

Introduction

THESE RULES OF PROCEDURE were designed for use by a municipal council. They incorporate general principles of parliamentary procedure and applicable North Carolina laws. Essentially the rules are a modified version of *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised* (hereinafter referred to as *RONR*). However, *RONR* is intended primarily to guide the deliberations of large legislative bodies; its detailed rules are not always appropriate for a small governing board. A small board can afford to do some things that are not appropriate for a large body, and in some cases the procedure prescribed by *RONR* for larger assemblies is unnecessarily cumbersome. *RONR* itself recognizes that more informality is desirable with small boards (*RONR*, Sec. 48, pp. 477-78); these rules detail the more informal procedures that might be expected with a small board. This book modifies *RONR* with the following principles in mind:

1. The council must act as a body.
2. The council should proceed in the most efficient manner possible.
3. The council must act by at least a majority.
4. Every member must have an equal opportunity to participate in decision making.
5. The council's rules of procedure must be followed consistently.
6. The council's actions should be the result of a decision on the merits and not a manipulation of the procedural rules.

Many of the rules suggested here reflect the provisions of the North Carolina city council meeting procedure statutes, Chapter 160A, Article 5, Parts 1-3, of the North Carolina General Statutes (hereinafter G.S.) (G.S. 160A-68 to -81) and the North Carolina open meetings law, G.S. Chapter 143, Article 33C (G.S. 143-318.9 to 143-318.18). When the rules in this book state procedures that are required by sections of these statutes, that fact is noted in the *Comments*. City councils

2 Suggested Rules of Procedure

must follow procedures required by these laws, whether or not they adopt some version of the rules in this book.

Note that G.S. 160A-82 provides that nothing in G.S. 160A-68 through G.S. 160A-81 (with certain exceptions not pertinent here) is to be construed to repeal any inconsistent provision of any city charter. (See also G.S. 160A-3, which provides rules for resolving conflicts between charter provisions and other statutes.) City officials should examine the city charter whenever a *Comment* refers to a general law, to determine whether the charter conflicts with the cited general law.

A city council has a relatively free hand in designing its own rules of procedure, as long as the requirements of the general laws mentioned above and the city's charter are followed and the board adheres to the general principles listed earlier. Most of the rules in this book are merely suggested procedures, and each council should feel free to change them to suit local needs and customs. For example, Rule 11 eliminates the requirement of a second to a motion. A council may choose to adopt that rule or not. Alternative wordings and optional language for some of the rules are shown enclosed in brackets.

Throughout these rules the city governing board is referred to as the "council," in keeping with the wording of G.S. Chapter 160A.