



**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE  
City Commission Agenda Memo  
CONFERENCE MEETING**

**#25-0217**

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**TO:** Honorable Mayor & Members of the  
Fort Lauderdale City Commission

**FROM:** D'Wayne M. Spence, Interim City Attorney

**DATE:** April 1, 2025

**TITLE:** Discussion Regarding Rules of Parliamentary Procedures  
**(Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4)**

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This memorandum outlines the importance of having parliamentary procedures, examines how different jurisdictions in Florida have addressed this issue, and provides a recommendation for adopting a hybrid set of rules that combine custom procedures with Robert's Rules of Order. It is intended to serve as the basis of a discussion about the value of parliamentary procedures for the City Commission, City advisory boards and committees.

### **Importance of Parliamentary Procedure**

Parliamentary procedure is essential for ensuring orderly and efficient meetings. It provides a structured framework that facilitates decision-making, promotes fairness, and ensures that all members have an opportunity to participate in discussions. By establishing clear rules, parliamentary procedure helps prevent confusion and disputes, thereby enhancing the productivity and effectiveness of meetings. Moreover, it ensures transparency and accountability, which are critical for maintaining public trust in governmental processes.

### **Approaches in Various Jurisdictions in Florida**

Different jurisdictions in Florida have adopted various approaches to parliamentary procedure:

- 1. Completely Custom Parliamentary Procedures:** Some jurisdictions have developed entirely custom rules tailored to their specific needs and preferences. This approach allows for maximum flexibility but may lack the comprehensive guidance provided by established systems like Robert's Rules of Order. As an example, see City of Jacksonville Code of Ordinances Sec. 5.08 attached as Exhibit 1.
- 2. Adoption of Robert's Rules:** Many jurisdictions have adopted Robert's Rules of Order in full, benefiting from its well-established and widely recognized framework.

This approach provides a comprehensive set of rules and interpretations, ensuring consistency and reliability. As an example, see City of Key West Code of Ordinances Sec. 3.07 attached as Exhibit 2.

### **3. No Codified Rules of Parliamentary Procedure**

A few jurisdictions operate without any codified parliamentary procedures, relying instead on informal practices. While this approach offers flexibility, it can lead to inconsistencies and inefficiencies, particularly in complex or contentious situations.

### **4. Hybrid of Custom Rules and Robert's Rules of Order**

Some jurisdictions have adopted a hybrid approach, combining custom rules with Robert's Rules of Order. This allows them to tailor procedures to their specific needs while relying on the comprehensive guidance of Robert's Rules for situations not covered by their custom rules. As an example, see City of Tampa – City Council Rules of Procedure attached as Exhibit 3 and City of Orlando Code of Ordinances Sec. 2.36 attached as Exhibit 4.

### **Recommendation for a Hybrid Approach**

It is recommended that the City of Fort Lauderdale adopt a hybrid set of rules for the City Commission. This approach would involve establishing a basic custom structure that addresses the City's unique needs and preferences, while allowing Robert's Rules of Order to govern situations not covered by the custom rules. This hybrid model offers the best of both worlds: the flexibility to craft tailored rules of order and the reliability of a comprehensive, well-established system.

The hybrid approach allows the City to create rules that reflect its specific operational needs, ensuring that procedures are relevant and effective. At the same time, it leverages the extensive guidance and interpretations provided by Robert's Rules of Order, which can be invaluable in addressing unforeseen or complex situations. This combination ensures that meetings are conducted efficiently and fairly, with clear guidelines for resolving disputes and making decisions.

### **Conclusion**

Adopting a hybrid set of parliamentary procedures will enhance the efficiency, fairness, and transparency of the City's meetings. By combining custom rules with Robert's Rules of Order, the City can ensure that its meetings are conducted in an orderly and effective manner, fostering public confidence and trust in its governance processes.

## **Attachments**

Exhibit 1 - City of Jacksonville Code of Ordinances Sec. 5.08

Exhibit 2 - City of Key West Code of Ordinances Sec. 3.07

Exhibit 3 - City of Tampa City Council Rules of Procedure

Exhibit 4 - City of Orlando Code of Ordinances Sec. 2.36

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