



THE CITY OF POUGHKEEPSIE NEW YORK

COMMON COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 16, 2024, 6:30 p.m.

Common Council Chambers

Welcome to the regularly scheduled Meeting of the City of Poughkeepsie Common Council the date is Tuesday, January 16, 2024, and the time is 6:30 pm.

I. ROLL CALL: 8 Present, 1 Absent (Councilmember Menist arrived after roll call)

II. REVIEW OF MINUTES:

Common Council Organization Meeting – January 2, 2024

Common Council Meeting – January 2, 2024

Motion to accept the minutes: Vice Chair Shook, Seconded by Councilmember Grant

CC Organization & CCM Minutes of January 2, 2024 - VOICE VOTE						
			Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Absent
☒ Accepted ☐ Defeated ☐ Tabled	Councilmember Henry	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Menist	Voter	☐	☐	☐	☒
	Councilmember Brown	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember James	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Grant	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Deichler	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Majority Leader Patterson Thompson	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Vice Chair Shook	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Chairman Wilson	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐

III. READING OF ITEMS by the City Chamberlain of any items not listed on the printed agenda.

ADD TO CONSENT AGENDA:

IX. MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

2. **R-24-11**, Resolution Amending the 2024 Rules of Conduct and Procedure of the Common Council of the City of Poughkeepsie

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION:

1. **Suprina Troché – 3 Delafield St.**
2. **Joseph Troché – 3 Delafield St.**
3. **Jamar Cummings – 415 Maple St.**
4. **Daniel Atonna – 116 College Ave / For the Many**
5. **Laurie Sandow – S. Grand Ave ***

***Submitted written comments**

Laurie Sandow public comments,

City of Poughkeepsie Common Council meeting, January 16, 2024

It's the second Common Council meeting of the year, and what have we learned so far? That this Council wasn't ready on "Day One". And also that this Council, rather than being dedicated to public service, has wasted no time in establishing dedication to self-service. Half the members of this Council don't even have their phone numbers posted to the City website. Is that what they've meant by "Poughkeepsie Before Politics"? Councilmembers collecting a stipend for their digital devices, yet—in this city with a digital divide—making sure that no resident is able to reach them by phone, no matter what the urgency?

This Council has yet to post their meeting schedule for 2024. But at just 12:20pm this afternoon—and only if one is a subscriber to "CivicPlus"—came notice of a change to the Council agenda. A consent agenda item was added, with changes well concealed: changing Council meetings to Tuesdays, as well as changing the order of business at Council meetings. With those changes, the people who want to make public comments, and the people who watch at home to hear public comments, will have to either/both remain in attendance or stay tuned long into the meeting before they hear the voices, thoughts and concerns of their neighbors.

Not one current Councilmember has ever tested themselves by speaking as an ordinary citizen during the Council's 3-minute time limit, never mind being a regular audience attendee at council meetings. That's a pitiable contrast to myself and others, who are entirely unpaid, yet have the courage and commitment to consistently attend, speak, and enter thoughts and opinions on this body's record. Myself and others are the very public commenters and voices that Da'Ron Wilson labelled "complaints" within minutes of being sworn into office. Too bad Mr. Wilson did not make his hostility clear while on the campaign trail, same as he and other recent electeds—Mayor Flowers included—never revealed their membership in the private Exempt Firemen's club—a club that saw fit to "honor" Dr. Martin Luther King on his holiday with a membership bus trip to a casino.

Have residents of this City also noticed the Code of Ethics violations by Councilmembers Nedra Thompson and Terriciana Brown, with Ms. Thompson using her Council seat to promote her family's foundation; and Ms. Brown promoting her private business enterprise from her Council seat. And what about Open Meetings Law violations, where a majority of Council members have gathered more than once at various venues under the guise of "just celebratory meals".

Last October, Da'Ron Wilson asked me to provide a sample consent agenda policy (see the document provided, further below). Has that policy, or any policy, been added to the Council's procedure? Of course not, because then items of a questionable or controversial nature would be prohibited from appearing on a consent agenda, and each and every Councilmember would actually have to state on the record whether they'd read, understand and agree with the items they're approving under cover of consent and caucus darkness.

Do members of this Council even know the dates—let alone attend the meetings—held by other City boards and committees, and/or the Dutchess County legislature? Do members of this Council know that those boards have already set and published their own 2024 meeting schedules? And that changes in the Council dates will be creating rather than reducing conflicts? Why should City residents and City boards scramble to rearrange their calendars to suit the unexplained whim of this Council, who won't even reveal or defend why, after decades, a meeting date change is necessary? Will any member of this Council explain why they need to change meeting dates to Tuesdays? Were they unaware of the Monday dates while seeking office? Were they well aware of the intention to change to Tuesdays, yet never consulted or surveyed constituents prior to agreeing to this change? Will this Council's love of backroom wheeling and dealing keep that information shrouded in secret, too? Need the public and city residents beware the "precedent" that Chair Wilson promised in his inaugural address?

Provided to Mr. Da'Ron Wilson on October 12, 2023, including the note: "Below is one link regarding consent agendas. There are many others available online. I'm sending this particular article because it contains sublinks to other sources. I draw your attention especially to its last paragraph": <https://www.cityethics.org/content/misuse-consent-agendas>

Misuse of Consent Agendas

Thursday, March 20th, 2014 – Robert Wechsler

<https://www.cityethics.org/content/misuse-consent-agendas>

Consent agendas, also known as consent calendars, are an excellent way to get around the disclosure of conflicts (and, as Dallas showed us in 2011, to amend ethics provisions without a discussion (see [my blog post on this](#))).

A consent agenda is a way to deal, in a single motion and a single vote, with routine, non-controversial items, in order to save often a great deal of time. Board members are allowed to request the movement of a specific item on a consent agenda to the regular meeting agenda, but this is rarely done. Often, few board members have a clear idea what is on a consent agenda. Voting for it becomes a habit, like voting to approve the minutes. However, sometimes matters are placed there, with or without the knowledge of board members, in order to be passed with no attention or to prevent the need for particular members to disclose conflicts they would have to disclose were there to be a discussion and vote on the particular matter.

In a [2011 blog post](#), I noted that a grand jury criticized the Broward County (FL) school board for using the consent agenda to expend funds in ways, and benefiting individuals, the board didn't want the public to know about: The way the Board carries out its day to day business is set up to allow wasteful and dubious spending on ill-conceived ideas, and to direct that spending towards friends, acquaintances or supporters of Board members without any accountability. One way they do that is by making informal decisions at Board workshops and retreats or even during training sessions, and then ratifying their decisions by use of a consent agenda. Consent agendas do make meetings shorter, but they are a great way to hide serious and often expensive decisions from the public. In Broward County, only expenditures of over \$1 million were required to be debated. That figure is far too high.

[An article in today's New York Times](#) celebrates a "sea change" at the Port Authority for New Jersey and New York, an agency that has been drawing a great deal of attention for its misuse by board members for their political and financial interests and for the interests of their political allies. That "sea change" is having the authority's board actually deal with such things as lease agreements publicly, with a roll call vote, and with the vice chairman asking if anyone needs to withdraw from participation in the matter due to a conflict. Doing this would be a big change for thousands of councils, boards, and commissions throughout this country.

How did this change come about? Due to the criticism of the authority that began with the infamous George Washington Bridge lane closures, a special oversight committee was created. A few hours before the meeting, the committee voted to do away with the consent agenda. The question is, to get rid of a consent agenda, does it take a debacle that makes the national news?

Consent agendas do save a lot of time. But they can be seriously abused. Robert's Rules has only a short paragraph on them (it uses the term "consent calendar"), providing little guidance. If they are to be used, there should be clear restrictions, such as no contracts, grants, or permits that involve more than, say, \$5,000. Appointments are often included on consent agendas. If they are to be included, the names should be read and members should be asked whether they have a special relationship with anyone on the list.

No item should be placed on a consent agenda unless it has been sent to all members at least three days in advance of the meeting, so that they have an opportunity to determine whether they would like to ask for a discussion of the item and whether they have a conflict. When the consent agenda is raised at a meeting, members should be asked whether they have read it, fully understand each item in it, have any conflicts with respect to any item, or know of another member who has a conflict, and believe that there is no reason to open any item to discussion. Conflicts should be disclosed, and any item where a member has a conflict should be moved to the ordinary agenda. If even one member hasn't read and fully understood the consent agenda, the items on the consent agenda should be placed on the regular agenda and brought up individually. Otherwise, there is no informed consent. These rules should be placed in the board's bylaws and carefully followed.

—Robert Wechsler, Director of Research-Retired, City Ethics

V. CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS AND PRESENTATIONS:

So, I can personally address some of the concerns that were brought up earlier.

One of the things is that, like Mr. Troché said, that is that I will take full ownership on the Rules and Code of Conduct and changing the dates. We were looking - I -was looking at that same very thing, that making sure that the Council and others in this community would have opportunities to attend the County meetings, as well as the Common Council meetings. So that was one of the - that is the main reason for switching the meeting to Tuesday.

One of the reasons [is] for that, and the reason that we wanted to talk to the other planning board [was]to make sure that they were okay with moving the meeting to moving their meeting. That was why the delay was in place and took - was not in place on the January 2nd meeting. We just want to make sure, we want to hear from them, to make sure that they were okay with moving the meeting. That is the exact reason why it did not go on to that January 2nd meeting.

As far as making the city and the Common Council aware of what's going on with the County [that] is one of the things that we're trying to move in a direction to. In order for that to happen, we have to try to have our meetings on a different day and time. I will take full ownership on that. That was me looking at it and thinking, let's try to do something different this time.

In regards to the phone numbers, many of the new Councilmembers do not have a city, uh, city phone issued to them. So, I do feel that they are either, they are waiting or they are have their email addresses, or if they do have an alternate phone that will be given out, but they do not have city issued phones to them at this time for them, they will be posting to the public. As we all know, they have that right to have a private number as their own personal number versus having the city official number. But all their contact information via email is listed on the City's website.

Also, as far as.. I want to celebrate and make announcement, uh, Beulah Baptist Church had a great celebration for Martin Luther King Jr. [A] celebration where many of our elected officials throughout the state came.

We were addressed by Lt Governor Delgado, Sue Serino, County Executive, State Senator Rob Rolison, uh, Assemblyman Jonathan Jacobson, our county legislator Barrington Atkins, various council members. So it was a great event that took place at Beulah Baptist, showing that the interest and the love in the City of Poughkeepsie is still there. Um, thank you to Reverend Bottoms and the African-American Clergy Association for that event.

And also, I just want to know, as we know, that we are moving into 2024, that I will state for the record, Mr. Wilson is not perfect, and Mr. Wilson is not trying to be perfect. So, there will be some mistakes made, just like anything in life. And I will do my best to make sure that I don't continue those mistakes. And I will do my best to make sure that I am a servant leader.

As far as the regards to the comments made about my inaugural address, I did not say nothing there that I have not said in plenty of other speaking engagements or anything about the City of Poughkeepsie. There was nothing new to not be addressed during my campaign trail. If

individuals want to walk with me next time door to door, they can hear exactly what I tell the citizens as I'm walking door to door about the City of Poughkeepsie, so there won't be any confusion moving forward.

That is it for my comments. Mr. Knapp, will you be speaking on behalf of the mayor, please?

VI. MAYOR'S COMMENTS: *Interim City Administrator Knapp on behalf of Mayor Flowers*

I will, thank you. First of all, I would just like to thank the mayor for the faith she put in me and appointing me to this position. I promise that I will do my best to work with each of you on the issues in your wards.

Uh, having said that, my first day as, uh, Interim City Administrator was Sunday. We had a snowstorm. Twelve inches, one of the biggest ones we've had in two years. And today, the mayor's out of town, so I am taking care of her side of the floor as well and we have another snowstorm.

So the goal here is that don't appoint me to anything else.

The mayor is attending the U.S. Conference of Mayors, and she's meeting with mayors across the country and then also meeting with federally elected officials to discuss funding opportunities.

So, she does want to make sure that you are all aware that as far as the housing vacancy study that -I know was brought up at the first meeting - our staff met with the group that's conducting that study. We got an update from them, and we hope to have it finished by the end of February with a presentation to the Council in March. So, again, the key there is, uh, getting accurate data.

The mayor also wanted to say that she wants to set up training for all the Council members. That will include tours of the police department, the fire department, the DPW and water and sewer plants. Plus visits within building and finance departments as well. So, I think she wants everybody to have the opportunity to get out and meet with the staff and see the various areas, which is a good thing.

More importantly, right now with the weather we've been having in the last week she wanted to thank all the departments that were involved in the in the snow, the cleanup. Obviously, DPW was [at] the front with the, you know, the most hours and most involvement, but we went from a 12 inch storm to four inches of rain. And now, you know, kind of a nuisance storm. DPW, like I said, took that lead. Police was involved. We had a snow meeting prior. We had a debrief on Friday, and we're, you know, trying to learn from there.

And I think you might have seen it already. We've been doing postings on the snow emergency routes with a new, high visibility sign that says that they are snow emergency routes and that if a snow emergency is declared, that, you know, those routes would be subject to the ordinance so that those postings begin on Sunday with the traffic officers and are going to eventually hit all the snow routes, because signage is important And the visibility of the signs, I think, will improve because the goal is to get people off the snow emergency routes as opposed to an enforcement, uh, of anything near. I know the icehouse was just, uh, brought up a few minutes ago and everybody is aware an RFP

was done in the fall for the leasing of the Icehouse. Many, uh, different people applied to the RFP, and we did interviews, uh, towards the end of the year with them. And we're in the final selection of somebody to operate the Icehouse with the goal of not only full, uh, food there, but being an asset for the community. The site, as you say, uh, did get flooding over the weekend. I was down there personally on Saturday. I took some photos and we're going to work with the engineering department, who's doing a flood mitigation study with the county. As far as we know, there was no internal damage to the ice house. But as you say, getting it back into somebody's hand and operating is the best purpose. And, you know, then that relieves the city of maintaining.

Other than that, that's it for me. Thank you. Thank you.

VII. NEW & UNFINISHED BUSINESS & ANNOUNCEMENTS:

VIII. REPORTS OF COMMITTEES AND BOARDS: NONE

*A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by **Councilmember Brown** and seconded by **Councilmember Grant**.*

CONSENT AGENDA:

IX. MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

A motion was made by Councilmember Menist and seconded by Councilmember Deichler to move Addendum item R-24-11 to the ACTION AGENDA.

X. ORDINANCES AND LOCAL LAWS:

1. **LL-24-03**, a Local Law Amending CHAPTER 9 “Garbage, Trash and Weeds,” ARTICLE V “Solid Waste Management,” SECTION 9-68 “Solid Waste Collection Fees,” § (E) “EXEMPTIONS”

(LL 24-03)

A LOCAL LAW AMENDING CHAPTER 9 “GARBAGE, TRASH AND WEEDS,” ARTICLE V “SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT,” SECTION 9-68 “SOLID WASTE COLLECTION FEES,” SUBSECTION (E) “EXEMPTIONS”

SPONSOR: COUNCILMEMBER GRANT

BE IT ENACTED, by the Common Council of the City of Poughkeepsie as follows:

~~STRIKETHROUGH INDICATES DELETION~~
BOLD and UNDERLINE INDICATES ADDED LANGUAGE

SECTION 1: City Code Chapter 9 “Garbage, Trash and Weeds,” Article V “Solid Waste Management,” Section 9-68 “Solid Waste Management Fees,” subsection (e) is amended to read as follows:

(e) *Exemptions:*

(1) Any person who because of age or disability shall qualify for exemption from City real property taxes based on an enhanced star exemption or low income tax exemption, shall be charged a reduced fee for solid waste collection and disposal services in an amount to be determined by the schedule of annual collection fees pursuant to Subsection (a). This reduced fee shall only apply to one dwelling unit in the case of multifamily properties..

(2) Any residential user eligible for STAR tax exemption from City real property taxes, upon demonstrating that only one unit of a two or three unit residential parcel is occupied as their residence, all other units being permanently vacant, after certification to the Commissioner and inspection, pursuant to regulations promulgated by the Commissioner and approved by resolution of the City Common Council, shall pay only the annual base unit fee.

(3) A residential property owner may make an application to the Commissioner of Finance for a one-time waiver of sanitation fees for a period of no more than one (1) year for a residential property that is unoccupied and does not possess a valid certificate of occupancy. If there is an open building permit, the property owner must prove that construction or other debris is being removed from the site by an alternate service such as a dumpster. Any city issued sanitation cans shall be returned to the City during the one-year period. The determination of this waiver shall be within the sole discretion of the Commissioner of Finance.

SECTION 2. This Local Law shall take effect immediately upon filing with the New York State Secretary of State.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of the aforesaid proposed Local Law be laid upon the desk of each council member; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Common Council shall hold a public hearing on said proposed Local Law and that the City Clerk shall publish or cause to be published a public notice in

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the official newspaper of the City of Poughkeepsie of said public hearing at least five (5) days prior thereto.

SECONDED BY COUNCILMEMBER BROWN

LL-24-03 –Voice Vote						
☒ Accepted ☐ Defeated ☐ Tabled			Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Absent
	Councilmember Henry	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Menist	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Brown	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember James	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Grant	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Deichler	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Majority Leader Patterson Thompson	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Vice Chair Shook	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Chairman Wilson	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐

ACTION AGENDA:

XI. MOTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

Addendum item moved to ACTION AGENDA:

1. **R-24-11**, Resolution Amending the 2024 Rules of Conduct and Procedure of the Common Council of the City of Poughkeepsie

**RESOLUTION
R-24-11**

INTRODUCED BY CHAIRMAN WILSON

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Common Council hereby amends the 2024 Rules of Conduct and Procedure of the Common Council of the City of Poughkeepsie as shown on the attached document which is made a part of this Resolution. This resolution shall replace the Rules of Conduct adopted by Resolution R-24-02.

SECONDED BY COUNCILMEMBER GRANT

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R-24-11 Roll Call Vote						
☒ Accepted ☐ Defeated ☐ Tabled			Yes/Aye	No/Nay	Abstain	Absent
	Councilmember Henry	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Menist	Voter	☐	☒	☐	☐
	Councilmember Brown	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember James	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Grant	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Councilmember Deichler	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Majority Leader Patterson Thompson	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Vice Chair Shook	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐
	Chairman Wilson	Voter	☒	☐	☐	☐

*A motion was made to defer the below communication/petitions to Corporation Counsel by **Councilmember Deichler** and seconded by **Councilmember Grant**.*

XII. PRESENTATIONS OF PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

1. **FROM TEVAN DENNIS**, a notice of property damage sustained on December 18, 2023

XIII. ADJOURNMENT:

*A motion was made by **Vice Chair Shook** and was seconded by **Councilmember Brown** to adjourn the meeting at 7:24pm.*

Dated: January 19, 2024

I hereby certify that this true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Common Council Meeting held on Tuesday, January 16, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna M. DeLuca
Deputy City Chamberlain