

**RULES OF CONDUCT AND PROCEDURE: BY-LAWS OF THE  
COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE FOR THE YEAR 2023**

**RULE I.** Regular meetings of the Common Council shall be held on the first and third Mondays of each month at six thirty in the evening at the City Hall, or at such other place as the Chairperson shall appoint. The first regular meeting of January shall be held on January 3, 2023 at six thirty o'clock in the evening at City Hall. In case of a holiday on any such day, the regular meeting shall be held on another date. The Common Council may adjourn when convened, to any other day or place, every such stated or adjourned meeting of the Council. In addition, there shall be informational meetings and special meetings held as provided in the Charter.

**RULE II.** The Councilmember elected At-Large shall be designated as Council Chair, the presiding officer, and the Common Council shall elect its Vice Chairperson in the manner provided for in the Charter. In the event of a vacancy in the office of the Vice Chairperson, the Council shall, by majority vote, elect a Vice Chairperson, at its next regular meeting and within thirty (30) days of vacancy of the office.

**RULE III.** There shall be a standing sub-committee of the Common Council known as the Finance Committee. The members of the Finance Committee shall be appointed pursuant to the City Charter. The Chairperson may create additional such subcommittees or special committees as they deem necessary and appropriate.

**RULE IV.** The City Chamberlain shall record the attendance at meetings. The order of business at regular meetings shall be as follows:

1. Pledge of allegiance and Roll Call.
2. Review of the minutes of the previous meeting.
3. Reading by City Chamberlain of any resolution or other items not listed on the printed agenda.
4. Public Participation-limited to 45 minutes.
5. Mayor's comments.
6. Chairperson's comments and presentations.
7. Reports of Committees and Boards.
8. Motions and resolutions.
9. Ordinances and local laws.
10. Presentation of petitions and communications.
11. Unfinished Business.
12. New Business.
13. Adjournment.

**RULE V.** The presiding officer shall set the agenda at all meetings of the Common Council. A councilmember may add items to New Business with the support of three (3) councilmembers. The order of business may be departed from with a motion, second, and by a majority vote of the members present. Any item added to an agenda must clearly identify a Councilmember as its sponsor.

**RULE VI.** The presiding officer shall designate the seating arrangement for Councilmembers and staff at Council meetings and the order of voting of Councilmembers on all matters coming before the Council for a vote. The presiding officer may, if they so desire, present motions and resolutions to the Common Council, and they may debate on any question which is being considered by it. The presiding officer, if they deem it appropriate, may allow Councilmembers or the Mayor to respond to or comment upon public comments made at each regular meeting during public participation (Item 4 of the Agenda set forth in Rule IV above), prior to the adjournment of the meeting.

**RULE VII.** The presiding officer shall have, to the fullest extent provided by New York State law, the sole authority to regulate public comment at any meeting as they, in their sole discretion, shall see fit, including, but not limited to, the authority to set priority for topics of comment and to declare any person to be out of order for failure to follow their directives in this regard. In governing the meeting and regulating public comment the presiding officer shall consider, but shall not be strictly bound by the following guidelines:

- A. The public shall be allowed to speak during the period of the meeting designated as “Public Participation” or as such other time as a majority of the Council shall suspend these rules, or at a duly called public hearing, or any other time required by state law or the City Charter. Speakers must sign-in and provide their name, address, and organization they represent, if applicable. Speakers must be recognized by the presiding officer. During the segment of the meeting designated “Public Participation”, speakers shall limit their remarks to three minutes and will be advised by the presiding officer when three minutes have expired. Speakers are requested to conclude their remarks at that time. “Public Participation” is intended to afford persons an opportunity to express opinions on items on the Common Council’s agenda. No Speaker shall be declared out of order, prevented from speaking or barred from attendance at any meeting because of any disagreement with the Speaker’s position or view on any matter, because of the Speaker’s identity or because of any disagreement with the content of relevant testimony.
- B. All remarks shall be addressed to the Council as a body and not to any member thereof. Speakers shall observe the rules of decorum set forth in Subsection C below. Interested parties or their representatives may address the Council by written communications. Written communications shall be delivered to the City Chamberlain.
- C. Rules of decorum
  1. Purposes of rules of decorum.
    - a. To ensure that meetings of the Common Council are conducted in a way that allows the business of the City to be effectively undertaken.
    - b. To ensure that members of the public who attend meetings of the Common Council can be heard in a fair, impartial manner.
    - c. To ensure that meetings of the Common Council are conducted in a way that is open to all viewpoints and which is protective of the content of each speaker’s speech and expression yet is free from hateful, abusive, obstructive or intimidating behavior.
    - d. To ensure that these rules of decorum are understood by persons attending Common Council meetings.
    - e. To ban egregious, inappropriate, and obstructive behavior at meetings of the Common Council.
  2. Sergeant At Arms. The Chief of Police or such member or members of the Police Department as they may designate shall be Sergeant-at-Arms of the Common Council and shall carry out all orders given by the presiding officer for purposes of maintaining order and decorum at the Council meeting. Any member of the Common Council may move to require the presiding officer to enforce the rules upon an affirmative vote of a majority of the Common Council.

3. Rules for the Speaker.
  - a. The speaker shall conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner.
  - b. All remarks shall be directed to the Common Council, as a body, and not a City staff or any member of the public in attendance.
4. Rules for the public. Members of the public in the audience shall not engage in any of the following activities during a Common Council meeting:
  - a. Shouting, clapping, booing, heckling, unruly behavior, or speaking out when not recognized by the presiding officer. Such behavior is distracting to the members of the Common Council and other members of the public, interfering with their ability to listen to the current speaker.
  - b. Defamation, intimidation, personal affronts, threats of violence, or profanity.
  - c. Behavior that disrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting.
5. Rules for Councilmembers. While the Common Council is in session, the members must preserve order and decorum. Each Councilmember shall conduct themselves with decorum and shall neither, by conversation or otherwise, delay nor interrupt the proceedings or the peace of the Common Council, nor disturb any member while speaking or refuse to obey the orders of the presiding officer.
  - a. Speaker to be recognized by the presiding officer. No Councilmember wishing to speak shall proceed until they shall have been recognized by the presiding officer. After such recognition, the member shall confine discussion to the item at hand and to its merits and shall not be interrupted except by a point of order or privilege raised by another member. Speakers should address their remarks to the presiding officer, maintain a courteous tone and shall avoid interjecting a personal note into the debate.
  - b. Discussion of Resolutions, Motions, Ordinances, Laws. Any Councilmember, when recognized by the presiding officer, may speak on any Resolution, Motion, Ordinance, Law on the printed Agenda during the period of discussion following the introduction of the aforementioned items. The Councilmember(s) named as the sponsor(s) of a Resolution, Ordinance, Law or Motion have the privilege of speaking first. No member shall speak more than once on the same question unless every member desiring to speak to that question shall have had the opportunity to do so.
6. Persons Authorized to be within Rail. No person except members of the Common Council and City Staff shall be permitted within the rail without the consent of the presiding officer.
7. Enforcement of rules of decorum.
  - a. Upon a violation of these rules of decorum, the presiding officer shall advise the person or persons violating a rule or rules to cease the violation with a brief

description of the conduct that is in violation. The speaker or member(s) of the public shall be advised to cease the violating conduct and that further violations could result in removal from the meeting room.

- c. If a violation continues, the presiding officer shall issue a second and final warning to the person(s) that they continue to be in violation of the Rules of Conduct and Decorum and that they will be required to leave the Common Council Chambers if the violation continues.
- d. If the person or persons does not cease the violation(s) the presiding officer shall declare the person out of order and advise the person(s) that their right to continued attendance at the particular meeting has been revoked. The presiding officer, or his/her/their designee, shall contact the Police to arrange for removal of the person(s) from the meeting room. Said person shall be subject to all civil and criminal penalties that may apply to their conduct.

**RULE VIII.** When a question is under debate, no new motion shall be received, unless for the previous question, to amend it, to lay on the table, to commit it, to postpone it, or to adjourn.

**RULE IX.** A motion to lay a question on the table shall be decided without amendment or debate, and a motion to postpone shall be decided without debate.

**RULE X.** A motion to adjourn shall always be in order; and shall be decided without debate.

**RULE XI.** Every member who shall be present when a question is put, shall vote for or against the same, or abstain with reasons for the abstention stated upon the record.

**RULE XII.** No question or motion, once put or lost, shall again be put unless reconsidered; and a motion for reconsidering must be made not later than the next regular meeting after that on which the decision proposed to be reconsidered took place, and shall be made by a member who voted with the prevailing side. All motions for reconsidering must be passed by the affirmative vote of a majority of the voting power of the Common Council.

**RULE XIII.** On the demand of any member, a roll call vote on any question shall be taken by ayes and nays; and it shall be the duty of the City Chamberlain to enter on the minutes the names of the members voting for or against the question, and also the name of the member demanding the roll call vote.

**RULE XIV.** All appointments of officers and fixing of salaries shall be by ayes and nays.

**RULE XV.** The legislation described below shall be read and laid over until the next meeting of the Common Council unless consent for immediate adoption is approved by a majority vote of the Common Council. This rule shall apply to:

- (a) The adoption of the budget
- (b) Ordinances
- (c) Local Laws
- (d) Resolutions amending the Rules and By-Laws of the Council
- (e) Resolutions appropriating money, amending the budget, or approving the

execution of contracts

**RULE XVI.** In order to hear persons other than members of the Common Council, the Mayor, and members of City staff, it shall be necessary to pass a motion suspending the 5 rules of order. A motion to suspend the rules may be made at any time during the meeting and shall be decided without debate. Any such person speaking shall confine themselves to the subject and not longer than three (3) minutes, unless the time is extended by the Chairperson. This rule shall not apply to public hearings.

**RULE XVII.** All meetings of the Common Council shall be recorded by means of an audio and/or video recording device. The archived results of the meetings shall be kept in the Office of the City Chamberlain, and shall be under their jurisdiction and control. Minutes of the proceedings shall be printed as soon as possible after each meeting and presented to the Common Council at its next meeting for its approval or correction. The minutes shall be available for public review in the Office of the City Chamberlain, and the City Chamberlain shall give a copy of the minutes to persons requesting the same to the extent that they are available. When a request is made for an annual record of the minutes, a fee shall be charged to cover the expenses of the handling and recording and mailing if the record is on paper in accordance with the New York Open Meetings Law. A Ten (\$10.00) Dollar fee shall be paid if the record is digital.

**RULE XVIII.** An executive session is that portion of the meeting not open to the public because of the consideration of matters authorized for executive session pursuant to the New York State Open Meetings Law. Proposals, discussions, statements, and transactions in executive sessions are intended to be and shall be held and maintained in confidence and shall not be disclosed.

**RULE XIX.** The Mayor may be invited to comment to and address the Council and the public on any issues of public concern raised by Councilmembers at the Council's regular meetings each month, prior to motions and resolutions being heard and at any time thereafter at the discretion of the Council chairperson.

**RULE XX.** All legislation, including local laws, motions, resolutions, and ordinances presented to the Common Council, except for procedural motions, such as motions to amend and motions to refer, shall be numbered to simplify the tracking of such legislation, with the number clearly marked below the title of each piece of legislation and on Common Council agendas, as follows:

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Local Laws:  | LL-Year- Sequential Number (LL01-1; LL01-2; etc.) |
| Motions:     | M-Year-Sequential Number (M01-1; etc.)            |
| Resolutions: | R-Year- Sequential Number (R01-1; etc.)           |
| Ordinances:  | O-Year- Sequential Number (O01-1; etc.)           |

Additionally, any such item listed on the agenda must clearly identify a Councilmember as its sponsor.

**RULE XXI.** The Chairperson of the Common Council shall give an address in response to the Mayor's annual state of the City address presented pursuant to section 3.02(h) of the City Charter at the next regular meeting of the Common Council following the Mayor's address.

**RULE XXII.** The Chairperson, or Vice Chairperson in the Chairperson's absence, is authorized to excuse a Councilmember from attending up to three (3) consecutive regular meetings of the Common Council because of a medical injury or illness which physically prevents the Councilmember from attending the meeting(s), if the medical injury or illness and physical inability to attend the meeting(s) is documented

by a physician's note. Absences beyond three (3) consecutive regular meetings, for no more than an additional three (3) consecutive regular meetings, may be excused by a majority vote of the entire Council, based upon a written physician's note documenting the medical injury or illness which physically prevents the Councilmember from attending the meeting(s). This medical information is confidential and shall not be disclosed or discussed by individual Council members other than to note that the requesting member has documented the need for their absence.

**RULE XXIII.** The following rules shall apply to a legally required public hearing held before the Common Council:

(a) Speakers shall register in writing prior to the beginning of the hearing by providing their name, address, and organization if any. Individuals arriving after the commencement of the hearing shall be permitted to register upon arrival as long as the Chairperson has not closed the hearing.

(b) The Chairperson shall recognize each speaker, in the order registered, when the hearing is commenced. Speakers shall identify themselves, their address and organization, if any, prior to the remarks.

(c) Speakers must limit their remarks to five (5) minutes. Remarks shall be addressed only to the hearing issues. Failure to limit comments to the public hearing shall be enforced by the presiding officer in the same manner as a violation of the Rules of Decorum. Speakers may not yield any remaining time they may have to another speaker.

(d) Speakers at a public hearing shall follow the Rules of Decorum as set forth in Rule VII (b) & (c). Failure to follow the Rules of Decorum shall be enforced by the presiding officer.

(e) The Chamberlain shall include in the minutes of the hearing the name, address, and organization, if any, of each speaker, a brief synopsis of the remarks, and a list of written statements submitted to the Council and shall either attach the statements to the minutes or indicate that said statements are available in the Office of the Chamberlain.

Adopted by the Common Council; January 3, 2023

Resolution R-23-01