

BELFAST COUNCIL GROUND RULES,

GOALS

- Effective and considerate communications among Councilors and Mayor, and between Council and the Public
- Respect, Civility, Listening, Efficiency

GROUND RULES FOR OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- The Mayor will provide concise rules for speaking at Open to the Public
- Open to the Public should encompass all public comment to be heard at the meeting
- A Speaker will state Name and Town of Residence before making a statement
- Each Speaker will be allotted three (3) minutes to speak, unless the Mayor or Council decides that one three (3) minute extension is allowable and appropriate
- Speakers will respect Council as a Body, individual Councilors, the Mayor, and the Public
- Speakers will be told that they cannot expect an oral response to their statements and that this is a time for the Council to listen and reflect on what is said for possible future discussion or action.
- The public audience and the Council will respect the Speaker and the Speaker's Message, and Council will not make noises or comments
- Councilors may ask specific questions, including clarifications and details of information provided, when recognized by the Mayor
- Organizational Updates from such organizations as Our Town Belfast, the Belfast Chamber of Commerce, the Belfast Creative Coalition, and City Department heads can be provided to the Council during a separate Agenda Item, perhaps preceding Open to the Public, in an Item entitled "Organization Updates."

GROUND RULES FOR PUBLIC HEARINGS

- The Mayor will provide concise rules for speaking at Public Hearings
- A Speaker will state Name and Town of Residence before making a statement
- Each Speaker will be allotted five (5) minutes to speak, unless the Mayor or Council decides that one three (3) minute extension is allowable and appropriate
- Speakers must speak directly to the subject of the Hearing. If a Speaker significantly strays from the subject, the Mayor or a Councilor, with the Mayor's recognition, may suggest that the Speaker is Out of Order. The Mayor may allow the Speaker to continue to speak on the subject of the Hearing or ask the Speaker to yield the microphone
- Speakers will respect Council as a Body, individual Councilors, the Mayor, and the Public
- Speakers will be told that they cannot expect an oral response to their statements
- The public audience and the Council will respect the Speaker and the Speaker's Message, and the public and Council will not make noises or comments
- Councilors may ask specific questions, including clarifications and details of information provided, when recognized by the Mayor

GROUND RULES FOR COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS

- Councilors will signal the Mayor by raising a hand to request to speak
- The Mayor will recognize Councilors to speak, in the order of the Mayor's seeing Councilors' signals
- The purpose of Council communications on each agenda is to carry out productive debates, share ideas, hear each perspective, and work towards consensus before any agenda vote(s). When there is not consensus, all views will be respected and those on the "losing" side will accept the "loss" graciously

- Active, participatory discussions may continue as long as needed before a vote is taken
- Be respectful of Councilors and Mayor when they speak; listen with an open mind
- The Mayor's role is one of presiding over the meeting, and thus is one of diplomacy
- Differences or disagreements are welcome and may be discussed freely

GENERAL MEETING GUIDELINES

- Show respect to Council members and the Public
- Work towards concise communications
- Try to finish meetings before midnight, but optimally by 11pm
- Organize meetings such that those agenda items that are most likely to require public input are scheduled earlier in the agenda
- The Mayor may call for a break in the meeting at any time for a short period. Councilors may continue to take personal breaks as they see fit.
- If anyone feels personally offended or threatened by the discussion, that person, Council or Public) will make their best effort to explain this for Council consideration
- All Council action and representation shall be made by the Council as a body