

# Civic Agencies Training: Module No. 5

## Making Recommendations



- All civic agency recommendations and other decisions are enacted through resolutions, which are proposals, statements, or requests for action.
- Most often, resolutions take the form of motions, though some civic agencies may use alternate procedures for passing resolutions.
- If a resolution is generated from a working session or subcommittee meeting, it must be approved at a regular or special meeting to be considered official, included in the minutes, and circulated to Council and staff.
- Whenever possible, resolutions meant for ratification should be drafted in advance and circulated to members a minimum of one week before the meeting. This ensures that all members have a chance to review and understand what they will be deciding.

- Resolutions with recommendations to Council and staff should be developed in consultation with your liaisons and administrative staff, as appropriate. In developing a recommendation, your civic agency should ask the following key questions:
  1. Is the recommendation within the civic agency's mandate and the City's jurisdiction?
  2. Is the recommendation realistic and actionable?
  3. Does the recommendation require funding, either from existing budgetary sources or the next year's budget?
  4. Is there already City work in progress related to the recommendation?

- Resolutions usually take the form of motions. Motions are stated in a specific format, are open for discussion and debate, and are approved through a majority vote (usually a simple majority, but in some cases two-thirds or unanimous).
  
- A good motion is:
  1. In order (i.e., within the civic agency's mandate and the City's jurisdiction).
  2. Stated in the positive, not the negative.
  3. Clear, succinct, and actionable.
  4. Clearly stated or written, and restated by the chair prior to voting.

- Significant motions should be circulated in advance of the meeting, to allow other members time for review. Minor or administrative motions may be moved without prior circulation.
- Depending on the issue, members may feel that a motion needs lots of explanation and context, or that every potential question needs to be addressed before the language can be finalized and voted on. This results in complicated motions that are inaccessible to both the public and to members.
- Civic agency motions are usually not legally binding, so there is usually no need for legal language or jargon—members are encouraged to keep motions succinct and in plain language.

- To propose and pass a motion, follow these steps:
  1. After being recognized by the Chair, state **“I move that...”** followed by the proposed action. Ideally the motion will have been circulated before the meeting, in which case you would state: **“I move the motion as circulated...”** Motions may contain **“WHEREAS”** clauses that give background information and reasoning, and must contain at least one **“THAT”** clause, detailing the proposed action. **“THAT”** clauses should be self-contained, meaning they should make sense even if **“WHEREAS”** clauses are not included or read.
  2. Another member must state **“I second the motion”** for it to be considered open for discussion and debate.

3. At this point administrative staff will display the text of the motion on screen, and a member may ask for it to be read aloud if needed. The chair asks if any member would like to declare a **conflict of interest**, then opens the floor to **discussion and debate**. No member should speak about a motion twice before all members have had the opportunity to speak once.
4. After discussion and debate, the chair asks for a vote, and members must state whether they support or oppose the motion. If the required majority supports the motion, it is “**carried**”; if a majority opposes it or there is a tie, it is “**defeated.**” Abstaining from a vote is registered as support—if a member wishes not to vote on an item, they must leave the meeting while the vote is conducted.

5. To change the language of the motion before voting begins, a member may move an “amendment.” The amendment is treated as a new motion: it requires a seconder, debate and discussion, and a vote. After this is completed and depending on the outcome, the chair returns to discussion and voting on the main motion, either with the amended language or, if the amendment motion was defeated, as originally stated.
6. Administrative staff record the results of the motion and any amendments in the minutes, noting any members who were opposed or absent.



- Here is an example template for a typical recommendation resolution:

MOVED by [member name]

SECONDED by [member name]

WHEREAS [reason for resolution]; and

WHEREAS [additional reason for resolution];

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the [civic agency name] recommends that Council/staff [desired action]; and

FURTHER THAT [additional desired action].

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

- The City recognizes that motions and parliamentary rules are rooted in colonialism, and may be considered stifling or unhelpful, particularly by members with different cultural traditions. For this reason, Type A and B civic agencies may use alternate, consensus-based procedures to pass resolutions, if so desired.
- To employ alternate procedures, a civic agency must first suspend *Procedure By-law* rule of order 15.13, which states that civic agencies may act only by motion. To do this, the following motion must be passed at the beginning of the meeting, in accordance with regular motion procedures and with a two-thirds majority vote:
  - “THAT the [civic agency name] suspend *Procedure By-law* rule of order 15.13 for the duration of the meeting, to allow alternate decision-making procedures.”
- At this point, the civic agency is free to use preferred alternate decision-making procedures for the duration of the meeting.

- There are many variations of consensus decision-making models, and unlike traditional majority-rule procedures, they usually share the goal of generating as much agreement as possible on a proposal.
- Alternate procedures must still meet the City's requirements for meeting procedures: they deal with one matter at a time, maintain order and respectful conduct, and give all Members equal participation and decision-making rights.
- Please consult the *Civic Agency Guidelines* and administrative staff if your Type A or B Civic Agency wishes to employ alternate procedures.

- Most civic agencies' main roles are to provide recommendations, advice, and information to Council and staff.
- In some cases, Council or staff may not follow a civic agency's recommendation. Council liaisons are not obligated to represent their civic agency in Council, and so civic agencies may wish to seek support or input from other Council members before making a recommendation.
- It is important that Council members be able to make decisions based on debate in open Council meetings, and not be bound by pre-existing commitments.

- **Recommendation resolutions**

- Recommendations to Council and staff should be communicated through resolutions approved in a regular or special meeting. The resolutions are then circulated to relevant parties by administrative staff.
- This ensures that recommendations are delivered in a clear and consistent way, and are recorded in each civic agency's official minutes.
- Recommendations may be reinforced or clarified by members speaking in a Council meeting. In these cases, the Chair (or Vice-Chair) is the civic agency's public spokesperson, unless the Chair has appointed an alternate spokesperson.
- The spokesperson should be mindful that they do not bring their personal opinions into the matter; only those matters that have been addressed or agreed upon by the civic agency should be discussed.

- In rare cases, a civic agency may wish to make an urgent recommendation before its next regular meeting, but is unable to schedule a special meeting due to time constraints.
- Here are two situations that may arise:
  1. A staff report is released a week before the Council meeting where it will be considered. Your civic agency was not consulted during the preparation of the report, but wishes to provide feedback to Council.
  2. A time-sensitive recommendation is scheduled for consideration in the civic agency's regular meeting, but the meeting does not achieve quorum and is cancelled.

- In these limited cases, the chair may send a recommendation letter to Council using the following process:
  1. Obtain member consensus on the content of the letter via email. The letter should indicate majority or total support among members, but may only be signed by the chair.
  2. Send the letter to administrative staff, who will format the letter and add two disclaimers:
    - a) The civic agency is not expressing views on behalf of the City.
    - b) Due to time constraints the recommendations have not yet been approved through resolution in a regular or special meeting.
  3. Administrative staff will circulate the letter to Mayor and Council, copying the City Manager, City Clerk, and relevant liaisons and staff.
  4. At the next regular meeting, pass a resolution confirming the recommendation, so it is recorded in the minutes.

- As with normal recommendations, recommendations without resolutions may be reinforced by members speaking in a Council meeting. However, this should be confined only to situations of extreme urgency.
- As with normal recommendations, the Chair (or Vice-Chair) is the Civic Agency's public spokesperson, unless the Chair has appointed an alternate spokesperson.
- Again, the spokesperson should be mindful that they do not bring their personal opinions into the matter.



## 1. What is a civic agency resolution?

- A. The progression of a chord from dissonance to consonance
- B. A proposal, statement, or request for action that is voted on in a regular or special meeting
- C. The amount of horizontal and vertical pixels on your television
- D. A New Year's promise to exercise more

## 2. What should a motion *not* be?

- A. Clear, succinct, and actionable
- B. In order
- C. Stated in the negative, not the positive
- D. Clearly stated or written, and restated by the chair

- 3. When is it permissible to make a recommendation to Council without a resolution?**
- A. Any time
  - B. When the chair changes their mind after a regular meeting
  - C. Never
  - D. When time constraints prevent a civic agency from scheduling a special meeting to pass a resolution

# Module No. 5 Quiz Answers

1. B

2. C

3. D

- Following the template provided in this module, try to draft a recommendation resolution related to a municipal issue that is important to you. Include WHEREAS and THAT clauses as you like, and remember the key questions and characteristics of a good motion.

- If you think your civic agency may not want to use standard parliamentary rules, what are some alternate procedures you might use for reaching decisions, and how can these alternate procedures be applied fairly and equitably? Examples of alternate procedures include *Consensus Decision-Making* and *Martha's Rules* (which are both detailed in the *Guidelines for Civic Agencies*).

Module Complete