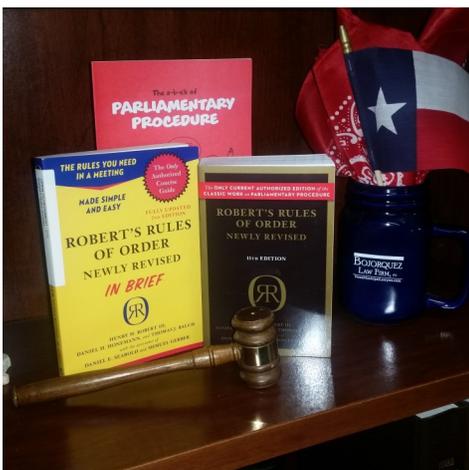




THE TEXAS MUNICIPAL LAW BULLETINTM

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Establishing Effective Rules of Order



Procedural Rules are not required by state law, but are mandated by some city charters. Creating a process for the orderly conduct of meetings is essential. Having written **Rules of Order** helps to ensure legal compliance and instills public confidence in the legislative process and the city's leadership.

Many options exist. Some cities use *Robert's Rules of Order*. Other cities adopt their own Rules of Order or amend *Robert's Rules* to better tailor the procedures to meet their needs. Regardless of their source, Rules of Order must be consistent with the Constitution, statutes, and if applicable, a home-rule city's charter.

Robert's Rules of Order contains many formal processes for making motions and conducting debate. Such formality may not meet the needs of every community. Some common amendments to *Robert's Rules* include:

- Changing the rules on recognizing speakers.
- Revising the manner of making motions, offering amendments to motions, and the precedence of motions.
- Adjusting the order of debate and adding a roll-call voting process.

Each city must assess its needs to determine the most effective manner to conduct business. Establishing procedures for setting up and conducting meetings, including closed (executive) sessions, creates transparency and prepares the public on what to expect. Accordingly, the Rules of Order may also include:

- Designating the time and location of regular meetings (a resolution is required for Type A municipalities).
- Establishing procedures for placing items on a meeting agenda.
- Setting the agenda structure and order of business for the meetings.
- Instituting a process for using a consent agenda to expedite routine matters.
- Creating rules for the public comment process and identifying when a member of the public is required to sign up to speak on agenda items.
- Addressing the use of electronic devices during meetings by officials, staff, and the public (e.g., flash photography).

The amount of structure and formality needed in the meeting process will vary among communities. Cities should periodically assess their Rules of Order and processes to ensure they are appropriately balancing between efficiency and democracy in the conduct of their meetings.

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