

**CITY OF NEWPORT**  
**RESOLUTION**

**OF THE  
COUNCIL**

**No. 2026-77**

- WHEREAS, the Rules of Council have not undergone a comprehensive update in more than 10 years; and
- WHEREAS, during that time, procedural questions and operational challenges have arisen which demonstrate the need to review and update the Rules of Council to ensure that the Council has clear guidance and effective tools to conduct business in an efficient, orderly, and transparent manner; and
- WHEREAS, an updated Rules of Council will promote the orderly conduct of meetings, reinforce standards of decorum, civility, and professionalism, and support the Council in fulfilling its responsibilities to the residents of the City of Newport; and
- WHEREAS, adopting revised Rules of Council will strengthen the Council's ability to deliberate thoughtfully, engage the public meaningfully, and conduct municipal business in a manner consistent with the City Charter and applicable laws; NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT
- RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Newport hereby adopts the following revised Rules of Council, which shall govern the conduct of Council proceedings unless otherwise required by the Rhode Island General Laws, the Newport City Charter, or other applicable law.

**CITY OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND**

**RULES OF THE COUNCIL**

- A. Governing Procedures of Council** – The Council shall conduct its business in accordance with the Rhode Island General Laws, Newport's City Charter, and Robert's Rules of Order - where applicable and where such rules do not conflict with state law or the City Charter.
- 1. City of Newport's Charter** – the procedures of the Council are governed by Newport's City Charter. Particular attention shall be given to the following provisions related to the organization and operations of the Council:

**SECTION 2-5. - MAYOR; PRESIDING OFFICER.**

The Council shall choose one of its members who were elected at large as Chair and another of its members as Vice-Chair. The Chair shall have the Title of Mayor and shall preside at all meetings of the Council and shall be recognized as the official head of the City for all ceremonial purposes. He or she shall sign and execute all contracts or other evidences of indebtedness on behalf of the City, make all proclamations in the name of the City and shall be the executive head of the City to the extent required by this Charter. In the absence of the Mayor, or in case of a disability, the Vice-Chair of the Council shall perform all duties of the Mayor.

**SECTION 2-17. - ORGANIZATION OF COUNCIL.**

The Council shall meet on the first day of December following each regular election under this Charter and regularly thereafter at such times as the Council may determine, but not less frequently than once each month. Until the election of a Chair, the Presiding Officer shall be the City Clerk. Special meetings of the Council shall be held upon the written request to the Mayor by three members of the Council. All meetings of the Council shall be open to the public (as required by law) and the record of the proceedings shall be kept by the City Clerk and shall be open to public inspection. All votes for the approval and election of officers shall be by written ballot and all votes for the passage of resolutions and ordinances shall be by roll call vote upon the request of any member.

**SECTION 2-18. - QUORUM; PROCEDURE.**

A simple majority of all the members of the Council shall constitute a quorum. All members of the Council present must vote on any question unless they recuse themselves on the question before the Council on ethical or other legal grounds.

The Council shall from time to time establish rules for its proceedings.

**SECTION 2-19. - ADJOURNMENT BY LESS THAN QUORUM; COMPELLING ATTENDANCE.**

If there is no quorum a majority of the members of the Council present may adjourn from time to time and be authorized to compel the attendance of absent members in such manner and under such penalties as may be prescribed by the rules of the Council.

**SECTION 2-20. - INTRODUCTION AND PASSAGE OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS.**

Every ordinance and resolution shall be introduced only in written or printed form. No ordinance or resolution shall be so amended in its passage as to change its original purpose. Any ordinance adopting a budget or making appropriations shall be confined to the subject of the budget or the appropriations. No ordinance shall be acted upon until it has been read on two separate days, nor until at least forty-eight hours shall have elapsed between such two readings, except in the case of an emergency ordinance as hereinafter provided. The second reading of such ordinance shall be in full unless a copy thereof shall have been furnished to each member of the Council prior to such reading. The enacting clause of all ordinances shall be "Be it Ordained by the City of Newport."

## **SECTION 2-21. - EMERGENCY MEASURES.**

An emergency ordinance to provide for the immediate preservation of public peace, property, health, or safety in which the emergency claimed is set forth and defined in a preamble thereto, may be passed without a second reading by an affirmative vote of at least five members of the Council. No measure making or amending a grant, renewal or extension of a franchise or other special privilege shall be passed as an emergency measure. No situation shall be declared an emergency by the Council except as defined in this section and such definition shall be strictly construed.

**2. Robert's Rules of Order** – Council meetings shall follow Robert's Rules of Order, except where they conflict with the Rhode Island General Laws or Newport's City Charter. Key procedural provisions include the following:

### **§23.Point of Order**

23:1 When a member thinks that the rules of the assembly are being violated, they can make a Point of Order (or "raise a question of order," as it is sometimes expressed), thereby calling upon the chair for a ruling and an enforcement of the regular rules.

### **§61.Disciplinary Procedures**

61:9 In dealing with any case of disorder in a meeting, the presiding officer should always maintain a calm, deliberate tone- although they may become increasingly firm if a situation demands it. Under no circumstances should the chair attempt to drown out a disorderly member – either by their own voice or the gavel – or permit themselves to be drawn into a verbal duel. If unavoidable, however, proper disciplinary proceedings to cope with immediate necessity can be conducted while a disorderly member continues to speak.

**B. Orientation of Newly Elected Councilors** – Pursuant to Newport's City Charter Section 2-17. – ORGANIZATION OF COUNCIL, "Until the election of a Chair, the Presiding Officer shall be the City Clerk".

On the first Monday following the certification of election results, newly elected Councilors shall meet with the City Clerk for an orientation that includes:

- Review of the Newport City Charter – Chapter II. – The Council.
- Review of the Rules of the Council
- Overview of caucus procedures for selection of Chair and Vice-Chair
- Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order - §3 Basic Provisions and Procedures; Means by Which Business is Brought Before the Assembly 3:21-3:24

**\*Please Note** – There shall be no caucus for the selection of the Chair and Vice-Chair until this orientation meeting has taken place.

**C. Rhode Island Code of Ethics** – Council shall conduct themselves in accordance with the Rhode Island State Constitution, Article III, Section 7 – Ethical conduct., which states “The people of the State of Rhode Island believe that public officials and employees must adhere to the highest standards of ethical code, respect the public trust and the rights of all persons, be open, accountable and responsive, avoid the appearance of impropriety and not use their position for private gain or advantage.” The following applies:

**1. Conflict of Interest –**

- a.** As a person subject to the Code of Ethics, Council members may not participate in any matter if it is reasonably foreseeable that they, any person within their **family** (which includes their spouse, parents, children, siblings, grandparents/grandchildren, aunts/uncles, nieces/nephews, and first cousins), their business associate(s), or any business by which they are employed or which they represent, will derive a direct monetary gain or suffer a direct monetary loss by reason of their official activity.
- b.** As someone who is subject to the Code of Ethics, Council members may not participate in any matter as part of their public duties if there is reason to believe or expect that any person within their family or a household member is a part or participant of; or will derive a direct monetary gain; or will suffer a direct monetary loss; or will obtain an employment advantage.

**2. Recusal –**

- a.** If a conflict of interest is present then a Council member must recuse themselves, that member must leave the dais until the item is voted upon at the meeting. Further, until the item for which the Council member has been recused is closed, said member cannot participate in discussion with other members of the council or lobby others either for or against the issue.

**D. Code of Conduct** – The Code of Conduct establishes clear expectations for the professional behavior of Council while conducting City business. Council members serve the public trust and are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes transparency, accountability, and respect for the democratic process.

Council members shall perform their duties in accordance with the highest standards of integrity, professionalism, and civility. Members shall treat fellow Council members, City staff, residents, and all individuals appearing before the Council with courtesy and respect. The Council recognizes that productive governance requires an environment that encourages open dialogue while maintaining decorum and mutual respect.

Council members shall respect the authority of the Chair to maintain order during meetings. As provided in Robert's Rules of Order, the Chair is responsible for enforcing the rules of procedure and ensuring that discussion occurs in an orderly and respectful manner. Members shall refrain from interrupting

other speakers and shall address remarks through the Chair in accordance with accepted parliamentary practice.

Council members shall avoid conduct that could reasonably be perceived as abusive, intimidating, discriminatory, or disrespectful. Personal attacks, threats, harassment, or attempts to demean another individual are inconsistent with the responsibilities of public office and undermine the effective functioning of the Council.

In accordance with the principles of Robert's Rules of Order, members share a collective responsibility to preserve the dignity of Council proceedings and to ensure that meetings are conducted in a manner that encourages constructive dialogue and meaningful public participation.

Adherence to this Code of Conduct reflects the Council's commitment to responsible governance and to maintaining a legislative environment that values professionalism, fairness, and respect for all participants in the public process.

- E. Council Meetings** – Per Rhode Island State General Law (R.I.G.L.) §42-46-1. Public policy. and §42-46-3. Open Meetings., every meeting of all public bodies shall be open to the public unless closed pursuant to §§ 42-46-4. Closed meetings. and 42-46-5. Purposes for which meeting may be closed.

**1. Types of Meetings –**

**a. Regular Council meetings -**

Regular meetings of the council shall be held on the second and fourth Wednesdays of each month at 6:30PM in the City Council Chambers, located on the Second Floor of Newport City Hall.

A pre-meeting shall be held at 6:20PM in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room and shall be open to the public.

If a regular meeting cannot occur at 6:30PM, then Council may designate an alternate time. If a regular meeting falls on a legal holiday or a major religious observance, the meeting for that week shall be held on the following day or on another date as determined by Council.

**b. Special meetings –**

A special meeting is a meeting of the Council held at a time other than a regularly scheduled meeting and is convened to consider specific items of business identified in the meeting notice. Only those matters listed in the meeting announcement may be discussed or acted upon by the Council.

Special meetings of the council may be held, as needed, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month at 6:30PM in the City Council Chambers, located on the Second Floor of Newport City Hall.

Requests for a special meeting shall be submitted to the City Clerk and must include the signatures of three (3) Councilors.

**c. Executive session –**

Executive sessions shall be conducted in accordance with Rhode Island General Laws §42-46-5, which governs the purposes for which a public meeting may be closed. Prior to entering executive session, the Council shall first convene in open session and, by an affirmative vote of a majority of its members taken by open call, vote to enter into a closed session for the specific purpose stated on the agenda.

Executive sessions of the Council may be held, as needed, on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30 PM in the City Council Chambers, located on the second floor of Newport City Hall, unless an emergency executive session is required then it will be scheduled as soon as practicable.

Consistent with the provisions outlined in Robert's Rules, discussions held during closed executive session are confidential and shall not be disclosed to individuals who are not authorized to attend. Any Council member who improperly discloses information discussed in executive session may be subject to disciplinary procedures in accordance with the Council's rules.

**d. Workshops –**

A workshop is a public meeting held by council for the purpose of discussing issues, reviewing information, and exploring policy options in a more informal setting than a regular council meeting. Workshops often focus on specific subjects and help ensure that council members have a thorough understanding of the issues before taking a formal vote at a regular council meeting.

Workshops of the council shall be held on Tuesdays, as needed, at 5:30PM in the City Council Chambers, located on the Second Floor of the Newport City Hall.

**e. Public Hearings –**

A public hearing is a formal meeting held to receive input from residents, stakeholders, and other interested parties on a specific proposed action, policy, or ordinance under consideration by the city council.

During a public hearing, city staff will provide an initial description or summary of the item(s) that has come before council. Members of the public are then given the opportunity to provide comments, ask questions, or express support or concerns on the information that is presented by city staff. The primary purpose of the hearing is to ensure transparency and provide the community with a structured opportunity to participate in the decision-making process before the council takes formal action.

After the public hearing has concluded, council will then deliberate on the item(s) presented in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

Public hearings shall be held, as needed, on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of each month at 5:30PM in the City Council Chambers, located on the Second Floor of the Newport City Hall.

**f. Special Circumstances –**

In the event of an incident that significantly impacts the health and wellbeing of the residents of Newport, it is essential that the Council act swiftly and efficiently to address the situation. To ensure timely response and transparency, this authorizes any one Councilor to submit a waiver to the above 48-hour rule and deem the event an emergency so that Council can convene as soon as practicable. Per the R.I.G.L. § 42-46-6 – Notices. if an emergency is called, a meeting notice and agenda shall be electronically filed as soon as practicable.

**2. Meeting Structure –**

**a. Call to order –**

The chair shall, at the appointed hour of each regular and special meeting, call the Council to order. Immediately after the Chair calls the Council to order, the City Clerk shall record the roll of the members present.

**b. Making a motion –**

Pursuant to Robert's Rules of Order §3 Basic Provisions and Procedures the following applies:

Before a Council member can make a motion, they must be recognized by the Chair as having the right to be heard at the time. This is done by stating "Mr. Chair," or "Madame Chair." If the Council member is entitled to the floor at the time, the Chair will recognize them.

The member can then make a motion by announcing what they propose and can ask for a second to their motion for their motion to be considered.

If a second to the motion is presented, then a discussion on said topic can follow. The Chair may make or second any motion.

A motion to reconsider a motion that has passed or failed is in order, if made at the same meeting, or at the next regular Council meeting but must be made by the one who voted in the majority.

When a question is under debate then no motion shall be received except to adjourn, to lay on the table (which motions shall be decided without debate), to postpone consideration either definitely or indefinitely, to commit, or to amend.

Anyone wishing to speak should use the microphone at the podium and state their name and address for the record. Comments must be addressed to the Council, not the audience.

**c. Vote –**

All matters coming before the Council shall be decided by a simple majority vote. Pursuant to Robert's Rules of Order §4 The Handling of a Motion, the following applies: The vote on a motion is normally taken by voice or by a show of hands.

**d. Citizens Forum –**

Citizens shall complete a written request to speak, noting the subject to be addressed during the public forum, and submit that form to the City Clerk prior to the start of the meeting per Resolution 2004-41.

Speakers must sign in with the City Clerk prior to the start of the meeting.

The Citizens' Forum period shall be no longer than fifteen minutes in its entirety and shall be conducted at the onset of a regularly scheduled council meeting.

Citizens may address the Council on one subject only and for no longer than three (3) minutes.

Issues to be discussed shall not include matters to be considered or discussed as part of the regular Council agenda and must be related to substantive city business. No comments regarding personnel or job performance are allowed.

This is a citizens' forum and not up for debate, discussion, or vote by Council, therefore Council is not required to provide a reply.

**e. Ordinances and Resolutions –**

All ordinances, resolutions, reports, communications, claims, appointments to boards and commissions, or any other matters intended for consideration by the Council must be introduced by a member of the Council or, in the official capacity of their office, by the City Manager, City Solicitor, and/or City Clerk.

Any member of the Council may introduce a resolution on any subject, provided that it is submitted in accordance with the filing procedures outlined herein. All such items must be filed in full with the City Clerk no later than 48 hours prior to the regular Council meeting, in accordance with the Rhode Island Open Meetings Act and R.I.G.L. § 42-46-6 – Notices. Resolutions not filed within the required timeframe shall not be acted upon at the meeting, except as otherwise permitted by law.

On the Wednesday preceding each regular meeting, the City Clerk shall prepare a docket of all matters that were submitted and shall send a copy of this docket, along with all relevant materials (ordinances, resolutions, reports, claims, communications, etc.), to each Council member. This shall be done both electronically and/or by hard copy to

ensure that members have sufficient time to review and prepare for the upcoming meeting, prior to the docket being posted to the City's website.

**f. Meeting minutes –**

The council shall keep written minutes of all meetings. Such minutes shall include, but need not be limited to, the following:

- The date, time, and place of the meeting.
- The members of the council recorded as either present or absent.
- A record by individual member of any vote taken.
- Any other information relevant to the business of the council that any member of the council requests be included or reflected in the minutes.

A record of all votes taken at all meetings of the council listing how each member voted on each issue shall be a public record and shall be available within two (2) weeks of the date of such vote. The minutes shall be public records and unofficial minutes shall be available within thirty-five (35) days of the meeting or at the next regularly scheduled meeting, whichever is earlier, except where such disclosure would be inconsistent with R.I.G.L. §§42-46-4 and 42-46-5, or where the council, by majority vote, extends the time period for the filing of said minutes and publicly stated the reason. The minutes of a closed session shall be made available at the next regularly scheduled meeting unless the majority of the council votes to keep said minutes closed pursuant to R.I.G.L. §§42-46-4 and 42-46-5.

**F. Boards and Commissions –**

**1. Appointments to Boards and Commissions**

Unless a member of the Council requests that applicants be interviewed, nominations may proceed without a formal interview process. In the event that an interview is requested, such interviews shall be conducted in open session. Upon completion of the interviews, the Council shall provide its recommendations to the Chair's office, and any resulting nomination shall be subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Council.

Applicants to the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Review, Historic District Commission, Waterfront Commission, and the Trust and Investment Commission shall be interviewed in open session by a majority of the Council. Following such interviews, the Council shall provide appointment recommendations to the Chair's office.

**2. Council Appointments and Liaison Roles**

Members of the City Council may be appointed to serve as members of, or liaisons to, various community, civic, municipal, and governmental bodies.

Such appointments shall be nominated by the Chair and confirmed by a majority vote of the Council. Council members serving in these roles shall not be considered voting members of the respective body and are expected to refrain from making motions or voting on matters before that body.

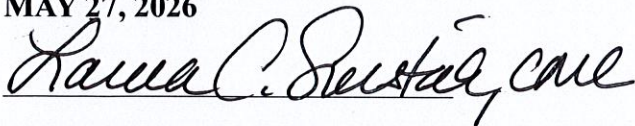
**G. Miscellaneous -**

1. There shall be no texting via cell phone when the meeting has come to order, however, the use of electronic devices such as laptops or tablets may be used on the dais for the purpose of following the agenda in lieu of receiving paper copies of the agenda.
2. Any of these rules, outside of the R.I.G.L. and City Charter sections, may be suspended temporarily, repealed, or amended by a vote of the majority.
3. The provisions contained in these rules shall undergo a review by the City Solicitor's office every two (2) years to ensure that they are up to date with the current state and local provisions.

**These rules shall take effect upon their passage.**

STEPHANIE SMYTH  
ELLEN PINNOCK

IN COUNCIL  
READ AND PASSED  
MAY 27, 2026

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Laura C. Swistak, CMC". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Laura C. Swistak, CMC  
City Clerk