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Mayor and Council Operating Guidelines

The Mayor and Council developed the following Operating Guidelines to formalize their practices and establish clear guidelines in order to improve the productivity and effectiveness of their meetings and to further enhance working relationships among the elected body and with city staff.

1. The governing body will take a formal vote for every formal agenda item as well as in every instance where city staff needs direction from the governing body in to proceed or to take action.
 - For all votes by the governing body, voting will be by a show of hands (or by electronic voting, potentially at some point in the future) to make clear the position of each member of the governing body and to gauge with absolute certainty the will of the governing body as a whole.
 - In order for city staff to proceed on any policy initiative or other request that will require more than a minimal amount of effort to fulfill and that is put forth by an individual member of the governing body, a majority of the governing body must vote to instruct city staff to proceed.

2. All members of the governing body will try to provide advance notice on new initiatives or requests so that the City Manager can consider the resources that will be needed to support them.
 - Whenever possible, new initiatives or requests, especially those that would require more than a minimal amount of effort to fulfill, will be shared with other members of the elected body in advance.
 - Members of the governing body will use the “future agenda items” section on the agenda to propose new initiatives, make requests not related to items already on that meeting’s agenda, and ask for a follow up from staff on other items.

3. Members of the governing body will share responsibility for enhancing the productivity and effectiveness of meetings and for maintaining professional decorum by:

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- Moving forward with making and seconding of a motion on a question before the governing body when it appears that a majority of members is ready to bring the question to an outcome.
- Using the motion and seconding a of motion as the time to complete discussion on a question before the governing body.
- Calling the question when is appears that no new ground in the discussion on a question is being covered.
- Waiting to be recognized by the chair of the meeting before speaking.
- Listening respectfully to other members of the governing body and other speakers by avoiding side conversations during meetings.
- Calling a point of order when it is felt that any participation by any member of the governing body or others is not related to the question at hand.
- “Agreeing to disagree” respectfully.
- Reconsideration of a matter previously decided by the governing body requires a motion to be reconsidered.

4. During Citizens Forum and public hearings, members of the governing body will listen and not speak, other than to ask specific questions in order to obtain new, relevant information or to clarify a specific point.

- After Citizens Forum is closed, members of the governing body may each provide a brief response and/or discuss matters that have been raised with city staff. Members of the governing body will strive to keep any remarks they make as concise as possible.
- After a public hearing is closed, members of the governing body may indicate to city staff any request for additional information related to the matter for which the public hearing was held. Members of the governing body will refrain from substantive discussion of the matter until “discussion and instruction” of that matter at a future meeting.

5. In order to ensure clarity as to when individual members of the governing body are speaking on behalf of the governing body versus for themselves:

- Members of the governing body will explicitly indicate that they are speaking on behalf of the governing body only when a vote has been taken by the governing body regarding the position being represented.
- Otherwise, when speaking on matters involving the City of Rockville and the city government, each member of the governing body will make clear that they speak only for themselves and not the governing body or the city government.

Approved by the Mayor and Council, 2/26/06