

Special City Council Meeting Minutes  
City Hall Auditorium, 62 Friend St.  
April 26, 2022  
7:00 PM

City Council President Wheeler called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Roll call was taken, and present were Councilor Hickok, Councilor Hogg, Councilor Lennon, Councilor Rinaldi, Councilor Stanganelli, Councilor Deschenes, Councilor Frey, and Councilor Wheeler.

Councilor Mandeville was absent.

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Public Hearing

**2022-036** An Ordinance to Adopt Rules of Procedure for the Amesbury City Council – 13<sup>th</sup> Session-  
Councilor Wheeler Sponsor

President Wheeler opened the Public Hearing at 7:06pm.  
No public comments were offered.  
President Wheeler closed the Public Hearing at 7:06pm.

President Wheeler stated that the red line contained in this bill was presented by Councilor Lennon as a first reading at the March 22, 2022 meeting of the City Council. President Wheeler further stated that the mandated 30 days have lapsed since the first reading, allowing the City Council to now debate the proposed rule change.

Councilor Lennon thanked her fellow councilors for taking the time to review the proposed rules and stated that the objective of the proposed changes is to bring the City of Amesbury in line with the municipal government structure that is commonly seen across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in terms of standing sub committees and committee functions of a City Council. Councilor Lennon explained that the document currently before the City Council includes red lines from the last cycle and anywhere a strike through appears has commonly already been approved. Council Rules and Procedures have been changed to allow the City Council to continue to evaluate, expand and contract the rules by which the City Council is governed throughout the year. Councilor Lennon stipulated for the record, two of the three members of the Rules Committee are currently on the Ordinance Committee, so it is almost the same group of people that would be looking at this. In the past, Rule 11, Council Committees, had four subsections. Councilor Lennon stated that the original Rule 11D was duplicative to the original Rule 11A, so she essentially incorporated it into the current Rule 11A. Currently, there are two standing committees that have legislative power of the City Council, Finance and Ordinance. Councilor Lennon opined that currently there is a tremendous imbalance of power where there are three councilors sitting on both these subcommittees, giving them twice the recommendation power over the other six members of the City Council. The proposed creation of three standing subcommittees, with three members each, is an effort to try to rebalance that. Councilor Lennon pointed out that the City Council should aim to approve their entire year schedule in January, with the second and fourth Tuesday of each month for the City Council meetings, and the third week of the month for standing committee meetings, so that the public is better aware of when meetings will take place. With this schedule, legislative matters could be moved in a matter of two and a half weeks versus the typical period of 6 weeks. Councilor Lennon opined that holding Special Meetings on an ad hoc basis is not a best practice because it does not clearly relate to the public how often the City Council is meeting as a body of the whole.

Councilor Lennon stated that under the new rules, expenditure matters will be referred to the Budget and Finance Committee, matters involving administrative structure, licensing, etc. will be referred to the

Ordinance and Administration Committee, and matters involving planning, zoning, land use and other development of the city will be referred to Planning and Development. These referrals will be by a simple majority vote of the City Council. Ad hoc committees will be appointed by the council president for specific purposes, for a limited amount of time and dissolved either when their assignment is complete, or when the City Council votes to do so. Councilor Lennon stated that ad hoc committees' schedules will not be published at the top of the legislative cycle. Councilor Lennon opined that these changes will dramatically improve how the public is able to engage with city government, improve relationships with managerial staff, rebalance the legislative power within the City Council, while leaving some space to continue to evolve and learn for future changes. There were several topics discussed that were not incorporated into this revision, including generating a document for performance standards during remote meetings, a social media policy, and a conduct policy.

Chairman Wheeler stated that the original version of the bill's cover sheet indicated that the City Council was going to readopt the 12<sup>th</sup> Session Rules because the red line edition was not ready by deadline. The City Council now has an amended cover sheet. The only changes that were made are Councilor Lennon is now listed as a sponsor of the bill and under the "be it ordained" section, rather than recodifying the 12<sup>th</sup> Session rules, it simply reads "the Amesbury City Council hereby adopts the attached 13<sup>th</sup> Session City Council Rules and Procedures".

**Councilor Lennon made a motion to substitute the amended cover sheet dated April 22, 2022, in place of the current cover sheet 2022-036. Councilor Rinaldi seconded and said motion carried unanimously on a roll call vote of 8-0-absent.**

Councilor Stanganelli questioned what would happen if the council did not adopt the matter as presented.

Chairman Wheeler stated that the Council needs to take some kind of action because the current rules have an expiration date.

Councilor Stanganelli questioned how a standing committee created by legislative order, such as the Joint Education Committee, could be eliminated by a change of the rules.

Councilor Lennon responded that the city is supposed to review its ordinances every 10 years ending in zero, but that has not been performed for a very long time, possibly 13 years. Multiple ordinances will need to be amended to comply with the rule changes.

Councilor Stanganelli expressed concern that there will only be the assumption that the Finance Committee Chairman will be appointed to the Budget Ad Hoc Committee. Councilor Stanganelli opined that while the expectation is that more work will be done at the committee level, the actual result may be repetitive discussions, in greater detail, at the full City Council meeting level.

Councilor Deschenes stated that while he shares some of Councilor Stanganelli's concerns, he also agrees the case Councilor Lennon made regarding the disproportionate power of councilors serving on different subcommittees and on the committee of the whole is an excellent argument.

Councilor Lennon pointed out that subcommittee assignments will not preclude other councilor members from participating in the activities of the subcommittees, just from voting on recommendations.

Councilor Stanganelli asked if the current plan is to draft an ordinance to establish a Traffic and Transportation Committee with 3 councilors as members, as well as other ex-officio members.

Councilor Lennon responded that the Traffic and Transportation Committee has been created by ordinance will be reevaluated and disbanded. Most of its members are municipal staff who also serve on the Design Technical Review Committee. It is an advisory committee and dubious at best.

President Wheeler stated that if this rule package gets adopted this evening, he will be introducing an updated Addendum L for a vote at the regular City Council meeting in May. This will include the

appointment of councilor members to the 3 new standing committees. President Wheeler further stated that he will not be removing council representation from boards such as Energy, Traffic, Open Space Committees, etc., unless and until the bills creating those boards are amended. The intent is that if this rule change occurs, the council will go forward and evaluate whether those committees need to be reevaluated, amended, or repealed.

Councilor Stanganelli stated that in 2019 he proposed the creation of a Public Policy Committee to the then sitting City Council, and he emailed the City Clerk late this evening with a draft to create such a committee.

President Wheeler stated that creating a separate policy committee would be redundant because the council is creating an Ordinance & Administration Committee and a Planning & Development Committee for those purposes.

Councilor Lennon opined that one could argue to a certain extent that all the work the council does is policy work. The point is to subdivide the policy work into specific categories for review.

Councilor Hickok asked for confirmation that the new standing council meeting schedule will be the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month, with the subcommittees meeting the third week of the month.

Councilor Lennon responded that is correct.

Councilor Hickok expressed his concern with the size of the Budget & Finance Committee, having three voices as opposed to nine.

President Wheeler stated for clarification that the subcommittees will not be mandated to schedule meetings during the third week of the month.

Councilor Frey stated that in the presented draft, the second paragraph of Rule 1C has a reference to Rule 11D- Appointments by the President, which should read 11A.

Councilor Frey asked the rules to be codified to specifically define that the Ad Hoc Committee for the budget will always be a Committee of the Whole.

President Wheeler and Councilor Lennon expressed their support of the Councilor Frey's request.

**Councilor Lennon offered a motion to amend the reference under Rule 1C to strike Rule 11D and to insert Rule 11. Councilor Hickok seconded, and the motion passed 7-0-1 (Councilor Stanganelli abstained).**

**Councilor Lennon offered a motion to change the footer of the Amesbury City Council Rules and Procedures from 2020 to 2022. Councilor Frey seconded, and the motion passed 7-0-1 (Councilor Stanganelli abstained).**

**Councilor Stanganelli offered a motion to have the Budget & Finance Committee be listed specifically as a Committee of the Whole. Councilor Deschenes seconded.**

President Wheeler asked if the intent is to make the committee nine members year-round.

Councilor Stanganelli stated his motion is for the standing Budget & Finance Committee, by extension, that would mean a Committee of the Whole meeting throughout the year.

**The City Clerk called the roll and the motion failed 2-5-1 (Councilor Stanganelli and Councilor Deschenes in favor, Councilor Hickok abstained).**

**Councilor Lennon offered a motion that bill 2002-036 be approved as amended. Councilor Rinaldi seconded the motion.**

**Councilor Stanganelli objected.**

The City Clerk provided President Wheeler with a copy of Robert's Rules.

Councilor Stanganelli stated a prior City Clerk had provided councilors with a Robert's Rules Chart of Motions. According to this chart, Robert's Rules, Section 26, essentially says a councilor does not need to be recognized to offer an objection, interruptions are allowed. Councilor Stanganelli further stated that there is no second requirement, there is no debate on the objection, there is no amendment to the objection, there is a vote.

President Wheeler requested Councilor Stanganelli provide the current City Clerk with a copy of that document.

Councilor Rinaldi stated that once the motion has been discussed, it is too late to offer an objection to consideration.

President Wheeler stated that under the City Charter, a Charter Objection must occur on the consideration of the final vote on a measure. You must have a motion, a second and a vote needs to be on the floor for someone to object. The question is whether the council should start the roll call first or postpone the matter immediately.

Councilors Frey and Councilor Deschenes opined that the roll should not begin.

**Hearing no other objections, President Wheeler remanded bill 2022-036 to the next regular or specially scheduled meeting of the City Council.**

**Councilor Lennon offered a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 PM. Councilor Frey seconded, and the motion passed unanimously 8-0).**

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer E. Smith  
Assistant City Clerk  
June 10, 2022