

Understanding Council Meeting Agendas

Vancouver City Council typically releases the agenda for meetings one week beforehand. The agenda provides insight into what will be discussed in the meeting and the order in which these items will be discussed. While council may decide to change the agenda, reading it in advance will still give you a good idea of what to expect during the meeting.

Here's an overview of some of the key parts of a typical council meeting agenda:

Matters Adopted on Consent



At the beginning of the meeting, councillors can vote to approve several reports at once if they all agree to it. Any member of the council can ask to take an agenda item out of the package that is being voted on for more discussion, questions, or amendments, or if they wish to vote against it.

Reports & Presentations



These are prepared by city staff, usually responding to specific directions council has already given or issues they have asked staff to look into. Their contents cover a broad range of topics, including updates to city plans, projects, and strategies, and grants to community organizations. Reports will typically include recommendations for council to approve; while presentations do not contain recommendations.

Bylaws



This stage of the meeting is more procedural and goes relatively quickly. Generally, the issue has already been debated and voted on at a previous meeting and council is formalizing its decision by passing a bylaw. Council members must have been present or get caught up on the previous meeting to be eligible to vote.

Notice of Council Members Motions



This is where councillors give their colleagues and the public a heads up about motions they are bringing forward at a future meeting. They must state the title of the motion and the date of the meeting it will be introduced.

New Business



While it doesn't happen often, council members can bring forward a motion or issue to discuss if they haven't given notice at a previous meeting. This usually only happens if the issue is time-sensitive or urgent.

Enquiries and Other Matters



Here's where councillors have a chance to bring up any other issues that weren't on the agenda. For example, they may recognize a significant event impacting the community, ask staff about the status of a certain project, or raise questions about a policy that residents have been asking about.

For standing committee meetings



The agenda for standing committee meetings follows a similar format with the addition of council members' motions.

Council Members' Motions

Council members' motions are written and brought forward by a councillor or the mayor to propose a policy direction for the future of the city. For example, a motion might propose adding a bike lane to an area of the city or forming a task force to address a certain issue.

