



Glossary of Terms/Phrases used for City Council Agenda, Meetings, and Minutes



City Council Agenda:

The weekly agenda that lists all matters submitted by the Mayor and Councilors for consideration during Council meetings. The agenda also includes the Green Sheets which consists of items previously submitted and are still before the Council.

Docket Number:

The number each matter before the Council is assigned for tracking purposes.

Communications from the Mayor:

Items on the Council agenda that are filed by the Mayor for consideration by the Council. They may be assigned to committee for review; placed on file, if no further review or vote is required; or the rules may be suspended, and they may be passed that day. These matters can also include notices, news, or reports to be put on file.

Reports of Public Officers and Others:

All items received from Public Officers and others are submitted to the Clerk and a notice is placed on the agenda reporting the receipt of that particular item.

Actions Taken by the Mayor:

Written notice of action taken by the Mayor indicating approval; veto (disapproval); or remanding of any order, ordinance, or resolution passed by the Council.

“Matters Recently Heard – For Possible Action:”

All actionable matter that were previously scheduled for 9:00am on the previous Monday and for the beginning of the meeting that could reasonably be called for action at the meeting.

Reports of Committees:

Submitted by the Committee Chair, generally after a public hearing, summarizes the matter and information learned about and also recommends an action to be taken in accordance. The actions recommended by the committee report include the following: pass; pass in a new draft; reject without prejudice; or, place on file. The Council votes on the acceptance of the committee report.

Items on the agenda filed by Councilors for consideration by the Council:

Ordinance: Local laws enacted by the Boston City Council and the Mayor that become part of the City Code of Ordinances.

Loan Orders: Authorization for the City of Boston to incur debt and expend money for projects, purchases, or other obligations.

Order: Directives that authorize action. Orders are legally binding but are not part of the City Code of Ordinances.

Home Rule Petition: Requests for special acts that concern a particular municipality. Home Rule Petitions require approval of the Boston City Council and the Mayor, as well as passage by the state legislature.

Order for a Hearing: A formal request sponsored by a councilor that a committee of the Boston City Council conduct a hearing about a particular matter, issue, or policy that impacts the City of Boston.

Resolution: A recommendation concerning policy issues that may urge action on particular matters. Legislative resolutions have no legal effect. Legislative resolutions represent a particular position or statement by a Councilor, Councilors, or the City Council as a whole.

Motion: A proposal brought before the Council for discussion and decision.

Consent Agenda:

Items on the Council agenda that are filed by Councilors to recognize constituents and/or neighborhood organizations for a personal accomplishment or celebration.

Green Sheets:

A listing of dockets presented in a formal Council meeting, assigned to a committee, and awaiting formal action.

17F Request:

The Council at any time may request from the Mayor specific information on any municipal matter within its jurisdiction. The response from the Mayor, or relevant department head or board member, can not be requested earlier than one week after the request is received. After a week has passed, the Mayor, or relevant department head or board member, will attend a meeting and publically answer questions. (Section 17F of Chapter 452 of the Acts of 1948).

Hearing:

A formal Committee meeting scheduled by the Chair of the Committee to discuss a particular docket or matter before it. Public testimony is accepted.

Council Meeting:

About once a week, all Councilors attend and new matters are introduced and discussed and actions are taken on matters.

Policy Briefing:

Less formal sessions, generally hosted by a committee, to discuss topics in an educational manner.

Working Sessions:

A convening of a Committee to discuss and deliberate on proposed changes to legislation before the committee. Working sessions are held separately from Committee hearings. While members of the public may attend working sessions, there is no public comment period.

Votes taken during City Council Meetings:

Councilors may vote on an agenda item by a 'voice vote' or a 'roll call vote.'

Voice Vote: The Council President will ask all those in favor of the item to say 'yay' and all those opposed to say 'nay.' Most votes are taken by a voice vote.

Roll Call Vote: Any Councilor who doubts the vote, may ask the Council President to request a roll call vote of the Councilors present during that meeting. The Clerk will then ask each Councilor to approve or disapprove the item. Also, some votes are required to be taken by roll call by the statute that governs them. Voting on matters that authorize the Mayor to borrow money, such as Capital Budget matters, require a roll call vote. Votes that require a roll call vote, may also require a supermajority to pass. If the matter requires a supermajority, 2/3 of the Councilors present must vote in favor of the matter for it to pass.

Pass: The Council has voted to confirm, ratify, or assent to a matter.

Adopt: The Council has voted to accept a matter.

Reject: The Council refused to accept, confirm, ratify, or grant a matter.

Reject without Prejudice: The Council refused to accept, confirm, ratify, or grant a matter, but the matter can be proposed again.

Pass in a new Draft: The Council has voted to approve a matter in an amended version.

Suspension of the City Council Rules:

Unanimous consent is needed to suspend the rules. Two-thirds is needed to amend the rules of the City Council once adopted.

Suspend and Pass:

When a matter does not require further review through hearings or working sessions and the Council would like to address it immediately; however, if even one (1) Councilor objects, they must review the matter further.

Placed on file:

Indication that no further action will be taken on a matter. Once a matter is placed on file, it cannot be filed again for consideration in the same calendar year.

Late file:

A matter received after the meeting agenda was established.

Move the question/Remand:

Ends debate on any matter before City Council. To return a matter to committee.