CITY OF SARASOTA
RULES OF PROCEDURE
FOR CITY COMMISSION MEETINGS

RULE I.

REGULAR MEETINGS

The City Commission shall hold regularly scheduled meetings from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. and continuing to 6:00 p.m. in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall on the first and third Monday of each month. When a regularly scheduled meeting falls upon a legal holiday or an election day, such meeting shall be held on the following day.

RULE II.

SPECIAL AND EMERGENCY MEETINGS

A. Special meetings may be called by the Mayor or any two (2) members of the Commission. Written notice shall be posted and delivered to each Commissioner at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the special meeting. Every reasonable measure will be taken to notify members of the Commission regardless of where the member may be. Also, every reasonable effort will be made to notify members of the local news media (by print and/or electronically) and the public.

B. Emergency meetings may be called by the Mayor or any two (2) members of the Commission. The most appropriate and effective notice under the circumstances shall be provided for emergency meetings. The notice shall state the business to be transacted. No business other than that specified in the notice shall be transacted. The method of providing notice shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

C. The Commission at any meeting may recess or adjourn to a time certain for the transaction of any business or for specified business only, as may be determined by the Commission in taking such action.

D. All meetings of the Commission shall be open to the public (except as authorized to the contrary by law).
RULE III.

WORKSHOP MEETINGS

Workshop meetings may be called by the Mayor or any two (2) members of the Commission. Written notice shall be posted and delivered to each Commissioner at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the workshop meeting. Workshop meetings shall be called for informational purposes. No action shall be taken and no public input shall be allowed unless the notice calling the workshop meeting specifies that public input will be allowed.

RULE IV.

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP AND GOAL SETTING MEETINGS

A. The Commission shall hold a goal-setting workshop in January of each even numbered year. The purpose of the goal setting workshop shall be to consider information relevant to the City’s goals for the next two-year period. Staff shall provide recommendations for the Commission’s consideration in developing the City’s goals. The City Commission, at its option, may decide to hold a community workshop to gather information from citizens of the community regarding the City’s goals.

RULE V.

AGENDA

A. The City Auditor and Clerk shall prepare an agenda for each meeting held by the Commission. All agenda items for regular Commission meetings, together with an agenda request form and backup material, shall be delivered to the Office of the City Auditor and Clerk by 5:00 p.m. on the Thursday, ten (10) days preceding each regular meeting.

B. All non-agendaeed items shall be added to the agenda through Changes to the Orders of the Day. A two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Commission members present shall be required to add non-agendaeed items to the agenda. Unless otherwise required, a majority vote of the Commission members present shall be required to take action on items added under Changes to the Orders of the Day. The preferred practice shall be that all items shall be on the published agenda.
C. All matters listed under Consent Agendas are considered to be routine and shall, be enacted by one motion. If discussion of any Consent Agenda item is desired, the item must be removed from the Consent Agenda and the item shall be discussed immediately following the vote on the remaining Consent Agenda items.

Commissioners are to announce items to be removed from Consent Agendas by advising the City Manager’s Office via e-mail, telephone or in person by no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the Commission meeting.

D. Persons requesting to make a presentation under Scheduled Presentations must first obtain the consent of the City Manager or one or more Commissioners. Information summarizing the presentation is required and must be furnished to the Office of the City Auditor and Clerk by 5:00 p.m. on the Thursday, ten (10) days preceding the regular Commission meeting date. Presentations are limited to seven (7) minutes. Items under Scheduled Presentations are limited to two (2) per agenda. No action may be taken by the Commission other than referral to the administration and no citizens’ input shall be allowed.

RULE VI.

PRESIDING OFFICER – ELECTION AND DUTIES

A. The Mayor, or in his/her absence, the Vice Mayor, shall take the chair at the hour affixed for the meeting and call the meeting to order. The presiding officer shall preserve order and decorum at all meetings of the Commission. The Mayor shall sit at the center of the Commission table with the Vice Mayor to his/her immediate right. The seating of the remaining three (3) Commissioners shall be designated by the Mayor.

B. In the absence of the Mayor and the Vice Mayor, the City Auditor and Clerk shall call the meeting to order, whereupon an acting Mayor shall be elected by the members of the Commission. Upon arrival of the Mayor or Vice Mayor, the acting Mayor shall relinquish the chair upon the completion of the business immediately before the Commission.
RULE VII.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The business of the Commission shall be considered in the following order, unless changed under Changes to the Orders of the Day.

From 2:30 to 4:30 p.m.:

A. Call Meeting to Order  
B. Invocation  
C. Pledge of Allegiance  
D. Citizens’ Input Concerning City Topics (limited to 30 minutes)  
E. Approval of Minutes  
F. Board Actions  
G. Consent Agendas  
H. Board Appointments  
I. Unfinished Business  
J. New Business  
K. Additional Citizens’ Input Concerning City Topics (Time Permitting)  
L. Commission Board and Committee Reports  
M. Remarks of Commissioners, Announcements and Items for Next Agenda  
N. Other Matters/Administrative Officers

Beginning at 6:00 p.m.:

O. Commission Presentations  
P. Scheduled Presentations  
Q. Public Hearings
R. Citizens’ Input Concerning City Topics

S. Unfinished Business (items not completed in the afternoon session)

T. New Business

U. Adjourn. (Adoption of motion by two-thirds (2/3) vote is required to continue meeting past 9:30 p.m.)

RULE VIII.

ROLL CALL

Ordinances and resolutions require a roll-call vote and their passage shall be recorded in the minutes by “yes” and “no” votes. The City Auditor and Clerk shall call the roll alphabetically, rotating the order including the Mayor with each new vote.

RULE IX.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Commission believes that wise decisions can best be made in an atmosphere that allows for constructive public debate and, therefore, adopts the following code for the conduct of its public meetings:

PLEDGE OF PUBLIC CONDUCT

WE MAY DISAGREE, BUT WE WILL BE RESPECTFUL OF ONE ANOTHER.  
WE WILL DIRECT ALL COMMENTS TO ISSUES. 
WE WILL AVOID PERSONAL ATTACKS.

RULE X.

RULES OF DEBATE

A. The presiding officer shall be familiar with and follow Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised (Current Edition). The presiding officer may move (after passing the gavel to his/her immediate right), second, and debate motions, and shall not be deprived of any of the rights and privileges of other Commissioners by reason of his/her action as presiding officer.
B. Commissioners desiring to speak shall address the presiding officer and upon recognition speak to the topic, avoiding personal remarks and indecorous language as determined by the presiding officer.

C. Prior to a motion being made, Commissioners shall be allowed to ask direct questions for informational purposes.

D. After a motion has been made, Commissioners shall have two (2) opportunities to speak to a motion, each limited to ten (10) minutes. Commissioners cannot speak the second time on a motion until every Commissioner who desires to speak on it has had an opportunity to do so once. Debate shall be limited to the immediately pending motion.

E. In the event of a tie vote on any non quasi-judicial matter, then such matter shall be automatically continued to the next regularly scheduled meeting at which all City Commissioners are present.

F. The City Manager, City Auditor and Clerk and City Attorney are encouraged to seek recognition by the presiding officer to provide information appropriate or pertinent to their respective positions with the City.

G. Commission action in response to issues raised during Citizens’ Input Concerning City Topics shall be limited to referral to the administration or placement of an item on a future agenda.

RULE XI.

PERSONS ADDRESSING THE COMMISSION

I. General Speaking

A. Persons desiring to address the Commission during a regular or special meeting shall complete a Request to Speak form, indicating whether they wish to speak during Public Hearings, Citizens’ Input Concerning City Topics or on a particular agenda item. Unless required by state law, no public input shall be permitted on the second reading of ordinances or quasi-judicial matters not subject to a public hearing. Additionally, no public input shall be permitted under the following agenda categories:
1. Approval of Minutes

2. Scheduled Presentations

3. Remarks of Commissioners, Announcements and Items for next agenda.

4. Other Matters/Administrative Officers

5. Public input may be prohibited at the request of the City Attorney on matters relating to pending or potential litigation or on matters about which the City Attorney is providing a legal opinion to the City Commission.

   B. The City Auditor and Clerk shall collect and submit the Request to Speak form(s) to the presiding officer. The presiding officer shall call each person who has signed up to speak to come before the Commission, announcing the name of the speaker and the street on which the speaker resides. Street numbers shall not be announced.

   C. Public input shall be limited to five (5) minutes per person during each non quasi-judicial public hearing. Public input shall be limited to three (3) minutes, on all other agenda items allowing persons to address the Commission, including Citizens’ Input Concerning City Topics. Persons desiring to address the City Commission during Citizens’ Input Concerning City Topics shall be limited to one appearance per meeting. Persons addressing the Commission shall not be permitted to split their time between the afternoon portion and the evening portion of a Regular Meeting agenda. The City Auditor and Clerk, or his/her deputy, shall be responsible for timing the Speakers.

   D. Citizens’ Input is to allow citizens the opportunity to present their views on matters concerning City topics but not on items scheduled elsewhere on the agenda. Questions and answers shall not be permitted. Political campaign speeches advocating support for or opposition to the candidacy of any individual for an elected public office shall not be permitted. With the consensus of the Commission, the Mayor may refer the matter presented to the administration for a
report back as an item on a future City Commission meeting agenda as necessary.

E. No person shall be permitted to enter into any discussion, either directly or through a member of the Commission, without coming to the Commission table and addressing the Commission.

F. Any person making impertinent or slanderous remarks or who becomes boisterous while addressing the Commission shall be barred by the presiding officer from speaking further unless permission to continue or again address the Commission is granted by a majority vote of the Commission members present.

G. Persons at the City Commission table shall not wear articles of clothing, hats or buttons that express support for or opposition to the candidacy of any individual for state or local political office. This rule shall be broadly construed so as to prohibit the wearing or carrying of any items that are intended as an expression of such support or opposition of the candidacy of an individual for state or local political office.

II. Non Quasi-Judicial Public Hearings

A. Petitioners shall complete a Request to Speak form. The presiding officer shall call the petitioner to the table after the petition has been introduced by the Administration. The petitioner shall have fifteen (15) minutes to make a presentation prior to the opening of the public hearing and shall be afforded a five (5) minute rebuttal after the public hearing is closed.

B. Other persons desiring to address the Commission during public hearings shall complete a Request to Speak form and follow the guidelines in Section 1 above, where appropriate.

III. Quasi-Judicial Public Hearings

RULE XII.

**SERGEANT-AT-ARMS**

The City Manager shall designate a Sergeant-At-Arms for each Commission meeting. The designated Sergeant-At-Arms shall be available to carry out all orders and instructions given by the presiding officer for the purpose of maintaining order and decorum at the Commission meetings. The following procedure is suggested as a guideline for handling disruptions:

1. **Individual refuses to leave the Commission table after the City Auditor and Clerk announces that time has expired.**

   The presiding officer shall inform the individual that his/her time to address the Commission has expired and shall direct the individual to leave the table. If the individual refuses to leave the table, the Sergeant-At-Arms shall be instructed to remove the individual from the meeting.

2. **Individual causes disruption during the Commission meeting.**

   The presiding officer shall inform the individual causing the disruption to cease disruptive activity.

   If the disruption fails to stop:

   The presiding officer shall inform the individual causing the disruption that his/her actions are contrary to the orderly running of the meeting and that the individual is to cease such action or the Sergeant-At-Arms shall be instructed to remove the individual from the meeting.

   The presiding officer shall revoke the individual’s participation to attend the meeting and direct that the individual leave the meeting by stating: “Your actions are inconsistent with the orderly functioning of this meeting; therefore, you are directed to leave and if you fail to do so, you shall be subject to arrest for trespass.”

RULE XIII.

**ADOPTION, ALTERATION OR SUSPENSION OF THESE RULES**

These rules of procedure shall be adopted, amended or rescinded by a majority vote of the entire Commission with
previous notice or by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the entire Commission without previous notice. A majority vote of the Commission members present is required to suspend or waive any of these rules of procedure.