

City of Downey



A Citizens Guide to Participating in the City Council Meeting Process

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Prepared by the City Clerk's Office (562) 904-7280
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Types of Council Action

Proclamations

A proclamation is an item that shows the Council's endorsement regarding various national, state and local activities. The Mayor will often present proclamations to persons representative of those activities.

Minute Actions

These ordinarily indicate majority approval for a procedural action. Minute actions are usually used for disposition of routine business items.

Ordinances

Under the City Charter, an Ordinance is a law enacted by the City Council. An Ordinance requires the affirmative votes of at least 3 Council Members. An Ordinance (except an Urgency Ordinance) is introduced at one Council Meeting, but must be finally adopted at a second meeting. A Summary of the Ordinance is then published in a local newspaper and also posted at the City Clerk's Office and the Library. Generally, the Ordinance becomes effective 30 days later. This action can be repealed or amended only by a subsequent Ordinance. An Urgency Ordinance to preserve the public peace, health or safety may be adopted immediately and requires the affirmative votes of at least 4 Council Members.

Resolutions

A Resolution constitutes a written action or decision. It may be adopted at one meeting and may be changed by subsequent Resolution. A Resolution requires the affirmative votes of at least 3 Council Members.

Motion to Waive Further Reading

Resolution No. 05-6827 set City Council policy that titles for Ordinances and Resolutions which appear on the agenda shall be determined to have been read by title and further reading waived.

Referral

When the Council is not prepared to take definite action, or when further study or information is needed, the matter may be referred to the City Manager for staff study; or, to a City Council subcommittee for reporting back to the City Council at a future meeting.

Staff Support

Both the City Manager and the City Attorney are present in an advisory capacity at City Council Meetings. The City Clerk records the official actions of the City Council. Also in attendance is the "Management Team," composed of the Assistant City Manager, Chief of Police, Fire Chief, Development Services Director, Community Services Director, Finance Director, Public Works Director, and Assistant to the City Manager.

Getting Involved

The City Council agendas and minutes are available on the City's website and at the City Clerk's Office. If you have questions about City Council Meetings or agenda items, contact the City Clerk at (562) 904-7280. To reach Council Members, contact the City Council Secretary at (562) 904-7274.

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The Council

The five members of the Downey City Council are elected by the voters of Downey, for four-year terms. Four members represent councilmanic districts, while the fifth is an "at-large" representation.

Council elections are held in November of even-numbered years, consolidated with the Statewide General Elections.

The Mayor serves as the Council's presiding officer, and is selected every December by the Council to serve a one-year term. The Mayor is spokesperson for the City Council at official and ceremonial occasions. The Mayor Pro Tempore assumes the above-mentioned responsibilities in the absence of the Mayor.

As the legislative body of the City, the City Council, may, among other things:

- Approve contracts and agreements;
- Formulate City policy, regulations and standards;
- Adopt and amend City laws;
- Adopt the annual budget.

The Agenda

The agenda gives a brief general description of each item of business to be acted upon at a Council Meeting. Agendas are posted at the front door of City Hall, at the Library and on the City's web site at least 72 hours before every regular meeting. A public copy of the agenda packet (which also contains Agenda Reports) is available at the Council Meeting, as well as the Downey City Library and the City Clerk's Office. A limited number of agendas are available during the meeting.

Addressing the Council

Persons wishing to address the Council on any item on the agenda may do so at the time the item is considered. Comments are limited to no more than 5 minutes per speaker.

Public Hearings

In general, a Public Hearing is an open consideration within a Regular Meeting of the City Council, for which special notice has been given and may be required. For the convenience of the public, all Public Hearings are set as the first item on the City Council agenda. These Public Hearings are required on topics such as zoning changes, annexations, appeals, proposed budget and franchises. After the Mayor opens the Public Hearing, the staff report is presented. The applicant shall speak after the staff report and shall have the opportunity for rebuttal. Any resident or concerned individual is invited to present protests or offer support for the matter under consideration.

The City Council will then close the Public Hearing, discuss the matter and render its decision regarding the item. Occasionally, the Public Hearing may be continued to another meeting, or, in some cases, the City Council may refer the matter back to the Planning Commission.

Non-Agenda Public Comment

This will occur after Public Hearings. The public may address the Council/Commission on any item within the jurisdiction of the Council/Commission and not listed on the agenda. Each person speaking shall be limited to no more than five minutes.

The Consent Calendar

This permits routine matters such as minutes, cash contracts, and resolutions to be handled by one motion. Members of the general public or Council Members may request that items be removed. All items that are removed will be considered near the conclusion of the meeting.

Administrative Reports

These are items of a significant nature requiring an oral staff report at the meeting and City Council discussion. The City Council will accept public comment at the time the item is considered.

Types of Council Meetings

All City Council Meetings are conducted in compliance with the Ralph M. Brown Act, found in California Government Code Section 54950, et. seq. Copies of the adopted Rules of Conduct for City Council Meetings are available during the meeting. Generally, Roberts Rules of Order are followed for parliamentary procedure.

Regular Meetings

The City Council meets for Regular Meetings on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7:15 p.m. in the Council Chambers, 11111 Brookshire Avenue. The City Council also acts as members of the Redevelopment Agency in regards to redevelopment issues. The Council will convene first as the Community Development Commission, then convene as the City Council.

Special Meetings

Occasionally, the Mayor or City Council will call Special Meetings to consider specific items. The City Clerk will post notices of these meetings at least 24 hours in advance. Only matters identified in the Special Meeting notice will be considered.

Closed Sessions

The City Council may meet in Closed Session before, during or after City Council meetings to discuss matters such as:

- Pending or threatened litigation;
- Labor negotiations;
- Conference with real property negotiators;
- Consideration of appointment, performance evaluation, discipline, dismissal or release of a public employee;
- License/permit determinations;
- Liability claims.

Study Sessions

The City Council may conduct Study Sessions, sometimes called "Workshops" for a specific purpose, such as the preliminary annual City budget. These sessions are usually informal, though public, and may be held at a place other than the City Council Chambers.