



AGENDA REPORT

City Attorney's Office
City Manager's Office
City Clerk's Office

DATE:	March 11, 2025
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	Dave Aleshire, City Attorney Shasa Curl, City Manager Pamela Christian, City Clerk
Subject:	Amendments to the City Council Rules and Procedures
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	None
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	June 18, 2013 April 22, 2014 October 21, 2014 July 27, 2021 November 23, 2021 January 18, 2022
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	The City Council would like to amend the City Council Rules and Procedures to modify Section II (Meetings) to formally change the start time of Open Session to 3:30 p.m. and Regular Session to 5:00 p.m. on a trial basis, and to change the end time of meetings to no later than 11 p.m. without an option to extend the meeting.
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	APPROVE amendments to Section II (Meetings) of the City Council Rules and Procedures to 1) formally change the start time of Open Session to 3:30 p.m. and Regular Session to 5:00 p.m. on a six-months trial basis; and 2) to end all Richmond City Council meetings no later than 11:00 p.m. without the option of extending the meeting - City Attorney's Office/City Manager's Office/City Clerk's Office/ (Dave Aleshire 510-620-6509, Shasa Curl 510-620-6512, and Pamela Christian 510-620-6513).

DISCUSSION:

The rules concerning the conduct of public meetings are set forth in Government Code § 54954(d), which states “Each legislative body of a local agency . . . shall provide by ordinance, resolution, bylaw or whatever other rule is required for the conduct of business by that body, the time and place for holding regular meetings.” (“Brown Act”). For the Richmond City Council, these rules of procedure are set forth in the City Council Rules of Procedure, adopted and amended from time to time by resolution. This is compliant with the Brown Act.

The City’s current process has been starting meetings at 6:30 p.m. on specified Tuesday nights, with closed sessions starting two hours earlier at 4:30 p.m., and ending at 11 p.m., but subject to extensions to 11:30 p.m. or thereafter by a two-thirds vote. Last year the Council found many going to 11:30 p.m. and past 11:30 p.m. An 11:30 stop meant a seven-hour meeting, generally without recess. Generally, in the later hours, there would be no public attendance, no public participation or transparency.

Mayor Eduardo Martinez expressed his support for a proposal to begin City Council meetings at an earlier time. The Mayor reasoned that earlier meetings could allow for more focused discussions, timely decision-making, and more inclusiveness of citizens who are not able to attend late-hour meetings. Under his proposal the proposed new start times were as follows: starting Open Session at 3:30 p.m., and starting Regular Session at 5:00 p.m.

Upon approval of this item, the Richmond City Council will amend Section II (Meetings) of its Council Rules and Procedures to 1) formally change the start time of Open Session to 3:30 p.m. and Regular Session to 5:00 p.m. on a six-month trial basis; and 2) to end all Richmond City Council meetings at 11:00 p.m. without the option of extending the meeting

The City Council Rules and Procedures – Section II (Meetings) A.(3) states as follows:

II. Meetings

A. Regular Meetings

- (1) Regular meetings of the Council of the City of Richmond shall be held on the first and third Tuesdays of the month provided that, if any Tuesday falls on a legal holiday, the meeting shall be held on the following Tuesday at the same hour. ***Any future regular or special meeting may be canceled by a vote of a majority of the members of the City Council during a regular or special meeting.***

- (2) Regular meetings held on the first and third Tuesdays of the month should be reserved for items requiring Council action.
- (3) The evening session of regular City Council meetings shall begin at 6:30 p.m or as otherwise posted.
- (4) Regular meetings of the City Council shall adjourn by 11:00 p.m. unless the time of adjournment is extended by the consent of a majority of the City Council. Any motion to extend the meeting beyond 11:00 p.m. shall include a list of specific agenda items to be discussed or approved and shall specify the order these items shall be handled. If a meeting continues past 11:00 p.m., it shall end at 11:30 p.m. 11:30 p.m. shall be the firm end-time of the meeting, unless by a 2/3 vote the City Council suspends the rules and then votes affirmatively to extend past 11:30 p.m..

To meet the requirements of the Brown Act, the decision to convert to this new time period was placed as an agenda item on the Council agenda at the February 25, 2025, agenda. There were public speakers, and the Councilmembers discussed the reason for the change of starting meetings earlier so that more of the public would be present when the meeting starts 1.5 hours earlier. All the elements of the proposal were discussed including the closed session time (3:30 p.m.), the regular meeting start time (5:00 p.m.) and the ending time of 11:00 p.m. and eliminating the successive extension feature. The City Attorney advised that this needed to be implemented by formal resolution.

Finally, the Council adopted a motion incorporating the following elements and directed that they wanted to incorporate this at the next meeting. The Rules of Procedure actually state that the evening session of the regular City Council meetings shall begin at 6:30 p.m. "or as otherwise posted." Relying on the direction given at the February 25 meeting, the City Clerk posted the agenda on March 4 for the earlier times. Ironically, as the March 4 meeting went late, the Council used the existing procedure to prolong the meeting to 11:30 p.m.

It is the hope of the Council that more of the people's business gets conducted at an earlier time thereby promoting public awareness and participation. We welcome your comments on how this experiment works.

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

Attachment 1 – Council Rules and Procedures Amendments (redlined)