

CITY OF TULSA

# HOW LOCAL GOVERNMENT WORKS

YOUR GUIDE TO THE  
TULSA CITY COUNCIL



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

- 2** About Tulsa City Government
- 3** Who Makes Up the City Government
- 4** City Government Structure Overview
- 5** City Council Frequently Asked Questions
- 6** Meeting Agendas and More Information
- 9** Legislative Process
- 10** Legislative Frequently Asked Questions
- 11** Legislative Flowchart
- 12** City Council Meetings and More Information
- 15** Connect With Us

# ABOUT TULSA CITY GOVERNMENT

The City of Tulsa was incorporated in 1898, nine years before statehood. In 1908, Tulsa adopted its first City Charter that outlined the processes of the city government. Under this charter, a board of commissioners led Tulsa. The City Commission included a Mayor and four commissioners: police and fire, streets and public property, waterworks and sewage, and finance and revenue. The Mayor and each City Commissioner held executive powers over various City departments and together acted as a legislative body. A City Auditor was also elected to exercise independent oversight of City operations and act as the City Clerk. The City Auditor did not have legislative power.

In February 1989, Tulsa voters approved the most sweeping changes in city government in more than 80 years. A strong Mayor-Council system was chosen to replace the outdated City Commission.

The change came about after a 35-year debate on how city government could better represent the residents of Tulsa. The first attempt to change the original City Charter, which had been in place since 1908, was made in 1954. It failed, and so did three other attempts in 1959, 1969, and 1973. The last proposal lost by a 3-1 margin. It seemed that Tulsa's system of government would probably remain unchanged into the next century.

Advocates of a City Charter change wanted a more representative, better organized, and strong-Mayor form of government. Many criticized the City Commission structure because residents could seldom find out which department was in charge of a given situation. In the late 1980s, only 40 percent of City departments reported to the Mayor - a further indication of a lack of centralized government. Resources were also wasted.

Trucks that carried materials for their own department could rarely switch gears to perform a similar job for another City department. In addition, the City had several maintenance operations - all performing the same jobs.

Also, under the City Commission form of government, all commissioners and the Mayor were elected at-large, meaning by the whole city. A federal lawsuit filed by the NAACP alleged this form of government violated federal voting rights amendments by diluting the Black vote with at-large elections of city commissioners. A Mayor-Council form of government would see Councilors elected by district, ensuring better representation.

The voters of the City of Tulsa finally approved a new City Charter on Valentine's Day, 1989, with the measure garnering 70 percent of the 47,586 votes cast. The new Charter provided for a Mayor-Council form of government with better representation, fewer City departments, more centralization, and greater operational efficiency.

Today, the Tulsa City Council continues to work with Tulsa's Mayor, City Auditor, and all City departments to try to find ways to make government function more efficiently and effectively so that all areas of the community are better served by City government.

# WHO MAKES UP THE CITY GOVERNMENT?

## AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

---

### MAYOR

The Mayor acts as chief administrator and manages Tulsa's everyday operations. The duties of this position consist of maintaining all administrative departments, executing municipal laws, submitting an annual budget to the City Council and appointing citizens to authorities, boards, and commissions (ABCs). The mayor holds a four-year term. The current mayor is G.T. Bynum. Contact Mayor Bynum by email at [mayor@cityoftulsa.org](mailto:mayor@cityoftulsa.org).

### CITY AUDITOR

The City Auditor is an independent eye that periodically reviews Tulsa's operations, resources and financial activities. Providing accountability to the city government, the City Auditor ensures resources are effectively and efficiently utilized. The City Auditor holds a two-year term. The current City Auditor is Cathy Carter. Contact Auditor Carter by email at [auditor@cityoftulsa.org](mailto:auditor@cityoftulsa.org).

### TULSA CITY COUNCIL

The Tulsa City Council operates as the legislative branch of the city government. It adopts municipal ordinances and resolutions, approves the City's annual budget and evaluates the overall effectiveness of city operations. As Councilors, a crucial aspect of their position includes listening to the concerns and suggestions of their districts' residents. City Councilors hold two-year terms. Email the City Council Office at [info@tulsacouncil.org](mailto:info@tulsacouncil.org) or call 918-596-1990.

### AUTHORITIES, BOARDS, & COMMISSIONS

Though the City Council, Mayor, and City Auditor make up Tulsa's city government branches, their functioning and efficiency depend on residents' voices. Groups of residents, appointed to authorities, boards and commissions (ABCs), provide their elected leaders with information and recommendations to assist the City's decision-making processes. Currently, Tulsa has dozens of resident groups covering a variety of subjects. Residents are encouraged to apply to serve on any authority, board, or commission. More information regarding ABCs and application processes can be found [here](#).

# CITY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE OVERVIEW

## 3 INDEPENDENT BRANCHES

---



### MAYOR

elected by the whole city

#### Administrative Branch

- Manage all administrative departments
- Manage the day-to-day operations of the City
- Execute municipal laws
- Submit annual budget to the City Council
- Appoint citizens to ABCs



### CITY COUNCIL

9 members, elected by district

#### Legislative Branch

- Adopt municipal laws & policies
- Approve the City's annual budget
- Listen to the concerns of citizens
- Evaluate the overall effectiveness of city operations.
- Confirm citizens to ABCs



### CITY AUDITOR

elected by the whole city

#### Investigative Branch

- Provide government oversight
- Ensure adequate protections are in place to manage risk
- Serve as an independent eye on city operations & resources
- Regularly reviews the City's financial activities



### AUTHORITIES, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

ABCs

- The advice from these groups helps create city policies & programs.
- Authorities acquire and manage or oversee the management of assets.
- Boards and Commissions review and recommend policy changes to Mayor and City Council.

# CITY COUNCIL

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

---

### 01 — Who makes up the City Council?

Normal residents just like you make up our council. Residents can run for office to serve on the Council and are elected by the people in each Council District. To run for office in a Council District, a resident must reside in that District for 365 days prior to the election. There are nine Council Districts in Tulsa and each is home to about 45,000 residents. To see a district map, [click here](#). To see the current councilors by district, [click here](#).

Office hours for the Council are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. The position of City Councilor is part-time, meaning Councilors are often away from the office attending meetings or working their full-time jobs. The Council employs a full-time staff who are able to assist with inquiries if a Councilor is not available.

### 02 — When does the City Council meet?

The City Council approves scheduled meeting dates for the upcoming year every December. By Charter, the City Council must conduct no less than two regular meetings a month at City Hall. These dates are typically on Wednesdays, excluding holiday weeks, at City Hall in downtown Tulsa. Before the Regular Meeting begins at 5 p.m., the Council conducts several standing committee meetings throughout the day.

These City Council meetings are televised live on TGOV – Tulsa Government Access Television – Cox Cable channel 24.

Meetings are also live-streamed online at [tgovonline.org](http://tgovonline.org) and on our Facebook page. Watch past meetings on demand on the TGOV website.

### 03 — What are standing committee meetings?

The Council holds its standing committee meetings on select Wednesdays in Conference Room 411 on the 4th Floor of City Hall at 175 E. 2nd St.

The meeting times for standing committees are:

- 10:30 a.m. Urban and Economic Development Committee**
- 1:00 p.m. Budget & Special Projects Committee (seasonally)**
- 2:30 p.m. Public Works Committee**

Committee meetings are where the Council receives reports from City staff and discusses proposed legislation items. Public feedback is not received during these meetings as they are designed for information gathering and in-depth discussion amongst the Councilors.

### 04 — What are regular meetings?

Regular meetings of the Council are held at 5 p.m. on select Wednesdays in the Council Chamber on the 2nd Floor of City Hall at 175 E. 2nd St.

This is the business meeting of the Council where feedback from the public is received and votes on legislation are cast.

---

# MEETING AGENDAS

## AND MORE INFORMATION

### Where to Find Meeting Agendas

Generally, agendas will be posted on the Council website 48 hours before the scheduled meeting.

Addenda, or changes and additions, will appear no later than 24 hours before the meeting. These agendas are not official postings and are only for informational purposes. Past agendas and minutes can be found in this archive.

Official agenda postings are available for in-person viewing Mondays on the 2nd floor on the southeast side of City Hall at the window to the right of the public entrance. If you cannot find what you are looking for, do not hesitate to contact the Council Office via phone at 918-596-1990 or email [secretary@tulsacouncil.org](mailto:secretary@tulsacouncil.org).

### How to Track Agenda Items

When viewing an agenda, the letters and dates after an agenda item indicate which meetings and days that item is scheduled to be on. This helps residents follow along with items of interest or go back and watch previous discussions.

UED = Urban & Economic Development Committee  
BUD/SP = Budget & Special Projects Committee  
PW = Public Works Committee  
CC = Regular City Council

Here is an example tracking an ordinance as it makes its way through the legislative process. It first appears on the Urban & Economic Development Committee for discussion on October 19, 2022, as indicated by [UED 10/19/22]. It then moves to the City Council Meeting on October 19, 2022, for First Reading as indicated by [CC 10/19/22]. Finally, it appears on the City Council Meeting on October 26, 2022, for Second Reading as indicated by [CC 10/26/22].

**FILED**  
**CITY OF TULSA**  
**STATE OF OKLAHOMA**  
10/14/2022 04:14 PM  
Office of the City Clerk

**NOTICE AND AGENDA**  
TULSA CITY COUNCIL - Urban & Economic Development Committee Meeting  
10:30 AM, Wednesday, October 19, 2022  
One Technology Center, 4th Floor, Room 411 - 175 E. 2nd St., Tulsa, OK 74103

**FILED**  
**CITY OF TULSA**  
**STATE OF OKLAHOMA**  
10/14/2022 04:15 PM  
Office of the City Clerk

**NOTICE AND AGENDA**  
TULSA CITY COUNCIL - Regular Meeting  
5:00 PM, Wednesday, October 19, 2022  
Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - 175 E. 2nd St., Tulsa, OK 74103

#### 6. ORDINANCES - FIRST READING

- a. Consideration and possible approval, adoption, denial, amendment or revision of an Ordinance amending the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget to make supplemental appropriations of three million dollars (\$3,000,000.00) recognized from a transfer of revenue from the Transportation Sales Tax Fund within the Long-Range Capital Projects Fund. [UED 10/19/22; CC 10/19/22; CC 10/26/22] 22-914-2  
[Supporting Documentation](#)

2

**FILED**  
**CITY OF TULSA**  
**STATE OF OKLAHOMA**  
10/21/2022 03:31 PM  
Office of the City Clerk

**NOTICE AND AGENDA**  
TULSA CITY COUNCIL - Regular Meeting  
5:00 PM, Wednesday, October 26, 2022  
Council Chamber, 2nd Floor - 175 E. 2nd St., Tulsa, OK 74103

#### 7. ORDINANCES - SECOND READING

- a. Consideration and possible approval, adoption, denial, amendment or revision of an Ordinance amending the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget to make supplemental appropriations of three million dollars (\$3,000,000.00) recognized from a transfer of revenue from the Transportation Sales Tax Fund within the Long-Range Capital Projects Fund. [UED 10/19/22; CC 10/19/22; CC 10/26/22] 22-914-2  
[Supporting Documentation](#)

3

# MEETING AGENDAS

## CONTINUED

---

### How to Get More Information on Agenda Items

Listening to the Council Committee discussion on an item is a great way to learn more. Some items are also posted with supporting documentation, which are documents containing more information about an item. To find and read backup material, navigate to the agenda and item of interest, then click the blue “Supporting Documentation” link at the end of the item. See the highlighted example below:

12. Ordinance amending the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget to make supplemental appropriations of five thousand, five hundred seventy-five dollars and fifty-seven cents (\$5,575.57) from unassigned fund balance within the Fire Equitable Sharing Program SubFund. [UED 10/19/22; CC 10/19/22; CC 10/26/22] 22-920-1  
[Supporting Documentation](#)

Note, not all items have supporting documentation. If no documents are available, you will see the following message after clicking on the link: “No supporting documents were submitted prior to the filing of this agenda.”

### Structure and How to Follow Council Committee Meeting Agendas

#### 1. Authorities, Boards, and Commissions – Appointments and Reappointments

- These items are first on the Committee agenda to afford these volunteers the courtesy of limiting their time spent at the meeting.

#### 2. First-time items that have been deferred from previous committee meetings for the purpose of agenda time-management.

- Since these items were voluntarily continued in deference to other items, they are given preference to ensure proper discussion time is allotted and to decrease possibility of further delay.

#### 3. Items that will be on the ensuing Wednesday evening Council meeting agenda.

- These items need to be discussed so that the Council can make an informed decision before taking action.

#### 4. Recurring/Repetitive Reports

- Defers to the above referenced items.

#### 5. Special/limited interest reports that will not appear on the ensuing Wednesday evening Council meeting agenda or are outside Council purview.

- Topically or geographically focused items of most interest to a more limited number of the public attending or watching meetings.

#### 6. All other items



# MEETING AGENDAS

## CONTINUED

---

### Structure and How to Follow Regular Council Meeting Agendas

Councilors will consider, discuss and take action on any item listed on the Meeting's Agenda. They may approve, reject or amend items. Regular Meetings of the City Council follow this general agenda:

**1. Receipt and Filing of Minutes**

- Councilors must review and approve official meeting minutes for previous meetings. Minutes are the written record of what occurred at a meeting.

**2. Appointments and Reappointments**

- The Mayor appoints residents to authorities, boards and commissions and the City Council confirms or denies these appointments in this section. A reappointment means the appointee has already served at least one term and has been recommended for another. Public input is permitted on these items.

**3. Public Hearings**

- The Council allows residents time to offer written and oral comments regarding proposals. Some actions legally require the Council to hold a public hearing. Often, notice of these hearings are posted online or in newspapers.

**4. Mayor's Items**

- The Mayor can provide reports on community events, briefs on City activities and efforts and discuss new business. This section also includes all items from the Mayor requiring Council approval. Public input is permitted on these items.

**5. Authorities, Boards and Commissions Items**

- Proposals, recommendations and reports from authorities, boards and commissions. Public input is permitted on these items.

**6. Ordinances: First Reading**

- An ordinance is introduced in the First Reading section of the agenda. This provides a notice to the public that the topic will be considered at a future meeting. Public comment is typically not taken at this time.

**7. Ordinances: Second Reading**

- An ordinance is read, debated and voted on in this section. Public input is permitted on these items.

**8. Council Items**

- Councilors make announcements regarding community events, efforts or concerns. This section also includes action items initiated by the Council. Public input is permitted on these items.

**9. New Business**

- New Business is any matter not known about or which could not have been reasonably foreseen prior to the time of the agenda posting. New Business is incredibly rare and is typically only used in disaster, emergency, or unforeseeable situations.

**10. Hearing of Appeals**

- In some situations, people can appeal the decisions of administrative officers to the Council. These cases typically deal with code enforcement issues.

**11. Hearing of Public Comments**

- Citizens can sign up one week in advance to speak before the Council on any issue affecting Tulsa.

**12. Adjournment.**

# LEGISLATIVE PROCESS



## STEP 1: INTRODUCTION

### New Ideas Are Presented

New or amended ordinances are proposed by Councilors or requested by City Departments, the Tulsa Planning Office or the Mayor.



## STEP 2: PUBLIC MEETINGS

### Legislation is Presented at a Meeting

An ordinance is discussed during Council meetings where changes may be made and input from the public is received.



## STEP 3: VOTING

### Yes or No

After discussion and input, the Council then votes on the ordinance.



## STEP 4: MAYORAL SIGNING

### Legislation is Presented to the Mayor

After an ordinance is passed by the Council, it is delivered to the Mayor, who has 15 days to either sign it into law, veto it or take no action. If the Mayor vetoes the ordinance, it is sent back to the Council. If this happens, the Council can override the Mayor's veto with a 2/3 vote. If the Mayor doesn't sign or veto the ordinance, it becomes law.



## STEP 5: ORDINANCE BECOMES LAW

### Legislation is Added

Once an ordinance becomes law, it's then added to the Tulsa Revised Ordinances and goes into effect 30 days from the date of publishing, unless passed with the emergency clause. Ordinances adopted with the emergency clause shall take effect at the time stated in the ordinance.

# LEGISLATIVE

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

---

### **01 — What is a resolution?**

A resolution is an action of the City Council which states the will or opinion of the City in a matter and is often an act necessary to perform some responsibility imposed on the City Council by statute or other law. However, an adopted resolution does not enact a law. Unique to Tulsa's Mayor-Council form of government, Tulsa's Mayor must either approve a resolution before it has any effect, or the Mayor may veto it.

### **02 — What is an ordinance?**

An ordinance is a formal legislative act of the City Council which has the force and effect of law within the city limits of Tulsa. Most people correctly understand that a city ordinance may have a fine or imprisonment attached to it if an individual violates it. However, an ordinance can also adopt a continuing regulation that governs how citizens, or the government must lawfully act, without the possibility of punishment by a fine or imprisonment. As with resolutions adopted by the City Council, Tulsa's Mayor must either approve an ordinance before it has any effect, or the Mayor may veto it. Ordinances are adopted by the City as a matter of course many times a year. If an adopted ordinance is to be a permanent law, it is published in the City of Tulsa's "Code of Ordinances," which is available in book form or on the internet.

### **03 — What is First and Second Reading on the Council agenda?**

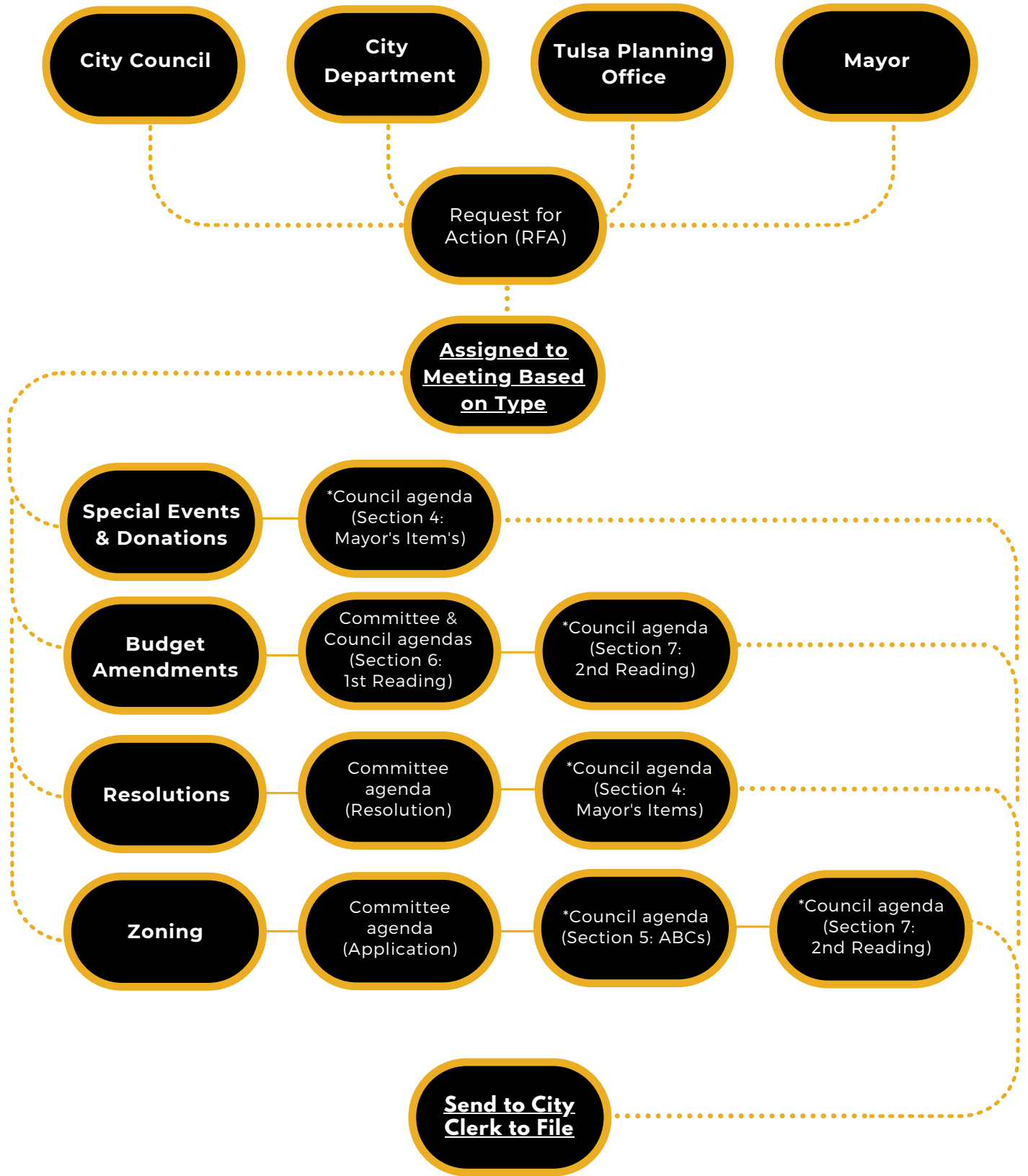
By City Charter, no ordinance can be adopted until the subject thereof has been on the agenda of the Council for two meetings. This gives the public more time to learn about ordinances and provide input before they are passed. This requirement may be waived by a vote of not less than two-thirds of the entire Council (6 votes). However, this is a rare occurrence and is included as a safeguard should there be an urgent matter.

### **04 — What is the Emergency Clause?**

An ordinance or resolution can be adopted as an emergency measure when there is a need to provide for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, welfare, or safety. The vote of at least two-thirds of the entire Council (6 votes) is required to adopt any ordinance or resolution as an emergency measure. Ordinances or resolutions adopted as an emergency measure take effect at the time stated in the measure. All other ordinances and resolutions take effect not less than 30 days from the date of first publication.

# LEGISLATIVE FLOWCHART

**START**



**END**

*\*Indicates when Councilors will vote on an item.*

# CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

## AND MORE INFORMATION

---

### Signing Up to Speak at a Meeting

During Regular Council Meetings, interested residents may sign up and speak to the Council regarding an item on the agenda. Before doing so, an individual must sign a Request to Speak form in person at the meeting before that item is read, provide their names and addresses and indicate whether they support or oppose that item.

A speaker may sign up to speak on multiple items, but speaking time is limited to five minutes total for all items. However, speaking in a “Public Hearing” under Section 3 does not count against a speaker’s total five minutes.

Public input is not received on agenda items during Committee meetings as these meetings are designed for information gathering and in-depth discussion amongst the Councilors.

Residents may comment to the Council about any issue affecting the City of Tulsa on the Regular Council Agenda under Section 11, titled “Public Comments.” To do so, they must follow these guidelines:

- 1. Timing of Request Submission:** A topic for the comment must be received no later than 12 p.m. (noon) on the preceding Thursday before the Council Regular Meeting.
- 2. Language and Content:** The language of the submitted topic will be reviewed and revised to guarantee agreement with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act. Comments must regard new issues affecting Tulsa and refrain from political, commercial or similar subjects. Residents are asked to keep comments in good taste and refrain from profanity or crude language.
- 3. Limitations:** Only two public comment items are allowed per agenda per person to ensure the review of all agenda items. Individuals shall be limited to a total of five minutes per meeting. Re-addressing a topic previously discussed within 180 days is not permitted.

More information, including the proper forms, contacts and rules, can be found [here](#).

### Public Input, Hearings, and Comments - What's the difference?

**Public Input:** The public can provide feedback on items placed on the agenda by City Councilors, the Mayor’s Office or Authorities, Boards, and Commissions.

**Public Hearings:** Sometimes, the Council addresses topics that have legally required public hearings, such as the annual budget. When the Council addresses this type of item, the Council will place a public hearing on the Council agenda under Section 3.

**Public Comment:** The public may place their own agenda item on the Council agenda. The Council cannot take immediate action on that item. However, a Councilor may add it to a future agenda for further consideration.

# CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

## MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

---



### 1 CHECK THE MEETING SCHEDULE & READ AGENDAS

The City Council schedules its meetings annually but meets most Wednesdays excluding holiday weeks.

Typically, agendas are posted online 48 hours before the meeting is scheduled to occur. Addenda to meetings will appear no later than 24 hours before a meeting.

View agendas here:

- [tulsacouncil.org/agendas](https://tulsacouncil.org/agendas)

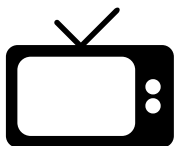


### 2 PROVIDE YOUR FEEDBACK

To comment on an item during the Regular 5 p.m. Council Meeting, fill out a Request to Speak form in person at the meeting prior to the Council addressing that item.

Submit comments to your City Councilor directly on any agenda item by phone or email using the contact information here:

- [tulsacouncil.org/contact](https://tulsacouncil.org/contact)



### 3 WATCH MEETINGS ON TV OR ONLINE

Watch meetings live or on-demand to keep up with what is happening with issues you care about:

- [facebook.com/tulsacitycouncil](https://facebook.com/tulsacitycouncil)
- [tgovonline.org](https://tgovonline.org)
- Cox Cable Channel 24



### 4 APPLY TO JOIN AN 'ABC'

The City of Tulsa has dozens of citizen authorities, boards and commissions (ABCs) that cover a wide range of topics. The Mayor and City Council rely on these volunteer citizen groups for thoughtful advice to create policies and develop programs.

Learn more and apply at:

- [cityoftulsa.org/abcs](https://cityoftulsa.org/abcs)

# CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

## CONTINUED

---

### Rules and Procedures for Attending a Meeting

All individuals and groups addressing the Council must limit their remarks to the specific agenda topic they have signed up to discuss.

Speakers should remain courteous and respectful at all times. As determined by the Council Chair, any violation of these provisions will initially result in a warning. If there is any further violation, the Council Chair shall direct the individual or group to vacate the podium and forfeit the remainder of their time available to address the Council. Likewise, the Council Chair may expel the individual or group from the meeting.

No weapons, including pocket knives, are allowed at public meetings.

Persons who require a special accommodation to participate in any Council meeting should contact Tulsa City Council Secretary Lori Doring, 175 East Second Street, Fourth Floor, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 918-596-1990 or via email at [loridoring@tulsacouncil.org](mailto:loridoring@tulsacouncil.org), as far in advance as possible and preferably at least 48 hours before the date of the meeting. Persons using a TDD may contact OKLAHOMA RELAY at 1-800-722-0353 and voice calls should be made to 1-800-522-8506 to communicate via telephone with hearing telephone users and vice versa.

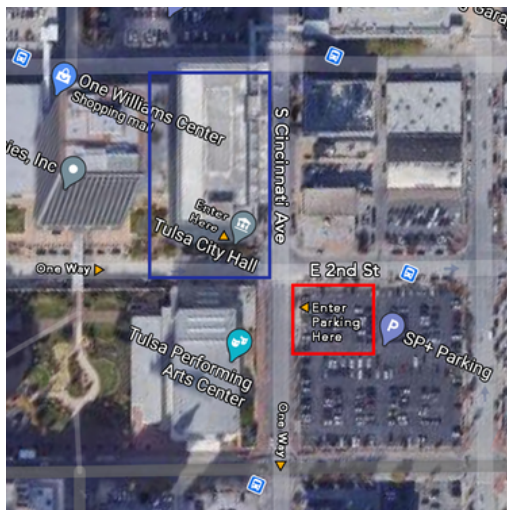
### Parking Tips for Attending a Regular Meeting

All street parking downtown is free after 5 p.m. In addition, the City of Tulsa has an arrangement with S.P.+ Parking so that people who attend the 5:00 p.m. City Council meetings on Wednesdays may park free of charge, with some exceptions, in the PAC Parking Lot (on the southeast corner of 2nd and Cincinnati).

If you wish to park at the PAC Parking Lot, inform the parking attendant that you are joining the meeting and provide the attendant with your tag number.

When the lot attendant leaves at 6:00 p.m., those who did not provide the attendant with their tag number will have a “pay” envelope placed on their windshield. If a person who attended the Council meeting receives a “pay” envelope, they should contact City Hall Security, who will work with S.P. + Parking to solve this issue.

NOTE: When there is an event at the Performing Arts Center at the same time as a City Council meeting, the PAC Parking Lot is never free.



# CONNECT WITH US



175 East 2nd St, 4th Floor Tulsa, OK 74103



(918) 596-1990



[www.tulsacouncil.org](http://www.tulsacouncil.org)



[info@tulsacouncil.org](mailto:info@tulsacouncil.org)



[@tulsacitycouncil](https://www.facebook.com/tulsacitycouncil)



[@tulsacitycouncil](https://www.instagram.com/tulsacitycouncil)



[@tulsacouncil](https://twitter.com/tulsacouncil)



[@tulsacitycouncil](https://www.youtube.com/tulsacitycouncil)

