



Office of the Mayor

FACT SHEET

Berkeley City Council Rules Committee

Berkeley City Council meetings have been somewhat notorious for their length and lack of focus on City priorities. Items often come before the Council before any staff research has been conducted, costs analyzed, or citizen review permitted. In addition, important issues that are ready for Council action are pushed late into the night or even held over for a future meeting because time is taken up discussing the meeting agenda and items that are not ready for a decision. Citizens who come to comment on an issue may end up waiting for hours before their item finally comes before the Council.

What the Rules Committee Does:

Mayor Tom Bates, along with six of his colleagues on the City Council, voted to create a Council Rules Committee made up of the Mayor and two Council Members. The Committee – which is similar to those in other cities – will be reviewed in six months and can be modified or eliminated at any time by a majority vote of the Council.

- The Council Rules Committee will meet eight days ahead of the regularly scheduled Council meeting to review items submitted for the agenda.
- The Committee will set the order of the agenda to allow for maximum citizen input and to leave adequate time for comment on issues that are controversial.
- The committee will also review items submitted by Council Members to see if a referral to a Commission, back to the author, or to City staff is warranted.
- The Rules Committee can decide not to recommend an item for the Council agenda. If the author disagrees with the Rules decision, they can have it placed on the Council agenda in a section for items not recommended by the Rules Committee.
- Items submitted by Commissions and Boards are placed on the Council agenda without review by the Rules Committee.

What the Rules Committee Does NOT do:

- The Rules Committee was designed in close coordination with the City Attorney and City Clerk to ensure it did not violate the City Charter or impede City operations.
- The Rules Committee does not have the power to stop an item from appearing on the Council agenda. If the author of the item disagrees with the Rules Committee recommendation, they just ask that it be placed on the Council agenda anyway.
- The Rules Committee does not set policy; it only makes recommendations to the Council and helps organize the agenda.