

Blue Ridge City Council Meeting Rules of Procedures

The purpose of having City Council Meeting Rules of Procedure is to ensure that the elected governing body of the City of Blue Ridge can effectively and efficiently conduct official city business in a productive, professional and timely manner.

City Council Meetings

This City Council Meeting Rules of Procedure policy shall apply to all regular meetings held by the Blue Ridge Mayor and City Council. Town hall meetings or other meeting which meet the definition of an “open meeting” under Georgia’s Open Meetings Act shall be conducted in the manner deemed appropriate by the Mayor and Council. Pursuant to Section 3.13 of the Charter, special called meetings will be limited to only the item listed in the call and no other business or public comment shall be allowed.

The Agenda

Meeting Rules of Procedure for Agenda Items are listed as follows:

a. Agenda items referenced to in the following rules, include all items listed on the agenda including Mayor and Council Reports. Public Comment rules and requirements are listed under Public Comments.

b. The Mayor and Council shall make reasonable effort to have agenda items on the agenda within seven (7) calendar days of the meeting. However, subject to these Rules, if the Mayor or a Council Member deems it necessary to add to the agenda less than seven (7) calendar days prior to the meeting, said elected official may do so at his or her discretion. The City Clerk may suggest that an item be added and such item shall be added with the concurrence of either the Mayor or a Council Member. In no event, however, shall any item be added to the Agenda later than 4:30 p.m. the day before the meeting so that the City Clerk has ample time to prepare copies of the Agenda and meeting material for Council Members and to provide notice to the public. If revisions to the Agenda are necessary or desired after the 4:30 p.m. deadline discussed above, the Mayor or member of the City Council must make a request for a “motion to amend the agenda” to include the item be placed on the Agenda and that Motion must carry by majority vote of a quorum.

c. The agenda may be posted seven (7) calendar days in advance of the meeting at the City Hall and in the event the agenda changes, the new agenda may be revised and posted at the earliest reasonable convenience of the City Clerk.

d. Agenda items shall be listed in the appropriate category and listed in the following order, however, the Agenda may be adjusted at the discretion of the Mayor.

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Prayer and Pledge of Allegiance
3. Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting.
4. Approval of Agenda or Motion to Amend Agenda (if applicable).
5. Public Comment (for all speakers who have signed up the previous week).
6. Any required public hearing on a rezoning request, appeal from the Zoning Board of Appeals decision or other appeal authorized by Ordinance.
7. Action Agenda Items (Items requiring the approval of the Council)
8. Purchasing Approvals
9. Discussion Agenda Items (Items for discussion)
10. Executive Session (if needed)
11. Adjournment

e. The Mayor, or a Council Member may add an item to the agenda, but must specify to the City Clerk if the item is an action item, discussion item or purchasing approval item. Any addition to the agenda by the Mayor or a Council Member must be specific enough so that the other elected officials are aware of what will be acted upon, discussed or approved. Requested additions to the agenda by the Mayor or a Council Member shall not be allowed on the agenda without the specificity outlined above. If the Mayor objects to an agenda item, it shall require three Council Members to request the item be placed on the agenda over objection. All agenda items shall be introduced by the Mayor. For agenda items requiring a vote, once the agenda item has been introduced, a motion shall be called by the Mayor requesting a Motion by a Council Member, if another Council Member does not make an immediate second, the Mayor shall ask for a second. After any applicable discussion, the Mayor may call for a vote on the motion after discussion or at any time during the discussion period.

Public Comments.

The following Meeting Rules of Procedure listed shall be followed for all public comments allowed at Blue Ridge City Council meetings including workshops, regular

scheduled meetings, and public meetings. Any time limits set forth herein shall be kept and enforced by the City Attorney and/or the City Clerk or their designee:

a. All members of the public requesting to schedule a public comment shall be required to sign in no later than the start of the meeting and identify their name and the specific topic on which the person wishes to comment. The sign in sheet for public comment shall be made available the day before the meeting at City Hall and there will be five (5) public comment time slots which shall be available on a first-come first-serve basis. If an individual speaking wishes to present any type of document to the Mayor and Council during this time, it must be submitted to the City Clerk (5) calendar days in advance of the meeting. This deadline ensures that the material is included in the meeting packet and allows additional time for review prior to the meeting. Individuals will be permitted a maximum of (2) minutes to make their comments and all comments shall be limited to the specific topic listed identified on the sign-in sheet. Such time allotment shall not be transferred to other individuals.

b. With the exception of town-hall meetings, public comments are not allowed for the purpose of asking questions and answers of the Mayor and City Council or other City representatives during the meeting. The Mayor or Council Members shall not engage in responding to comments or questions brought forth by individuals under the Public Comments section of the Agenda. If the Mayor or a Council Member does reply to a public comment, he or she shall be doing so in their individual capacity as an elected official and nothing said shall bind the City of Blue Ridge as a whole.

c. As set forth in the Agenda, Public Comments shall be allowed before any action item or purchasing approval is voted upon by the Council. Timely scheduled public comment by the person listed on the agenda is permitted about the topic of discussion subject to the two (2) minute per person time limit set forth in Subsection (a) above. The individual is only permitted to speak once per agenda topic. After the conclusion of the public comment section of the Agenda, the City Council shall proceed with the Agenda and, if applicable, vote.

Zoning or Appeal Hearings Procedure

The following rules of procedure shall apply to any public hearing on a rezoning request and any appeal from a decision of the Zoning Board of Appeals and shall be as follows:

(1) The case shall be called and the Land Development/Zoning Manager or his/her designee shall describe the request or appeal. If the hearing is a public hearing on a rezoning request, the Land Development/Zoning Manager or his/her designee shall present a Staff recommendation for approval, approval with conditions or denial and state a brief summary to support the recommendation.

(2) Georgia law requires applicants and opponents of cases to complete and file disclosure forms prior to speaking for or against a proposal. The disclosure forms will be provided at the meeting. No person shall be allowed to speak without complying with Georgia law.

(3) Representatives/applicants, as a group, and representatives/opponents, as a group, shall be given a maximum of ten (10) minutes for each side to present its case, unless, by unanimous vote, more time is allotted by City Council. The City Attorney and/or the City Clerk shall be responsible for keeping time. Any groups which are present are encouraged to choose a spokesperson to present their views as the time limit is not per speaker but ten (10) minutes collectively.

(4) As each case is called, all witnesses for the applicant and opponents shall first be sworn prior to making their presentations.

(5) Voting on cases will take place as to each case immediately following the close of the public hearing of the same case. However, discussion shall be allowed between members of the City Council.

(6) No further public input will be allowed unless questions come through the City Council. Any question by a Council Member and answer does not count for or against the ten (10) minute time limit set forth above.

Decorum in Council Meetings

Members of the public must comply with the following rules of decorum:

Once a meeting has been called to order there shall be no comments allowed from any member of the public including inappropriate, offensive, impertinent, profanity or insulting comments to the Mayor, City Council or other City Representative or between individuals. There shall be no clapping, cheering, opposition gestures or disruptive actions allowed during the meeting.

Meeting Materials

The Mayor and City Council will be presented meeting materials prior to or at the meeting. Members of the public and the media are permitted access to these documents following the scheduled meeting, by accessing the City's website at www.cityofblueridgega.gov.

WAIVER OF THESE RULES

Upon proper Motion by a City Council Member, a proper second and a unanimous approval by the City Council, these rules may be suspended for any purpose deemed necessary and appropriate. The suspension may be for one specific item or for numerous items. However, the suspension shall last no longer than the meeting in which these Rules were suspended. In the event of a suspension, and unless other procedures are adopted, Roberts Rules of Order shall be the procedure followed.