interest in mind when voting on any matter.**
- **Roll call votes; rotate the beginning and ending.**
- **Obtain the facts. Focus on solutions that are most likely to be successful for the good of the City.**

- There should be no offensive comments, personal attacks, name calling or unfounded accusations to any member of the Council, Staff, or Mayor. In the case that this happens, Council will vote to remove person in violation. If a committee member, Council member, or Mayor is removed from a meeting, they will be censured by the Council. On the Second occurrence & Censure during a 24-month period, they will be asked to resign or voted to be removed from office.
- There should be no public statements, letters to the editor or on social media or with an organization, advertisements, emails, texts or announcements regarding official city business without Council approval.

Council member name \_\_\_\_\_

Council member signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# City of Blue Ridge Code of Civility Policy

## Public

- Be considerate of others and treat all with respect. Refrain from using insults, profanities or other disparaging remarks in person or in written communication (including email, text, or articles).
- Clapping, Whistling, heckling, gesturing, loud conversations, and other disruptive behavior is prohibited.
- Only allow up to five individuals (4 City Residents and one other) to speak at City Council Meetings on a given subject. Speakers must have previously submitted speaker forms with a subject / agenda, 3-business days before the meeting and have been recognized by the Mayor / Council. Each speaker will be given 5-minutes to speak. (Order will be determined by City Clerk.)
- Citizens comments shall be directed to City issues and to the council or Board.
- All cell phones shall be turned off during meetings or left in vehicle. (When on vibrate people in the audience can hear the vibrations and it is distracting to other Council members. This will also prohibit texting between other Council Members and people in the audience or at home.)
- There should be no offensive comments to any member of the Council, Staff, or Mayor. In the case that this happens, Council will vote to remove person in violation.
- There should be no public statements or announcements without Council approval.
- No person attending a Council or Board meeting is to harass, annoy or otherwise disturb any other person.
- Proponent or Opponents to matters concerning the City should not invade Council Members, Employees, or Committee Members personal residences but should express their feelings through the methods provided by the City, i.e. Public Hearings or Correspondence sent to the City Hall or via e-mail addressed the party they desire to receive their communication.

- **Any member of the public whose behavior is disruptive and violates the City of Blue Ridge Civility Code is subject to removal from the Council (or Board) meeting by an officer and may be subject to a fine of up to \$500.00 to be enforced by the Blue Ridge Police Department and the Blue Ridge Municipal Court. If member is removed, the individual will not be allowed back in City Hall or to attend any meeting of Board, Committees, or Council for a period of 6-months.**
- **Last item before end-5-minute discussion period for public comment or questions. 1-minute time limit. Must be recognized by Mayor or Council.**
- **Thank you for your input, concerns & attendance of the City.**

FIRST READING: \_\_\_\_\_

PASSED: \_\_\_\_\_

AN ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_

**AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF BLUE RIDGE, GEORGIA;  
TO PRESCRIBE RULES OF PROCEDURE AND ORDER OF BUSINESS  
OF MEETINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL CONSISTENT WITH THE  
CITY CHARTER, AND PURSUANT TO SECTION 3.14(a) OF THE CITY  
CHARTER OF THE CITY OF BLUE RIDGE, GEORGIA; TO  
ESTABLISH SECTION 37.01, ET SEQ., ADOPTING THE RULES OF  
PROCEDURE AND ORDER OF BUSINESS FOR MEETINGS OF THE  
CITY COUNCIL; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

WHEREAS, Section 3.14(a) of the Blue Ridge City Charter mandates that the City Council of the City of Blue Ridge, Georgia, shall adopt rules of procedure and order of business for meetings of the City Council consistent with the provisions of the City Charter of the City of Blue Ridge, Georgia;

WHEREAS, the City Council of the City of Blue Ridge, Georgia desires to prescribe its rules of procedure and order of business regarding meetings of the City Council, and by adding new sections to the City of Blue Ridge Code, beginning with Section 37.01 and continuing as provided herein by this ordinance;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the City Council of Blue Ridge, Georgia, and it is hereby ordained by the authority of the City Charter as above referenced, as amended, and with the rules of procedure and order of business of City Council meetings to be as follows:

**SECTION 1.**

**AMENDMENT TO THE BLUE RIDGE CODE TO  
PRESCRIBE RULES OF PROCEDURE AND ORDER  
OF BUSINESS FOR THE MEETINGS OF THE CITY  
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BLUE RIDGE.**

The Code of Ordinances for the City of Blue Ridge, Georgia, is hereby amended and modified, to prescribe procedures regarding the rules of procedure and order of business of meetings of the City Council and which shall read as follows:

Sec. 37.01. Mayor as chair.

The Mayor shall act as the chair for Council meetings and is responsible for the orderly conduct of the meeting. In order to fulfill this duty, the Mayor shall enforce the rules of procedure that are adopted by resolution by the City Council. The Mayor shall be impartial and conduct the meetings in a fair manner. The Mayor may not introduce motions or second a motion except that the Mayor may introduce or second a motion to go into executive session as authorized by Section 37.10. The Mayor shall not vote except to break a tie.

Sec. 37.02. Vice-chair.

(a) The Mayor Pro Tem shall be the vice-chair. The vice-chair shall fulfill the duties of the Mayor if the chair is not in attendance.

(b) If the Mayor and the Mayor Pro Tem are absent and a quorum is present, the remaining Councilmembers shall select a Councilmember to serve as temporary chair of the meeting until either the Mayor or Mayor Pro Tem is present at the meeting.

Sec. 37.03. Committee.

The Mayor may create committees of members of the Council to study any issue before the Council or to administer a department of the City, or both. Any such committees may make recommendations to the City Council but no committee shall be empowered to make any final decision on any policy matter before it for consideration, except as

to purchases within the spending limits as set by the City Council for the Mayor, Councilmember, Department Head, or other agents of the City.

Sec. 37.04. Open meetings.

All meetings of the City Council shall be held in accordance with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq. The public shall at all times be afforded access to all meetings other than executive sessions.

Sec. 37.05. Organizational meeting.

The City Council shall hold an organizational meeting on or before the second Tuesday in January. The meeting shall be called to order by the City Clerk, and the oath of office shall be administered to the newly elected members of the City Council whose terms of office shall begin the day and hour of taking the oath of office.

Sec. 37.06. Regular meetings.

Regular meetings of the City Council shall be held at 6:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month. All regular meetings shall be held in the City Hall. A notice containing the foregoing information shall be posted and maintained in a conspicuous place available to the general public at the regular meeting place of the Council.

Sec. 37.07. Special meetings and rescheduled regular meetings.

A regular meeting or work shop meeting may be canceled, rescheduled or moved to a new location within the City by the Mayor or action by a quorum of the City Council for any reason. Other special meetings may be called as provided in the Charter. Whenever a rescheduled regular meeting or any other special meeting is to be held at a time or place other than the regularly scheduled time or place, written notice of the change shall be posted for at least 24 hours at the place of the regular meetings, except as to emergency meetings allowed



under general law. In addition, written or oral notice shall be given by the Clerk at least 24 hours in advance of the special called meeting to either the legal organ of the City or a newspaper having a general circulation at least equal to that of the legal organ and to each member of the City Council.

Sec. 37.08. Emergency sessions.

When emergency circumstances occur, the Council may hold a meeting with less than 24 hours' notice to the public. When such meetings are to be held, the Clerk shall provide notice to the legal organ of the City or a newspaper with a general circulation at least equal to that of the legal organ and to each member of the City Council as soon as possible. The notice shall include the subjects expected to be considered at the meeting. In addition, the minutes shall reflect the reason for the emergency meeting and the nature of the notice given to the media.

Sec. 37.09. Duty to attend.

It shall be the duty of each member to the City Council to attend each meeting of the City Council unless he or she is prevented by some unavoidable circumstance, including but not limited to their employment requirements.

Sec. 37.10. Executive sessions.

(a) Executive sessions of the City Council may be held for the purpose of conducting business excepted from public access requirements as authorized by O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1, et seq. Where a meeting of the Council is devoted in part to matters within the authorized exceptions to public access requirements, any portion of the meeting not subject to any such exceptions shall be open to the public. No executive session shall be held except pursuant to a majority affirmative vote of three members of the City Council taken in a public

meeting.

(b) The minutes of the public meeting shall reflect the names of the Councilmembers present, those voting for the executive session and the specific reasons for the executive session. Minutes of the executive session shall be maintained by the City Clerk as required by general law. Any such minutes shall be maintained in a confidential file and shall not be subject to disclosure, except as required by general law and except that disclosures of such portions of minutes identifying real estate to be acquired by the Council may only be delayed until such time as the acquisition of the real estate has been completed, terminated or abandoned.

Sec. 37.11. Quorum.

A quorum must be present for conducting meetings of the Council. A quorum is three Councilmembers. It is the duty of the Mayor to enforce this rule. Any Councilmember may raise a point of order directed to the Mayor if he or she believes that a quorum is not present. If during the course of a meeting a Councilmember leaves and a quorum no longer exists, the meeting cannot continue. If a quorum is not attained within 30 minutes, the meeting will be rescheduled by the Mayor or City Council.

Sec. 37.12. Voting; majority.

Passage of a motion, resolution and/or ordinance shall require the affirmative vote of three Councilmembers present and voting at a meeting at which a quorum is present. In the event of a tie vote, the Mayor shall vote to break the tie.

Sec. 37.13. Abstentions.

A Councilmember shall vote of all motions unless he or she has a conflict of interest that would prevent him or her from making a decision in a fair and legal manner. If a

conflict of interest does exist, the Councilmember shall explain for the record his or her decision to abstain on any vote.

Sec. 37.14. Agenda.

(a) The City Clerk with the advice of the Mayor and the Councilmembers, shall prepare an agenda of subjects to be acted on for each meeting. An agenda work shop shall be held by the City Clerk to finalize the agenda. The Mayor and all Councilmembers may participate in the work shop. Whenever a quorum of the Council is present for an agenda work shop, the meeting shall be open to the public; and all notice and recordkeeping requirements applicable to an open meeting must be met.

(b) Members of the public may request that a particular subject be placed on the agenda for the following meeting. To be considered, this request must be submitted in writing to the City Clerk and received at least three business days before the meeting.

(c) The order of the agenda may be changed during a meeting by an affirmative vote of three members of the Council. A new subject that requires urgent attention may be added to the agenda during a meeting by an affirmative vote of three members of the Council.

(d) A copy of the agenda and a list of those members present shall be made available to the public in accordance with general law.

Sec. 37.15. Consent agenda.

(a) A consent agenda may be prepared by the City Clerk for the Council to unanimously adopt motions on routine items. Any items of business that are expected to receive unanimous approval and where no debate is expected may be placed on a consent

agenda.

(b) At the appropriate time of the meeting, the Mayor shall read all of the items on the consent agenda. If a Councilmember objects to an item's being on the consent agenda, the Mayor shall move that particular item to the regular agenda. Following the reading of the consent agenda, the Mayor will ask for unanimous approval of the items on the consent agenda. If there are no objections, all the items on the consent agenda will be adopted by unanimous consent.

Sec. 37.16. Minutes.

(a) The City Clerk shall promptly record the minutes for each Council meeting. The minutes serve as the official written record of the Council meeting and shall be open for public inspection once approved as official by the Council but in no case later than immediately following the next regular meeting of the Council. The minutes shall specify the names of Councilmembers present at the meeting, a description of each motion or other proposal made at the meeting, the Councilmember who proposed each motion, the Councilmember who seconded each motion, and a record of all votes. In the case of a roll-call vote, the name of each Councilmember voting for or against a proposal shall be recorded. It shall be presumed that a Councilmember has voted in the affirmative unless the minutes show otherwise. More detailed information may be included in the minutes at the request of the Council.

(b) The Council must approve the minutes before they can be considered as an official record of the Council. A copy of the minutes from the previous meeting shall be distributed to the Councilmembers before the following meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting shall be corrected and approved by the Council at the beginning of each

meeting. An affirmative vote of three members is required for approval. Conflicts about the content of the minutes shall be decided by an affirmative vote of at least three members of the City Council. Upon being approved, the minutes shall be signed by the Mayor and attested to by the City Clerk.

Sec. 37.17. Order of business.

(a) All regular Council meetings shall follow an established order of business as determined by resolution of the City Council. The current order is as follows:

- (1) Call to order
- (2) Citizen comments
- (3) Approval of agenda or amendment to the agenda
- (4) Approval of minutes from any prior regular meeting or  
work shop meeting, if ready
- (5) Consent Agenda
- (6) Financial report and finance approvals
- (7) Old business
- (8) New business
- (9) City Clerk report/concerns
- (10) Mayor report/concerns
- (11) Executive session, if needed
- (12) Adjournment

(b) All regular Council work shop meetings shall follow an established order of business as determined by resolution of the City Council. The current order is as follows:

the City Council, and the work shop meetings when attended by a quorum of the City Council, shall not be limited to only discussion and the quorum of the City Council can take official votes in said work shop meetings.

Sec. 37.18. Decorum.

(a) All Councilmembers must conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner. All remarks should be directed to the Mayor and not to individual Councilmembers, staff or citizens in attendance. Personal remarks are inappropriate. All comments made by a Councilmember shall address the motion that is being discussed.

(b) The Mayor shall enforce these rules of decorum. If a Councilmember believes that a rule has been broken, he or she can raise a point of order. A second is not required. The Council shall debate the issue and decide the issue by affirmative vote of three members of the City Council.

Sec. 37.19. Public participation.

Public participation in meetings of the City Council shall be permitted in accordance with the provisions of this section.

(1) Public comments. An agenda item of the meeting shall be reserved for comments from the public. All members who wish to address the Council must submit their name and the topic of their comments to the City Clerk at least three business days before the Council meeting. These individuals will be allotted five minutes to make their comments, and their comments must be limited to their chosen topic. These limits can be waived by an affirmative vote of three members of the Council.

(2) Public participation on agenda items. By a vote of three Councilmembers, the Council may allow public comment on an agenda item at the time the item

limits may be waived by an affirmative vote of three members the Council. Anyone wishing to speak at any Council meeting must be recognized by the Mayor before addressing the Council.

(3) Decorum. Members of the public shall not make inappropriate or offensive comments at a Council meeting and are expected to comply with the rules of decorum that are established by Councilmembers. Individuals who violate any rules of the Council may be ruled out of order by the Mayor or on a point of order made by a Councilmember. An affirmative vote of three members of the Council will rule on the point of order. An individual who violates the rules of decorum may be removed from the meeting at the direction of the Mayor.

(4) Public hearings. The Council may schedule public hearings for the purpose of soliciting public comment on any subject of interest to the Council. Hearings may be held immediately prior to or following a meeting of the Council or at such other places and times as the Council may determine. No official action shall be taken at any such public hearing, but may be taken in a meeting following the hearing.

Sec. 37.20. Amendments to rules.

Any amendments to the rules of order must be submitted by a Councilmember in writing to the City Clerk three business days before a regular meeting of the Council. The proposed amendment shall be included in the agenda for that meeting and distributed to all Councilmembers. All amendments require an affirmative vote of three members of the Council to be adopted.

Sec. 37.21. Suspending the rules of order.

Rules of order may be suspended in the case of an emergency. A motion to suspend the rules requires a second, is debatable, and requires an affirmative vote of three

members of the Council. Rules governing quorum, voting methods and requirements, the notification to Councilmembers of meetings, and rules necessary for compliance with state law cannot be suspended.

Sec. 37.22. Visual and sound recordings.

Visual, sound, and visual and sound recordings shall be permitted for all public meetings.

**SECTION 2. SEVERABILITY.**

If any paragraph, subparagraph, sentence, clause, phrase, or any portion of this ordinance shall be declared invalid or unconstitutional by any court of competent jurisdiction or if the provisions of any part of this ordinance as applied to any particular situation or set of circumstances shall be declared invalid or unconstitutional, such invalidity shall not be construed to effect the portions of this ordinance not so held to be invalid, or the application of this ordinance to other circumstances not so held to be invalid. It is hereby declared to be the intent of the City Council of the City of Blue Ridge to provide for separate and divisible parts, and it does hereby adopt any and all parts hereof as may not be held invalid for any reason.

**SECTION 3. REPEAL OF CONFLICTING ORDINANCES TO THE EXTENT OF THE CONFLICT.**

All parts of prior ordinances, in conflict with the terms of this ordinance are hereby repealed to the extent of the conflict; but it is hereby provided, that any ordinance, or any provision of any ordinance, or law which may be applicable hereto and aid in carrying out and making effective the intent, purpose and provisions hereof, is hereby adopted as a part hereof, and shall be legally construed to be in favor of upholding this ordinance on behalf of the City of Blue Ridge, Georgia.



**SECTION 4.                    EFFECTIVE DATE.**

This amendment to the Code of the City of Blue Ridge, Georgia is hereby adopted upon passage and shall become effective upon passage by the Blue Ridge City Council.

This \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2014.

**BLUE RIDGE CITY COUNCIL**

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilperson

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilperson

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_

City Clerk