



# Guide to Council and Committee Meetings

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## THE AUTHORITY OF CITY COUNCIL

City Council's authority comes from provincial legislation that gives cities the power to deliver services and write laws that govern activities within the city limits. The authority given to cities is broad in nature and designed to allow a City Council the ability to regulate in a manner that best suits individual communities.

## CITIZEN INPUT

The input of citizens that live in Prince Albert is an integral part of good governance. Each resident holds knowledge, ideas and opinions that should be considered before a decision is reached on a community issue.

As well, public participation in local decision making processes fosters pluralism and encourages an examination of issues from as many different perspectives as possible in order to find the best solution for everyone involved.<sup>i</sup>

“Cities are accountable to the people who elect them and are responsible for encouraging and enabling public participation in the governance process.”

- *The Cities Act*

## THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

There are a number of ways that citizens can participate in the decisions of City Council. This guide is intended as an introduction to some of these options including some specific instructions on how to address City Council formally.

“The goal of civic engagement is not to produce an absolute consensus, but to ensure that the decision-making is well informed and offers citizens the chance to contribute their ideas and knowledge to policy development.”

- *Foundations for Success: A Strategy to Improve Civic Engagement at the City of Victoria*

## City Council

City Council is made up of the Mayor and eight City Councillors. The Mayor is elected by voters from across the City. Each Councillor is elected by voters in one of eight wards (geographical area of the city). The term of office for Council is four years.

City Council acts as the governance body for the City. They pass laws, approve policies, supervise city government, and set the budget to fund various needs. Council also looks to the city's goals, major projects and infrastructure improvements ranging from community growth to land use to finances and strategic planning

All decisions of City Council must be made at an open public meeting.

Matters that are considered by City Council include:

- Public Hearings (required by law)
- Bylaw and Policy Approval
- Budgetary items
- Any report requiring a decision of City Council that is not already covered under an existing Policy.

*Both the Executive Committee and City Council meeting are made up of the same members (Mayor and Councillors), but each meeting has a distinctive purpose. City Council is the main governance and decision making body for the City and handles decisions regarding budget, bylaw approval and legally required public hearings. Executive Committee meetings deal with delegated powers of authority and are a forum for policy development and informational items from City administration.*

## Executive Committee

City Council has the ability to delegate powers and duties to a person or body subject to certain restrictions. The Executive Committee is an example of this. The Mayor and eight City Councillors make up the Executive Committee.

The purpose of the Executive Committee is to provide advice and recommendations to Council; to oversee the implementation of approved policy decisions by civic administration and supervise the City Manager, City Clerk and City Solicitor.

The following powers or duties have been delegated to Executive Committee:

- The formulation and recommendation to Council of policies, plans, and bylaws
- The receipt of all legal advice and report from the City Solicitor
- The consideration and recommendation to Council on all matters referred to by Council or the Mayor
- The approval or denial of all labour matter in regards to grievances submitted by a Union

- The referral of City matters to administration
- The approval or denial of Administration to proceed with negotiations
- The consideration of informational items related to matters of the City
- The approval of contracts or agreements that include a confidentiality clause regarding the disclosure of personnel and legal negotiations
- The overall supervision of the City's annual and long term audit plans.

### **Closed Meetings**

The Executive Committee may meet privately to discuss matters relating to the above exemptions.

Only matters that meet the exemptions of the Part III of the Local Authority Freedom of Information and Privacy Act are considered during the private portion of the Executive Committee meeting. Examples include:

- Solicitor-Client Privilege
- Law Enforcement and Investigations
- Union Grievances

### **City Manager and Administration**

The City Manager's responsibilities include ensuring that the municipality's policies and programs are implemented, advising and informing council on the operation of the municipality, performing other duties as assigned by council and ensuring appropriate staffing is in place. Staying out of the daily operation of the municipality allows City Council to concentrate on policy making and program monitoring.

## Meeting Schedules

Exact meeting dates and meeting agendas are available at [www.citypa.ca](http://www.citypa.ca) or at the City Clerk's office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of City Hall – 1084 Central Avenue.

## Meeting Agendas

Complete agendas for the City Council and Executive Committee meeting are made available by 4:00p.m. on the Thursday before the upcoming meeting.

Agendas are available in digital format online at [www.citypa.ca](http://www.citypa.ca) . Specific items can be viewed at the Clerk's office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of City Hall – 1084 Central Avenue.

## Informed and Involved

### ***10 ways to get you more informed and involved about civic issues:***

1. Attend or watch a City Council meeting
2. Review Council Agendas and read up on issues that might interest you
3. Join a City Committee or Board
4. Attend Budget Consultation Meetings
5. Sign up to get City Media Releases emailed to you
6. Prepare a letter and present to City Council about an issue you are concerned about
7. Watch/read/listen to local news routinely
8. Find out what ward you live in and call your Councillor about an issue to give feedback or ask questions.
9. Visit the City Clerk's Office to get background reports on an issue that concerns or interests you
10. Like the City of Prince Albert's Facebook page

*Other ideas? Is there something the City can offer to help you understand how City decisions are made? Contact [communications@citypa.com](mailto:communications@citypa.com) with the subject heading: Engagement and let us know.*

## **ADDRESSING CITY COUNCIL**

City Council considers a number of items brought forward by the public. In some cases it is a request for a particular service, approval for an activity and in other cases, to simply receive feedback regarding an issue.

**Depending on the nature of the letter, it may be forwarded to Executive Committee, City Council or administration.** Below is a summary of some of the options available to you. If you would like further guidance, you are encouraged to call the City Clerk's office who will be able to assist you.

Depending on the nature of the letter, it may be forwarded to Executive Committee, City Council or administration.

See Appendix A: Getting on the Agenda – Frequently Asked Questions for more details.

### **Communicating with Council**

Communication with City Council regarding an item already on the agenda can come in two forms: either through written correspondence or a presentation. In both cases letters need to be provided to the City Clerk's office in advance of the meeting. The deadline for letters is 4:45pm the Tuesday before the upcoming meeting. Letters must be legibly written/typed and clearly set out the issue and/or your request. Letters must also include your name, mailing address and be signed. In the case of electronic correspondence, your name, mailing address and email address are required. If you would like to make a presentation, you will need to state that in your letter and outline the presentation.

### **Matters on the Council Agenda**

If you would like to provide feedback to City Council regarding a particular item already on the City Council agenda, you will need to submit a letter to the City Clerks' office as described above. If you would like to make a presentation regarding the issue, be sure to make the request in the letter and outline the presentation.

You should also note that if the letter is provided after the 4:45pm deadline, your item will still be brought to the attention of City Council on the day of the meeting. In this case however, City Council will need to vote to allow the communication to be added to the agenda.

### **Matters not on the Council Agenda**

If you have a matter that you would like to bring to the attention of City Council and it is not already an agenda item, you can do so by writing a letter. All letters addressed to Mayor and City Council is referred to the City Clerk's office. The City Clerk's office will

review the correspondence and depending on the nature of the content will refer the item to the City Council meeting, the Executive Committee meeting or to administration.

### **Speaking at a Meeting**

Members of the public willing to speak to inform members of Council on matters of significance to the City are required to make a request to have an item placed on an agenda for consideration. For details on how to get an item on the agenda and what to know when making a presentation, please see: Appendix A: Getting on the Agenda – Frequently Asked Questions

## **MAKING PRESENTATIONS**

FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT MAKING A PRESENTATION PLEASE SEE:

APPENDIX A

GETTING ON THE AGENDA – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Public Forum**

Public forum is an opportunity for members of the public to address City Council for 5 minutes on a matter of civic relevance without the submission of a written letter to the City Clerk. Public Forums are scheduled at the end of every City Council meeting. Any member of the public wishing to make a presentation must register with the City Clerk by noon on the day of the meeting so that their name may be placed on the speakers list.

### **Public Hearings**

Public hearings are required for a variety of matters considered by City Council, but most commonly public hearings are held for matters relating to land use that fall under the scope of the Planning and Development Act and the Zoning Bylaw. For example, Prince Albert's Zoning Bylaw requires that a public hearing be held for Zoning Bylaw amendments and notification to the public be completed. Public hearings are intended to provide the public with an opportunity to provide feedback to City Council to consider before a decision is made on a particular issue.

Public notification requirements vary depending on the issue. If you have a question regarding public notification procedures you can contact the City Clerk's office.



If notification has been provided regarding a matter to be considered during a public hearing, you may write a letter to City Council for consideration. You may also make a presentation during the public hearing portion of the meeting. Please note that if you would like a written submission reviewed by members of Council prior to the meeting it would be preferable that your submission is provided by 4:45pm the Tuesday prior to the City Council meeting. If you are intending on making a presentation to City Council, please see APPENDIX A for a list of Frequently Asked Questions about addressing City Council.

## **Committees and Boards**

The City is always recruiting new volunteers to participate on City Council's various Committees, Commissions and Boards. Participating on a local Committee or Board offers a unique opportunity to become engaged with your community, to provide leadership in civic issues that interest you and to gain valuable volunteer experience.

City Council appoints citizens to fill vacancies on approximately 5 City Committees, Commissions and Boards under its jurisdiction. Council wishes to have representation on these bodies by as broad a cross-section of the community as possible.

The current Committees, Commissions and Boards with citizen appointments:

- Board of Police Commissioners
- Development Appeals Board
- John M. Cuelenaere Public Library Board
- Property Maintenance Appeal Board
- Golf Course Advisory Committee
- Housing Advisory Committee

To find out more about the boards and committees and how to apply please see the Citizen Appointments Booklet available at [www.citypa.ca](http://www.citypa.ca) or visit the City Clerk's office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of City Hall.

## **Budget Meetings and Public Consultations**

Each year, city administration puts together a proposed budget that includes an overview of anticipated revenues, proposed expenditures and funds required for external agencies. Based on these projections, a rate for property taxes is established. City Council is presented with the proposed budget which is reviewed during Budget deliberations. This process usually requires multiple days.

During budget deliberations the public is invited to provide feedback to City Council about the proposed budget at a public consultation meeting. The date for the public consultation meeting changes each year depending on the release date of the budget. Media announcements are made and advertisements on the radio, newspaper and postings on the City website are made in an effort to ensure residents are informed of these dates.

Making a presentation to the budget committee follows the same process as a regular City Council meeting. Refer to Appendix A for proper process.

## **APPENDIX A – Getting on the Agenda, Frequently Asked Questions**

If you have an item that requires attention by the City that is operational in nature or related to the services the City provides, a letter may not be required. For example, requests for raising a flag in memorial square can be done through the Mayor's office and requests to hold a parade can be forwarded to the Public Works department. You are encouraged to review the City's website, [www.citypa.ca](http://www.citypa.ca), which has detailed information on City operations.

Depending on the nature of the letter, it may be forwarded to Executive Committee, City Council or administration. Before you request to have an item considered please read through all of the information provided below.

### **If I want an item placed on an agenda what do I do?**

To have an item placed on an agenda, deliver your request to the City Clerk's office, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall.

Write a letter and address it to:

Mayor & City Council  
c/o City Clerk's Office  
1084 Central Avenue  
Prince Albert, Saskatchewan S6V 7P3

Fax your request to (306) 953-4313

Or, you can email your request to Sherry Person, City Clerk at [cityclerk@citypa.com](mailto:cityclerk@citypa.com)

### **What should I include in my letter?**

Written letters must include the date, your first and last name, your mailing address and must be originally signed. Electronic correspondence must include your first and last name, your mailing address and your email address. We would also appreciate if your day time phone and fax number were included so that we may contact you personally as to when your item will be discussed and to advise the outcome of the decision or referral approved.

Outline the details of your request providing background information or any other details you feel will be helpful in presenting your information. Attach documents that may assist in making a decision. If your issue is land or building related, please include the street address and legal description of the property in question. Attach maps, sketches or drawing where applicable. The City Clerk's office must receive your letter prior to 4:45p.m., the Tuesday before the meeting.

**Please note** that since all meetings of City Council and Executive Committee are public, if your letter is placed on the agenda, the letter, in its entirety, will be included on the agenda which is posted on the City's website.

### **What happens to my letter once I submit it?**

When you submit a letter addressed to City Council it will be forwarded to the City Clerk's office for review. Depending on the nature of the letter, it may be forwarded to Executive Committee, City Council or administration. The City Clerk's office or administration will be in contact with you to let you know where your letter has been directed.

### **When are Council and Executive Meetings held?**

An annual City Council and Executive Meeting schedule is established each October. Please visit [www.citypa.ca](http://www.citypa.ca) for a copy or contact the City Clerks office. Shaw Cable broadcasts all regular City Council meetings live on Channel 10 on the evening of the meeting and repeat the airings at 2:00p.m. on Wednesdays. Executive Committee meetings are not televised.

### **Where are Council and Executive Committee Meetings held?**

Council meetings are held on the first floor of City Hall, 1084 Central Avenue, in the Council Chamber.

### **Are meetings open to the public?**

Yes. You are welcome to attend all regular council meetings and all board and committee meetings. See the City's website for all upcoming meeting notices. The only exception are closed meetings that handle issues covered under the Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection or Privacy Act. At any public meeting you may choose to stay for the entire regular meeting or just for the items that interest you.

### **When will my issue be discussed?**

Unless your letter has been forwarded to city administration, the City Clerk's office will contact you the Friday prior to the meeting to advise you the date and time of the meeting. Condensed agendas to be considered are available on the City's website by 4:00p.m. on the Thursday before the Monday meeting.

### **Are all requests to have an item discussed at a meeting granted?**

Depending on the nature of the item city administration may be able to handle your request and it may not need to proceed to Council. There are also cases where a request will not be granted if a similar item has appeared on the Council agenda in the last six months.

If city administration has been granted the authority to handle issues under policy, then your item will be referred directly to city administration and will not be considered by City Council.

**Will I get a copy of the agenda and administrative comments before I attend the meeting?**

Copies of the agenda items including any related reports and administrative comments will be available to you by 4:00p.m. on the Thursday before the meeting. This information will be available in digital format on the City's website [www.citypa.ca](http://www.citypa.ca) but can also be accessed from the City Clerk's office prior to the meeting.

**Will my item still be considered if I don't attend the meeting?**

Yes. If an item has been referred to the Executive or Council meeting, it will be considered.

**Do I have to speak at the meeting?**

No. However, if you wish to speak to your item you must indicate your desire to speak in your letter and you must provide your speaking notes or an outline of your presentation. You will be allowed a maximum of 5 minutes to make your presentation. If you have more than one person wishing to speak, you will be allowed 5 minutes for the entire delegation. If you don't wish to make a presentation, you may choose to be available to answer any questions that the Mayor or Councillors may have.

**How will I know when it is my turn to speak?**

When you arrive at the meeting inform the City Clerk who you are and what you are there regarding. When your item comes forward, the Mayor will invite you to the microphone at the appropriate time.

**How do I begin?**

Begin by stating your name and, if applicable, the name of the company or group you are representing. If several members of a group are present, one person should be appointed to act as a spokesperson for the entire group. When addressing Council remember you have a 5 minute maximum and be sure to keep your comments confined to the topic.

**How do I address the Mayor?**

The Mayor should be addressed as "Mayor" and if the Mayor's delegate is Chairman of the meeting, they should be addressed as "Chair".

**How do I address a Councillor?**

When addressing a Councillor, the Chairman should be addressed first and then the Councillor, "Mayor or Chair and Councillor..."

**Can I ask Council or the administration a question during my presentation?**

No. You are permitted to make a presentation and Council may ask you questions regarding your particular issue.

**What do I do after my presentation?**

Please remain standing until excused by the Chairman. There may be questions.

**When will a decision be made?**

A decision will normally be made at the meeting. However, there are occasions when additional information is required before an informed decision can be made. In this event, the item will be postponed to a future meeting until the additional information is received. Following the meeting the City Clerk's office will send you a letter informing you of the decision, postponement or referral of the issue. Minutes for all meetings are available on the City's website once the minutes are approved at the next meeting.

**Where can I get more information on this process?**

The City Clerk's Office is your direct link to Council. Staff will provide you with as much assistance and current information as possible to ensure that your issue is brought forward in a timely and impartial manner. You may contact them at (306) 953-4305 for clarification.

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<sup>i</sup> "Community Engagement Toolkit", sparcc bc, July 2013.