

City of Woodcreek

Procedural Training Manual

2025

A Guide for Elected and Volunteer Service in the City of Woodcreek

IMPORTANT: the City has other governing policy documents. This document is not fully comprehensive, nor is it meant to be a substitute for required training, on-going education, or other policy documents of the City of Woodcreek.

The following pages are a series of procedural guidelines for the City of Woodcreek.

These are considered “best practice” guidelines for conducting business for the city.

While the processes outlined herein are considered ideal, it is understood that nuanced situations will arise resulting in the exercise of good judgement in the interpretation of the application of the procedure of the City of Woodcreek.

All rules, unless specified otherwise apply to all individuals in employment or of service to the City, including staff, the Elected Body, and all advisory body members. This is not meant for third party contracted individuals, but the procedures outlined within the documents may be applicable to how such parties navigate the City’s structures.

The intended goals of this training manual are as follows:

- 1) Give guidance to newly elected, and appointed, governing and advisory body members on the basics of their role in the city.
- 2) To support staff’s needs and create clear procedures for the conduct of city business.
- 3) Promote an understanding of and respect for the roles of key city officials as identified and delineated herein.
- 4) Create positive opportunities for communication and collaboration with and between all bodies of the city government and staff.
- 5) Facilitate the ease and efficiency of city business.
- 6) Provide good governance and a positive work environment for all.

OUTLINE

- I. Key Terms
- II. Ordinances
- III. Resolutions
- IV. Agenda Submission
- V. TOMA basics
- VI. Robert’s Rules “Crash Course”
- VII. Required Trainings
- VIII. Advisory Bodies – role and function overview
- IX. HR Complaints and Guidance
- X. Conflict Management

XI. Social Media Usage Guidelines

Key Terms:

This is an overview of the key parts of city business, what purpose they serve, and how these items are processed from start to finish.

Resolution	Reviewed every 2-4 years and updated frequently – some annually. Serves as a declaration of intention and is an official expression of the opinion or will of a legislative body. These are not legally binding in the same way as an ordinance, but they do govern city policies, procedures, rate fee schedules, and more.
Ordinance	An ordinance is a local law that regulates persons or property. Typically regarded as long-standing or less frequently changed.
Minute Order	Motions made in meetings – hold the same weight as a resolution. These are used to direct staff on regular city business, small purchases, additional research and more. These can serve in place of a formal motion where it is clear the elected body is unanimous in a decision that does not require a formal vote. Cannot be used to pass ordinances or resolutions. Doesn't always include a vote process from the elected body but should be noted in minutes.
Policy	A course or principle of action adopted by the city. These are developed by staff and the elected body jointly. They are passed by resolution. They govern the process and procedures for the city. Examples: we have policies regarding investment, procurement, anti-fraud, the creation and management of elected body agendas and meetings, use of City Hall and more.
Procedure	A series of actions conducted in a certain order or manner. This is how city business is carried out. These are often defined in policy (passed by resolution) or by ordinance. Some procedures are created by city staff in regard to how City Hall operates. Some procedures are set by the elected body in regard to how the advisory bodies operate and communicate.
Sub-Committee	Contains no more than two members of any single body, has a specific purpose, provides reports on progress, can acquire members of other boards, citizens, staff, and the Mayor to form a larger group task force. The two members of the body are designated by vote of the body. These can be permanent and topics can be very broad in nature. Result is a formal report and recommendation for action to the body that formed the sub-committee. Meetings are informal and not publicly noticed.
Ad-hoc work group	These informally review a topic and provide less structured feedback. The Mayor can create without Council action. Council can form one by

	vote. No more than two members of any governing body can serve in this group. These are more temporary and focused. They report to the individual or body that formed them, but may not produce a formal report or recommended action. Meetings are informal and not publicly noticed.
Comprehensive Plan	A governing document based on citizen input that provides the City Council with directives on a variety of issues and can help direct future development that may occur. This document helps set long-term infrastructure and financial planning and it includes a general summary of city conditions, land features, and demographics
Request for Proposal	Used for projects or contracted labor.
Request for Qualification	Used for professional services such as legal or engineering.
Proclamations	Done by the Mayor. Do not require a vote. Used to support movements and events. Example: Pride Month or Black History Month
Board of Adjustment	In the City of Woodcreek, this is the full governing body, including the Mayor, who also has a vote. The BoA reviews and rules on variance requests from ordinances or disputed previous decisions made by the City Manager or Council. It is regulated by State Law and has different quorum and majority vote rules than the regular City Council.
Workshop	An informal portion of a meeting where Robert's Rules are suspended, and discussion can flow freely. No action can be taken during the workshop.
Executive Session	A closed portion of a public meeting for which only specific individuals can stay. No notes can be taken. No action can be taken. This is primarily for legal consultation and is heavily regulated by State Law. What is discussed in these meetings is to remain private and not to be shared with anyone not present in that Executive Session.
Mayor	They are the liaison to all advisory bodies for Council and the liaison between staff and Council. They help ensure that staff is effectively and efficiently operating the day-to-day business of the City. They oversee the budget and expenditures and are responsible for emergency response coordination along with the City Administrator.
Council Member	An elected or appointed official member of the City of Woodcreek governing body. They do not act alone, and work as a single unit by vote to direct city business and set policy for city governance.
Advisory Body	Bodies created by the City Council to help inform them on topics, make recommendations for action, and handle specific city business as designated to them by Council. These follow TOMA.
City Administrator	The day-to-day operations manager. They oversee budget expenditures and ensure Council action is carried out.
City Secretary	The legal record keeper of the City.

Ordinances:

Ordinance adoption is the formal process of changing the laws of the City. Routine review for state compliance and effectiveness should be performed; although ordinances should typically remain consistent over longer spans of time. Proposals for new ordinances and edits to existing ordinances may arise from a variety of areas, such as an advisory board, public input, staff requests, and Council Member proposals. While the adoption or passing of a final ordinance draft is the responsibility of the Council, this process is relevant for the Planning and Zoning Committee as well. Here is a brief outline of what proposing an ordinance change should look like in process:

- 1) Utilize the “Future Business” section of a Council Meeting to announce the proposed item – no discussion, give a short description.
- 2) A draft ordinance must be prepared. This is a copy of the relevant portion of the existing City code with edits or additions clearly identified.
- 3) Utilize the agenda submission guidelines to prepare an agenda item for Council consideration. These guidelines are available later in this document under “agenda submissions”
- 4) Council may edit the proposed draft ordinance update via discussion in an open meeting through proposed amendments. If the changes are supported then Council, via majority vote, shall send the ordinance for legal review to form and of substance. The City’s legal counsel will add the “whereas” portion of the formal document, and the item will come back to Council in a timely manner for consideration of passage. Note: It is best practice to have two readings of an ordinance, but if upon the first reading there are no changes, or only minor typographical changes, then it is possible that an ordinance can pass, with legal review, upon the first reading.
- 5) Some ordinances, specifically those on zoning, require a public hearing of both the Planning and Zoning and City Council.
- 6) Changes to drafts should be designated with a draft version number and utilize redlining and other typical editing tools so that Council and the public can clearly track edits.
 - a. Edits of substance after the initial draft submission shall be managed by legal counsel and the sponsoring Council Member can assist
 - b. Edits of typographical and formatting nature shall be managed by staff, or the sponsoring Council Member can assist

- c. Edits are confirmed by Council vote and cannot be considered final or complete without vote in a properly noticed open public meeting
- 7) Once an ordinance is adopted by Council majority vote, it shall be assigned a number by staff and is considered “passed” after 4 days or with Mayoral signature.
- 8) The Mayor may ask that a council adopted ordinance be reconsidered within 4 days – see state law for more information

Resolutions:

Resolutions are how the governing body sets out policy and procedures not explicitly governed by city ordinances.

These documents are numbered much like ordinances and have a formal structure.

The process for creating a resolution to pass new policies and procedures or update existing ones is the exact same as ordinances.

These documents, or more specifically, the policies and procedures they are tied to are updated more frequently than ordinances, and some (like financial ones) can be required to have annual review and passage.

All policies, processes, and procedures must have a resolution passed by Council majority vote to take effect.

Examples of resolutions:

- 1) How and when public meetings of the City Council are held
- 2) Utilizing Robert’s Rules to guide meeting format
- 3) Investment strategy
- 4) A City training manual such as this one

Resolutions are used to explain in detail how the city operates and outline those processes in writing.

Resolutions can support existing ordinances by giving more explicit instructions on how to carry out the directives of the ordinance.

They are much easier and less costly to update than ordinances and are recommended for topics that may change often. It is not always best to write everything into law (as in an ordinance) and Resolutions hold a similar weight regarding governing the City.

Agenda Submission:

The rules are the same for Council and Advisory Bodies. Members of any governing body should use the agenda item coversheet template and check list to create their agenda item submission.

TYPES OF ITEMS:

- 1) Action item – this is something you want the body to vote on to take action. “Discussion and possible action...” are the required start of this type of agenda item.
- 2) Workshop – this is for creating a discussion on a topic and it suspends the formal rules of the meeting. NOTE: if you want to take action on this item/topic, then you must submit TWO agenda items; one for workshop and then one for “action item” using that wording. This alerts the public that possible action after the workshop may occur.
- 3) Consent agenda – these are not discussed but are voted on to approve – meeting minutes are the most typical part of the consent agenda. If a member of the body wishes to discuss something found in the consent agenda, they must request that it is moved to the regular part of the agenda, where it can be taken up there.
- 4) Announcements – good for event notice
- 5) Future Business – this is not a formal submission, but instead please come prepared to announce your future item in this portion of a meeting BEFORE placing an item on the agenda. Future agenda items need a second to be submitted.
- 6) Executive Sessions – used for legal counsel primarily, this agenda wording MUST go to legal counsel for review and approval as to form and substance

ITEMS THAT COST MONEY:

- 1) When submitting an item, it is important to note if the proposed item has an associated cost, then you MUST list the budget line item and amount proposed for expenditure in the motion.
- 2) You MUST meet with staff to confirm there are enough funds available - this can be done via email, but may require an in-person meeting.
- 3) If funds are NOT available, then a budget amendment MUST be prepared for agenda submission with the item.
- 4) Items that result in spending cannot be taken up unless these specifications have been met.
- 5) Advisory boards submit ALL expenditure requests to Council for approval in the form of a “recommendation to Council”. No spending can occur without Council approval.

SUPPORTING MATERIALS:

- 1) Occasionally items do not need attachments for members to discuss or take action. However, more often than not supporting materials are needed.
- 2) What are supporting materials? Budget outlines, maps, existing ordinances, resolutions, images, coversheets (required), and more.
- 3) Upload supporting materials (limit 10 items). If you have more please send an email with a request – the submission forms have limits as to what they can process.
- 4) Items not included in agenda submission MUST be submitted for City records prior to meeting. And, if presented as a handout during the meeting, a minimum of 6 copies is necessary.
- 5) **IMPORTANT:** if your motion references a packet or document, it MUST be attached in the published version, or the motion cannot be taken up.

Items submitted will appear on an agenda within 3-6 months of submission.

Incomplete submissions will not be taken up until all necessary items are included (see the checklist).

A meeting with the Mayor and City Administrator will be required for most items in order to ensure agenda packets are properly formed. The goal of these meetings is to promote efficient city business that is considerate of volunteer and staff time, available resources, and other scheduled items.

For advisory bodies, the Chairperson meets with the Mayor and/or staff to finalize their agenda submissions and serves as the liaison for their board members with staff and Council.

The rights of Council Members and advisory board members to submit items for consideration on agendas is protected. All efforts will be made to honor submissions as intended by the individual sponsoring the item in a timely manner.

Some items may occasionally be rejected for submission. This decision shall be made by the Mayor and City Administrator, and they must be in agreement. This shall be reserved for very specific conditions and used sparingly. The sponsoring Council Member will receive a written statement explaining this decision and citing code, state law, Robert's Rules, or some other legitimate constraint for not allowing the submission. This can be overridden should the sponsoring Council Member secure support from another Council Member to have the item considered.

TOMA Basics

The best practice is to only discuss city business in an open meeting which has been properly noticed to the public.

Changes to document drafts such as resolutions and ordinances of substantive value (not correcting typos and format) MUST occur during an open and properly noticed meeting.

To work on city business outside of a meeting (example: event planning or project development), a sub-committee of no more than TWO members of the body can be formed to prepare items to be presented in a public meeting.

Remember, no action can be taken outside of a meeting – so expense approvals, plan executions, etc. ALL occur in the open meeting.

A “walking quorum,” or essentially an unnoticed meeting, can occur when 3 or more members of a body are together AND city business is discussed. This can happen online and in email. So, it is best practice NOT to discuss future business outside of an open meeting publicly noticed. And if a quorum is expected at a city event or activity, it is important to give notice to the public and ALWAYS avoid discussing future city business.

A “daisy chain” is when a third person is used, with or without intent, to connect more than two members of a body discussing future city business.

Discussion of future city business with two or more voting body members is strictly prohibited by law. You CANNOT share your opinions or intentions with two or more body members about an item outside of a public open meeting.

If you are the sponsor of an item, and two other members of the body call you to discuss it, it is best not to discuss it with them. It is up to YOU to know and remember who you have worked with on what. Similarly, reaching out to another member to discuss an agenda item prior to the meeting can create the same issue. Discussion should occur in open meetings.

Existing policy and process are not necessarily a violation of TOMA when discussed. Example: asking for help on agenda submission process or coordinating when to call a future meeting and aligning schedules.

Carrying out day-to-day business and enacting Council motions/actions is the purview of the City’s staff and under the review and management of the Mayor.

Individual Council Members or Advisory Body Members, and even the Mayor in most circumstances, do NOT hold the authority to direct staff, contracted vendors, or make expenditures on their own.

Robert's Rules "Crash Course"

The Chairperson or Mayor "run the meeting" and are responsible for the agenda compilation along with City Staff. This person follows the agenda outline to lead the meeting and will manage discussion time lengths and member recognition to speak.

A cheat sheet for Robert's Rules will be made available upon request.

All individuals who work or volunteer for the City are encouraged to attend the annual TML training at the City's expense to learn more about the rules that govern meetings.

Basic Terms and Actions of Robert's Rules:

- a. A motion is required for a body to take up an item for discussion, and they must have a second to proceed. No second means the item is not up for discussion or action.
- b. Motions become 'Actions' by required votes – this is true for advisory bodies as well. After discussion on an item, a clear direction for action by motion should be voted upon. It sounds like this "I move to....." This can be the original (main) motion made to open the discussion or one with amendments. A new (main) motion can be made if the previous main motion has been voted upon (closed/completed), if additional action is needed for that item.
- c. The Chairperson or Mayor is responsible for making sure the action is clear and that the vote occurs.
- d. Amendments can be made to motions, but they cannot create a completely new motion.

Example:

Motion: The City buys 4 green cop cars not to exceed \$15,000 each out of the traffic control budget line item 10-10-1010.

Amendment: I move that the City buys 5 purple buses not to exceed \$25,000 each... (NO – this is not allowed)

Amendment: I move that the City buys 3 black cop cars not to exceed \$10,000 each... (YES)

- e. Time limits for the whole discussion of an item can be imposed by the Chairperson or Mayor, as long as it does not take away an individual body member's right to speak to the item.
- f. During the public comments section of the agenda, discussion between the body and citizens cannot occur; only a statement of fact is allowed. Public Comments are a one-way communication. The public to their government.
- g. If a member of a body wishes to speak, they should be recognized by the Chairperson or Mayor first.
- h. All members should be given the opportunity to speak once before others speak a second time.
- i. The sponsor of an item speaks first and may answer questions out of turn if requested to do so or allowed by the Chairperson or Mayor. The sponsor of an item also has the right to speak last on their item.
- j. To close a meeting, it is a motion to adjourn with a second and recognized by the Chairperson or Mayor.
- k. Common phrases:
 - a. "Question of Privilege" - I need a bathroom break, I don't have that handout, it's too cold, it's too loud
 - b. "Recess" - the chairperson or Mayor will allow a formal break in the meeting and set a time to reconvene
 - c. "Point of Order" - this brings focus back to the rules of the meeting
 - d. "Call to vote" encourages the Mayor or Chairperson to close discussion and hold the vote. This cannot be used right at the start of discussion, and all body members have a right to speak on the item first. This motion requires a vote to close the discussion, separate from the vote on the item.
 - e. "Second" - this is how you open discussion on an item once the main motion is made
 - f. "Move to Amend" - this is how you alter a Main motion for small things like color, number, amount of money, etc. Like the Main Motion, it requires a 'Second' to proceed and be considered.

IMPORTANT: During an Open Meeting, money allocated by amendment in the meeting CANNOT exceed that as posted in the motion on the agenda publicly noticed.

Example: "Motion to approve the Community Relations Committee budget for Spooktacular not to exceed \$3,000" - this cannot be amended to state \$3,500.

Required Trainings

All advisory body and Council Members MUST complete the following trainings:

Texas Open Meetings Act (TOMA)

Public Information Act (PIA)

This training can be done online or in person. If there is a cost associated, then the City can pay for the training. These should be renewed every two years; and must be updated every five years.

Council Members and City Staff must take the Cybersecurity Training.

Other job specific trainings are required for certain staff such as the City Administrator, City Secretary, and Code enforcement or administration positions.

The Mayor is required to attend specialized emergency response training.

These should be updated annually.

Advisory Bodies – role and function overview

Advisory bodies are formed by the City Council to serve as long-term, formal city entities that follow the Texas Open Meetings Act (TOMA).

Currently the City of Woodcreek has the following advisory bodies:

- a. Planning and Zoning Commission: reviews development plans, zoning changes, code of ordinances, and the Comprehensive Plan. This body is directly regulated by the State of Texas.
- b. The Trees and Parks Board: reviews existing trees and parks, creates management plans, and drafts improvement proposals for these features
- c. The Community Relations Committee: plans and executes city events

Advisory bodies can hold joint meetings to take up an item or topic together.

Recommendations for action or expenditure are made directly to Council; not staff or another advisory body. Advisory bodies are created by Council to advise on decisions. Advisory bodies are not empowered to act on their own.

Advisory Boards do not have the authority to spend allocated budget funds on their own. They submit an annual budget request which Council approves by vote and this becomes an allocated fund or expected possible expenditures total. This is NOT permission to spend. Before action is taken on a proposal or plan or an expense made, an itemized expense report is presented to Council for approval – this should include detailed plans and proposal specifics. Any changes after Council approval must come back to Council; this is specific to fund use increases and/or substantive plan changes or additions.

Depending on the intensity of the proposed change, it may be in the form of a report or may require additional Council votes to approve and move forward. It should be noted that Council may change or deny any recommendation an advisory body may make. There may be reasons that council may choose to do so, such as other plans in the works or other expenses they foresee. This does not mean that council does not fully appreciate the advisory bodies efforts in submitting their recommendations.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION: This is a state regulated board and so there are very specific rules for this commission that are outlined below:

- 1) The Chairperson of this group will need to pay special attention to the packets for these agendas as important attachments regarding subdivision review, building development and zoning changes are required to conduct business during a meeting.
- 2) Knowledge of the City of Woodcreek Code of Ordinances is essential to serve on this commission.
- 3) Public Hearings are required for MANY of the functions of this board, and one must regularly check state and city code. This includes notices in the paper of record, letters sent to residents, and signs at times.
- 4) This commission MUST issue formal reports with clear recommendations to Council by State law.

HR Complaints and Guidance

The City of Woodcreek does not have an official designated Human Relations Department at this time. It is recommended that HR type concerns are taken up with the City Administrator if they concern other staff, or the Mayor if they concern the governing body. If the concern is with the Mayor or City Administrator, then it should be taken up with the other.

Woodcreek is committed to a safe and healthy work environment. Sexual harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated.

Ethics violations can and should be reported to the Texas Ethics Board.

The City of Woodcreek's legal counsel is available for consultation to all staff, advisory body members, and Council, including the Mayor, to advise on any city business related issue or topic in relation to HR, discrimination, harassment, or TOMA. This list is not exhaustive, nor limiting, in nature. If you have a concern, seek guidance.

If you feel you are experiencing burn out, mental health crises, medical issues, depression, anxiety, stress or any similar issue, it is important that you attempt to alleviate the problem, get help, and take care of yourself.

The City of Woodcreek takes mental health and physical well-being seriously.

Your well-being is a priority.

Conflict Management

It is recommended that a third-party is present for any discussions that may result in heightened emotions or cover difficult topics.

Every effort should be made to resolve conflict outside of the public domain (i.e. not in a public meeting or on social media) so long as doing so is not in violation of TOMA. So, this is not about discussing how to vote on an item but is more about personal issues that may arise between two people.

The City of Woodcreek is committed to providing conflict management training as needed.

Social Media Usage Guidelines

All members of the Council, staff, advisory bodies, and other volunteers for the City maintain their constitutional rights, and free speech is protected by law. The following statements are meant to be best practices and do not prevent individuals from exercising their rights to online free speech, nor do they absolve individuals of the consequences of such actions.

It is very important to distinguish when your comments reflect your own views versus when you are representing the City of Woodcreek.

When you represent the City, please attempt to stick to fact alone and cite your sources. This promotes public trust and transparency and avoids inadvertent TOMA violations.

Discussion of future business online can violate TOMA, no more than two Council Members should interact online on a topic. This includes more than one comment thread.

All staff and volunteers are encouraged to create a social media account designated specifically for their role in the City should they intend to engage in social media posting regarding city business and to keep this separate from their personal pages.

City communications such as emails between two Council Members should NOT be posted online as this can form a “walking quorum” and violate TOMA.

Executive Session details should NEVER be discussed with individuals not in the session, and online discussion about an Executive Session should be avoided completely.

Council Members should be aware that sharing their opinions or intentions on a future item can put them at risk of violating TOMA. Council Members are individually responsible for maintaining their TOMA compliance at all times.

The City of Woodcreek social media accounts have a specific policy governing their use.