



City of Jonesboro

Municipal Center
300 S. Church Street
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Meeting Minutes City Council

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

4:00 PM

Municipal Center

Special Called Meeting

1. CALL TO ORDER BY MAYOR PERRIN AT 4:00 P.M.

2. ROLL CALL BY CITY CLERK DONNA JACKSON

Present 10 - Ann Williams; Charles Frierson; Chris Moore; John Street; Tim McCall; Gene Vance; Chris Gibson; Rennell Woods; Charles Coleman and Todd Burton

Absent 2 - Darrel Dover and Mitch Johnson

3. NEW BUSINESS

COM-15:033

Policy audit concerning the current City Council rules and procedures

Attachments:

[State Code](#)

[Motions](#)

[Policies & Procedures](#)

[Procedural Rules for Municipal Officials](#)

[Ethics Statement](#)

Nominating & Rules Chairman Chris Gibson explained the reason for the special called meeting is to audit the Council's rules and procedures. He asked City Clerk Donna Jackson to review the current Council procedures and if any of the aldermen would like to make changes they can be submitted through Ms. Jackson's office in order for her to put together working document for the next meeting. He also asked that all questions be held until the end of the meeting.

Ms. Jackson showed the Council State Code A.C.A. 14-43-501 which details the state law regarding organization of the city council. (Attached to minutes) She noted it states aldermen should meet at the first council meeting in January to organize the city council. She further read the state law and stated the law indicates the mayor can vote to establish a quorum only at regular meetings of the city council, not special called meetings.

Ms. Jackson then presented the Council with information showing what motions require three-fourths vote as well as two-thirds votes. (Attached to minutes)

Ms. Jackson discussed the current rules and procedures. (Attached to minutes) She explained the difference between a regularly scheduled Council meeting and a special called Council meeting. Special meetings are called by three or more aldermen, or by the mayor. If called by three or more aldermen, only those aldermen can cancel the meeting and all of them have to agree to cancel the meeting. Councilman Moore asked if the mayor could cancel a meeting that was called by

aldermen. Ms. Jackson answered the person(s) who call the meeting is the only one who can cancel the meeting. The press has to be notified two hours prior to a meeting time and also have to be notified of cancellations with a two hour frame. She explained the reason for the special called meeting must be stated and only those items can be considered.

She then discussed the conduct rules detailed. She noted aldermen who abstain from voting also cannot participate in discussions and must state the reason for the abstention. She noted the Freedom of Information procedure is very short and more could be added due to the recent hiring of the Director of Communications.

Ms. Jackson discussed Council agendas and noted the Council has the authority at regular meetings to rearrange their agenda. She pointed out the public comment section is for citizens to voice their concerns about non-agenda items only. That does not mean that debate or discussion is to be held.

Committee meetings were then discussed. Ms. Jackson noted according to the rules and procedures in order for a committee to make a recommendation to the Council on an item a majority vote is needed by the committee. It was also noted that the procedures do not allow for the mayor to count towards the quorum of a committee meeting; rather, the procedures state a majority of the committee shall be necessary to constitute a quorum.

Further discussion was held concerning the current rules and procedures.

Councilman Vance asked whether the Ethics Disclosure that the aldermen fill out every year is required by state law or if it's by city ordinance. Ms. Jackson stated the disclosure is required by city ordinance, as stated in the rules and procedures, so the Council can change that if they want to.

Ms. Jackson noted that areas such as the public comments section, how citizen legislation is presented to the Council, the FOI policy, walk-ons and the process for calling special meetings have been debated recently and should be looked at during their consideration of the rules and procedures.

Chairman Gibson asked if agendas for special called meetings need to be adjusted to ensure that the only topic(s) discussed is the one for which the meeting was called. He explained in special meetings the agenda is formatted the same as if it was a regular meeting, including Other Business and Public Comments. But, if a special meeting can only cover specific topics he questioned whether the agenda should omit those other areas.

Mayor Perrin stated he has several things he would like to submit for changes to the procedures. He discussed public comments and stated it is his understanding that public comments are not for asking questions. Dialogue, discussion and debate is not to be held under public comments. He noted he will have to be more careful about that during Council meetings. Councilman Moore added that the rules also state public comments are for non-agenda items only and aren't to bring up a topic that was earlier on the agenda. Councilman Street stated the Municipal League recommends Council adjourns the meeting and then hold public comments that way they can be sure no business can be acted upon. Chairman Gibson asked what other cities do that. Mayor Perrin stated North Little Rock adjourns the meeting and then goes into public comment. Councilman Vance stated he likes that idea because it would take away the tendency to respond to the comments being made. Councilman Moore asked who would conduct the public comments section if the meeting stands adjourned. Councilman Street stated the Mayor would still conduct the meeting. City

Attorney Carol Duncan noted a clock could be put on the screen to show the time in order to make sure the public comments don't run long. Councilman Street indicated he would submit that request for a change. Further discussion was held concerning public comments. Chairman Gibson reiterated that all changes are to be submitted to the Clerk's Office so she can put together a working document.

Councilman Burton pointed out that in the current rules and procedures it states that the Council can allow for more time, but if the meeting is no longer being conducted then they can't vote to make it longer. So, the wording with that will also need to be cleaned up. Councilman Vance stated he would be willing to stay for an hour as long as something constructive is taking place. Councilman Moore agreed, explaining that goes back to who will be conducting the meeting. Councilman Vance proposed having a public hearing before or after the Council meeting to allow for public comments. Ms. Jackson recommended having it before the Council meeting so citizens wouldn't have to wait till the end of the meeting to discuss their issue. Mayor Perrin agreed, stating that would also limit the discussion so it doesn't take long. Further discussion was held concerning public comments.

Councilman Vance stated he has questions about the Ethics Disclosure from the standpoint that it doesn't define "family." He explained he thinks the definition of family should be restricted to those people who live in the household. But, it shouldn't include brothers, etc. He further explained the word "family" is too general. Mayor Perrin stated he's not sure the Ethics Disclosure is needed because a lot of the information is stated on the Statement of Financial Interest that is required by state law to be filled out every year.

Mayor Perrin then discussed citizen legislation and how the process for hearing it. He explained city legislation goes to the a committee first before being presented to the Council. Councilman Vance stated citizens should get a Council member to sponsor a piece of legislation and then have it go through the proper procedure.

Mayor Perrin stated he should be allowed to add something to an agenda for a regular meeting without having to go through a committee chair. He explained he thinks it's a waste of time to have to call the committee chair, who will then in turn have to call the Clerk's Office to add something to the agenda.

Mayor Perrin added he will be submitting changes that have to deal with the administration. He stated an important matter to look at is how the citizens can present something to the Council. Ms. Jackson explained in the past she has referred items to a committee to be heard. Councilman Street stated he thinks a committee is the proper place to submit citizen legislation. City Attorney Duncan further explained the question is whether a citizen can bring something to the Clerk's Office and it be placed on an agenda, or if it has to be sponsored by an alderman and/or the Mayor and then taken to a committee. She stated that needs to be specified in the rules so everyone is clear what the procedure is. Ms. Jackson added that also goes back to notifying the chair of items that are going to be added to a committee meeting because the chair is the presiding officer of the committee. Mayor Perrin stated he understands the intent, but he always contacts the chair of a committee.

It was clarified that citizens can submit something to an alderman and/or the Mayor to be sponsored and taken to a committee and then on to the Council, if that's the will of the committee. City Attorney Duncan added that they also need to question whether a citizen can take an item to any alderman or if it has to be an alderman on that particular committee that would hear the item. Councilman Moore stated he thinks any alderman should have the ability to submit something to another committee, whether they sit on that committee or not.

Mayor Perrin stated that discussion is why a lot of cities have moved to a committee of the whole because everyone will hear everything at the same time. Councilman Street pointed out that he did some research and found where committees are actually used to reduce the workload put on Council members and reduces the length and frequency of Council meetings. He also found that over the past few decades cities have used increasingly used committee systems. The use of committee systems is growing in larger cities with Mayor/Council form of government. He noted the National League of Cities endorses the system Jonesboro uses now. Councilman McCall agreed, adding his concern is longer meetings that may result in items being rushed on the agenda without being fully researched.

This item was Filed.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS

5. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.