

Draft Motion to Adopt Standing Rules of Decorum

MOTION:

Presented by Nico Ruderman - Community Officer

WHEREAS

- Neighborhood Council meetings exist to serve the community through respectful, civil, and efficient deliberation; and
 - Some recent meetings of the Venice Neighborhood Council have become contentious, with repeated personal conflicts, disruptive conduct, and excessive commentary interfering with the Council's ability to complete its business; and
 - **In the interest of both decorum and timeliness, it is necessary to establish clear expectations and procedures to ensure that meetings are conducted efficiently and do not unreasonably burden this volunteer board and the public;** and
 - The Board has a responsibility to set clear standards of conduct and procedures to ensure all participants—Board Members and members of the public—can be heard without intimidation or disruption;
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THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

That the Venice Neighborhood Council hereby adopts the following Standing Rules of Decorum, which shall apply to all General Board Meetings and Committee Meetings, effective immediately upon adoption and remaining in force until amended or repealed by a majority vote of the Board.

Standing Rules of Decorum

Section 1. Purpose

These rules establish standards of conduct to ensure all Venice Neighborhood Council meetings are conducted:

- With civility and respect.
 - In an orderly and efficient manner.
 - In compliance with the Brown Act, City policy, and the VNC Bylaws.
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Section 2. Recognition and Speaking Procedures

2.1 Recognition Required

- No person may speak without first being recognized by the presiding officer.
- The presiding officer shall recognize speakers in an orderly manner and may establish a queue.

2.2 Addressing the Chair

- All remarks must be addressed to the presiding officer or to the Council as a whole.
- Speakers shall not address or question individual Board Members or members of the public directly.

2.3 Standing to Speak

- Whenever practicable, Board Members and presenters shall stand when speaking.
- Exceptions may be made for accessibility or other reasonable accommodations.

2.4 Speaking Order

- No person may interrupt another who has the floor, except:
 - To raise a point of order.
 - To make a privileged motion.

- If recognized by the presiding officer for a clarifying question.

2.5 Clarifying Questions

- Board Members may ask clarifying questions after a presentation.
- Clarifying questions must be stated in **fifteen (15) seconds or less**.
- Time used by presenters to answer clarifying questions does not count against the presenter's comment time.

2.6 Timekeeping and Time Limits

- The presiding officer or designee shall act as timekeeper.
- Speakers shall not exceed the established time limits.
- If the presiding officer determines a question or process requires pausing the clock, they may stop time to avoid penalizing the speaker.

2.7 Other Presentations Time Limits

- The presiding officer may set reasonable time limits for all presentations, reports, or guest speakers.

Section 3. Standards of Conduct

3.1 Respectful Speech

- No speaker shall engage in personal attacks, insults, or demeaning remarks.
- No speaker shall impute improper motives to another person.

3.2 Disruption Prohibited

- No person shall engage in shouting, interrupting, or making loud noises intended to disrupt the meeting.
- No use of obscene, profane, or threatening language.
- No gestures or signs intended to intimidate or provoke.

3.3 Relevance

- Remarks must be germane to the item under discussion.

- Repeatedly straying off topic may result in a warning or loss of speaking privileges for that item.

3.4 Visual Materials

- No display of obscene or offensive images.
- All materials shall be submitted to the presiding officer for review prior to display, if practicable.

3.5 References to Individuals Prohibited

- During official Board comments, Board Members shall not reference, name, or make statements about other Board Members or members of the public, except as necessary to state a fact relevant to the matter under discussion (such as the identity of the maker of a motion).
- Comments shall focus solely on the facts and merits of the agenda item.

3.6 Speaking Out of Turn

- No person shall speak over another recognized speaker or engage in cross-talk or side conversations during remarks.
- Such conduct is subject to warning and enforcement.

3.7 Electronic Devices

- All mobile phones and electronic devices shall be silenced during meetings.

Section 4. Board Member Speaking Limits

4.1 Comment Limits

- Board Members may speak up to **two (2) times per agenda item**, for **up to two (2) minutes each time**.
- Additional time may be granted at the discretion of the presiding officer.

4.2 Presentation of Motions

- A Board Member presenting a motion shall have **three (3) minutes** to introduce the motion, or more at the discretion of the presiding officer.

- Presentation time does not count against the Board Member's comment time.
 - Answering clarifying questions does not count against the comment time.
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Section 5. Public Comment

5.1 Public Comment Time

- Public comment shall be limited to **one (1) minute per speaker**, unless adjusted by the presiding officer.
- The presiding officer may reasonably limit cumulative public comment time to maintain meeting efficiency.

5.2 Speaker Conduct

- Public commenters are subject to the same standards of respectful speech, relevance, and decorum as Board Members.
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Section 6. Enforcement

6.1 Warnings

- The presiding officer shall issue a verbal warning to any person violating these rules.

6.2 Loss of Privilege

- Upon a second violation during the same meeting, the presiding officer may:
 - Revoke the individual's remaining speaking privileges for the item.
 - Revoke remaining speaking privileges for the meeting.

6.3 Removal

- Continued disruptive conduct after a warning may result in removal from the meeting.
- The presiding officer may instruct the individual to leave the meeting space.
- If the individual refuses to comply, the presiding officer may recess the meeting or request assistance from authorized personnel to restore order.

6.4 Censure

- Repeated or egregious violations may result in censure by majority vote of the Board.

6.5 Suspension and Referral

- The Board may, by **two-thirds (2/3) vote**, suspend a Board Member from participation in up to **two (2) consecutive meetings**.
- The Board may refer conduct to the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment for further action, including removal proceedings under City policy.

Violation	First Occurrence	Second Occurrence	Subsequent Occurrences
Talking over others	Verbal warning	Loss of speaking privileges for item	Removal from meeting
Personal attacks	Verbal warning	Loss of speaking privileges	Censure and/or suspension
Time limit violations	Verbal warning	Loss of speaking privileges for item	Removal from meeting
Disruptive behavior	Verbal warning	Removal from meeting	Censure and/or suspension or referral
Threatening conduct	Immediate removal	Censure	Referral for removal proceedings

Section 8. Authority of Presiding Officer

- The presiding officer has the authority to interpret and apply these rules, subject to appeal by majority vote of the Board.
 - In the event of any conflict with the Brown Act, City policy, or the VNC Bylaws, those higher authorities shall control.
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Section 9. Applicability to Committees

- These rules apply to all General Board Meetings and Committee Meetings.
- In Committee Meetings, the Committee Chair or Acting Chair shall act as the presiding officer and have the same authority described herein.

