

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: TERESA STRICKER, CITY ATTORNEY  
SUBJECT: REVISIONS TO CITY COUNCIL MANUAL OF PROCEDURES  
AND PROTOCOLS

AGENDA ACTION: RESOLUTION

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RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended by the City Clerk and City Attorney that the Council, by resolution, approve revisions to the City Council Manual of Procedures and Protocols.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

The City Council Manual of Procedures and Protocols gets reviewed and revised routinely on a periodic basis to address changes to language, process, and legal standards. The City Clerk and City Attorney recommend that Council approve various clerical and other revisions to the current version of the City Council Manual of Procedures and Protocols to remove gender specific language, clarify existing processes, and align with applicable laws.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

On May 25, 1999, by Resolution 23989, Council Adopted the City Council Manual of Procedures, which included the 30-day meeting absence rule as Rule 1.E.

On July 30, 2013, by Resolution 28317, Council adopted the City Council Manual of Procedures and Protocols which superseded the previously adopted City Council Manual of Procedures by consolidating that document with the Council Norms and among other things renumbered the 30-day meeting absence rule as Rule I.F.

On September 22, 2015, by Resolution 28691, Council amended the City Council Manual of Procedures and Protocols to amend the process for election of Mayor and Vice Mayor as well as various revision relating to placement of items on agenda by Council members, agenda headings and order, and distribution of communications to Council members.

On May 31, 2016, by Resolution 28783, Council amended the City Council Manual of Procedures and Protocols to set forth the procedure to select a Mayor Pro Tem in the absence of the Mayor and Vice Mayor.

REVISIONS TO CITY COUNCIL MANUAL OF PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOLS  
PAGE 2 OF 3

On October 22, 2024, by Resolution RES-2024-168, Council amended the City Council Manual of Procedures and Protocols, Rule I.F – Attendance to reflect the requirements of Government Code Section 36513(a).

ANALYSIS

Clerical edits have been proposed throughout. Language is made gender-neutral throughout. The following substantive changes are also being proposed:

1. Section II, Agenda, (C), Teleconferencing:
  - Changed address updates in the Brown Act that allow Council Members to appear remotely under certain circumstances.
2. Section II, Agenda, (E), Statement of Abstention/Recusal:
  - Updated to include brief definitions.
3. Section VII, Voting, (A), Voting Procedure:
  - Modified to require a roll call vote when required by the Brown Act,=.
  - Modified to require the affirmative vote of a majority of the total membership of the Council (4 votes) to take any action (except otherwise required by City Charter, City Code or state law). Currently, motions pass by a simple majority of the Council members present at a properly quorumed meeting unless otherwise required by the Charter, Code or state law, while at least four votes are needed to adopt an ordinance, resolution, or settlement if a claim against the City.

Starting in September, staff plans to move away from the long-standing practice of Council approving most items by resolution except in situations where a resolution is legally necessary. With modern technology, resolutions are no longer necessary to track Council actions. Elimination of unnecessary resolutions will result in considerable saved staff time spent drafting, reviewing and approving items before they come to Council, and reviewing and executing resolutions once approved by Council. To make sure this process change does not have the unintended consequence of impacting how many votes may be required to approve a particular item, staff recommends that Council modify the existing rule to require at least four affirmative votes for Council approval of all items except where the Charter, Code or state law requires otherwise.

4. Section VIII, Minutes, (B), Minutes of Hearings:
  - Removed to reflect current process and best practice.
5. Section IX, Ordinances, Resolutions, and Contracts, (C) Enactment of Ordinances, (1) Introduction:
  - Updated for clarity and to align with current process.

REVISIONS TO CITY COUNCIL MANUAL OF PROCEDURES AND PROTOCOLS  
PAGE 3 OF 3

6. Section XVI, Council Committees, (E):
- Removed to reflect current practice.

All revisions are shown in redline in Attachment 1 to this staff report.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this action does not have a fiscal impact on the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

This action is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Sections 15061(b)(3) and 15378(b)(2).

Section 15061(b)(3) states that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential to cause a significant effect on the environment. The revisions to the City Council Manual are limited to clerical updates, removal of gender-specific language, clarification of existing processes, and alignment with applicable legal standards. These changes have no potential to result in a physical change in the environment.

Additionally, under Section 15378(b)(2), the proposed revisions do not constitute a “project” under CEQA, as they involve general policy and administrative activities of government that do not result in direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical changes in the environment.

Therefore, no further environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Not applicable.

NOTIFICATION

Not applicable.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1 – Redlined City Council Manual of Procedures and Protocols
- Resolution / Exhibit A – City Council Manual of Procedures and Protocols (revised)

PRESENTER

Teresa Stricker, City Attorney