

A Guide to City Council Meetings

This general overview of the City Council meeting process is intended to help you better understand your local government.

Council meetings occur on Tuesday nights at 6 p.m. and the Council does not generally meet on a fifth Tuesday of the month. Much of this information is provided in the City's [Governance Manual](#), a legislative document that serves as a guide for the conduct of legislative/executive operations on behalf of the community.

Meeting types

- Business meeting
 - Held during the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month.
 - Primarily for the purpose of voting on City business, generally in the form of motions, resolutions or ordinances.
 - Typically includes a public comment period.
 - The mayor chairs the meetings.
- Study session
 - Held the first and third Tuesdays of the month.
 - Generally, more informal than a business meeting. The purpose is to study, deliberate on or review emerging issues for potential future action. Final votes are not taken at a study session but there are often procedural votes. Study sessions do *not* include a public comment period.
 - The deputy mayor typically chairs the meetings.
- Special meeting
 - A special meeting is a Council meeting called at a date or time other than the time prescribed by ordinance for a Regular Meeting. At a special meeting, the Council may conduct any business stated on the agenda that is publicly posted prior to the meeting, or the Council may approve deletions or additional items for discussion (but not additional action items) to the agenda at the meeting.

Types of Council action

- Proclamation
 - A **proclamation** recognizes a day, week or month for a specific issue or occasion. The goal of a proclamation is to honor, celebrate or create awareness of an event or significant issue.
- Motion
 - A **motion** is a formal proposal by the Council for taking actions.
- Ordinance
 - An enacted **ordinance** is a local law (legislative act) prescribing general rules of conduct. Ordinances are codified in the Bainbridge Island Municipal Code, which is available on the City's website.
- Resolution

- An adopted **resolution** is an administrative act that is less formal than an ordinance but is a statement of legislative policy or direction concerning matters of special or temporary character. A resolution may have the force of law (e.g., a resolution setting permit fees).

Agenda Items

The City Council meeting agenda is published the Friday before a meeting and posted on the City website. If you would like to receive the City Council agenda by email when it's published, sign up on the [Council Agendas webpage](http://bainbridgewa.gov/1101) at bainbridgewa.gov/1101.

- Call to order/roll call
 - The chair announces the start of the meeting and roll call is taken to ensure a quorum (4 or more) is present.
- Executive session
 - Portion of a public meeting that is closed to the public. The Council may discuss only certain items of business, such as
 - real estate acquisition, lease or site selection or deliberations on the price for offering real estate for sale or lease
 - negotiations on publicly bid contracts
 - evaluation of complaints or charges brought against a public officer or employee
 - evaluation of qualifications of an applicant for public employment or of the performance of a public employee
 - evaluation of the qualifications of a candidate for appointment to elective office
 - City enforcement actions or litigation or potential litigation
 - Council members shall not disclose confidential information learned or confidential documents provided during an executive session unless waived by the full Council.
- Approval of agenda/conflict of interest disclosure
 - The agenda is approved to keep the meeting on track.
 - Council members must disclose if they have a conflict of interest on an agenda item that precludes them from participation on that item.
- Public comment
 - During a business meeting, any member of the public may address the full Council on any public issue whether or not it's on the agenda. Unless Council determines otherwise, the public comment period is not for responses from Council or the administration. Each person has three minutes to speak unless there are many participants. Instructions for providing public comment in a Zoom meeting are provided on each business meeting agenda.
 - Speakers begin by stating their name.
- City Manager's report
 - This is an opportunity for the City Manager to announce any upcoming events or news (not to be confused with the City's weekly e-newsletter that is also called the City Manager's Report).

- Consent agenda
 - The consent agenda includes several items to be adopted all at once, including items previously discussed by the Council or that are in the approved budget and are so routine or technical that passage without discussion is likely.
- Future Council agendas
 - Any council member may request future Council deliberation of agenda items. If after discussion there is not clear support for the agenda item, then the chair may call for a vote. If there is general Council support, or a majority vote of Council to proceed, then the City Manager, in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, will add the item to an upcoming meeting agenda with adequate lead time for staff support. If there is not support by a majority of Council, then the item will be placed under Future Council agendas for a 10-minute discussion on whether to schedule the item.
- Presentations
 - City staff or advisory groups, outside agencies and/or consultants provide presentations to enhance the public's understanding of complex issues or to introduce new topics. Proclamations also appear under this section.
- Public hearings
 - A formal opportunity for the public to share views with the Council on the subject of the hearing. A public hearing may be required by statute or City ordinance as a portion of the prescribed public process for the Council's adoption of the City budget, the City's Capital Facilities Plan and certain other legislative actions.
- Unfinished business
 - This section includes any item that was pending when the previous meeting adjourned or business items that were on the "unfinished business" list in a previous meeting but were still not taken up before adjournment.
- New business
 - This section includes new items presented to the Council for discussion and consideration of next steps.
- City Council discussion
 - This section is for items that need additional time for Council discussion and deliberation.
- Committee reports
 - This is an opportunity for council members who serve as liaisons to City advisory groups and regional boards to provide an update on the status of their committee work.
- For the good for the order
 - This is time set aside for members to offer comments or observations (without formal motions) about the Council's work or items of general interest to the community.
- Adjournment
 - This marks the end of the meeting—the chair declares the meeting adjourned.
- Guiding principles
 - The guiding principles, derived from the Comprehensive Plan, describe our values guiding growth, development, and conservation of resources in the community.

Ways to watch Council meetings

- Zoom
- City website livestream
 - Visit the [Agendas & Minutes page](#), then click on "In Progress" when the meeting starts
- BKAT (Channel 12 on Comcast & Channel 3 on WAVE)

Accessibility

- In-person City Council meetings are wheelchair accessible. Assisted listening devices are available in the Council Chambers. If you require additional ADA accommodations, please contact the City Clerk's Office at 206-780-8604 or cityclerk@bainbridgewa.gov by noon on the day preceding the meeting.
- Closed captioning
 - We provide real-time closed captioning on our live Zoom meetings.
 - We are working to upgrade our equipment in the Council Chambers to provide for closed captioning on our recordings once we return to in-person meetings.