CITY OF DAWSON, TEXAS

CITY COUNCIL RULES OF DECORUM AND PUBLIC FORUM

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-10-01

Section 1. Purpose

The purpose of these Rules of Decorum and Public Forum is to establish reasonable procedures for public participation during meetings of the Dawson City Council and to ensure that meetings are conducted in an orderly, respectful, and efficient manner while protecting the public's right to address the City Council.

These rules shall be administered consistently and shall not be used to prohibit or limit criticism of the City Council, the City government, individual Council Members, City officials, employees, or City policies solely because the criticism is unfavorable or critical.

Section 2. Public Forum

A Public Forum may be provided on the City Council agenda for members of the public to address the Council concerning matters within the jurisdiction of the City.

Unless otherwise provided by the posted agenda or applicable law:

1. A person wishing to speak shall be recognized by the Mayor or presiding officer before addressing the Council.
2. A speaker shall state their name for the record.
3. Each speaker shall be allowed a maximum of **five (5) minutes**, unless the Council establishes a different reasonable time limit for a particular meeting.
4. The presiding officer may announce the remaining time to a speaker when reasonably necessary.
5. Speakers may address the Council as a body but should not engage in personal exchanges or debate with individual Council Members, City employees, or members of the audience.
6. Members of the public should direct their comments through the presiding officer.

Section 3. Decorum

All persons attending a City Council meeting are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that permits the Council to conduct its business and permits members of the public to hear and participate in the meeting.

The following conduct is prohibited when it actually disrupts or interferes with the conduct of the meeting:

1. Threatening, assaultive, or physically intimidating conduct.
2. Fighting or other physical confrontation.
3. Repeated shouting, yelling, or other conduct that prevents the Council or another recognized speaker from being heard.
4. Repeated interruption of a speaker after being directed to stop.
5. Approaching the Council dais or another person in a threatening or disruptive manner.
6. Blocking entrances, exits, aisles, or other areas necessary for the orderly conduct of the meeting.
7. Other conduct that materially disrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting.

Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to prohibit peaceful expression, disagreement, criticism, applause, or other protected expression merely because the expression is critical of the City or its officials.

Section 4. Order of Speakers

The presiding officer shall recognize speakers in an orderly manner.

A speaker who has been recognized shall have the opportunity to complete their allotted time, subject to these rules and applicable law.

A speaker may not transfer unused speaking time to another person unless the Council has adopted a procedure expressly allowing such transfers.

Section 5. Council Response

Public Forum is intended primarily to provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the Council.

Council Members may listen to comments and may respond when permitted by law and the agenda.

The Council shall not act on an item raised during Public Forum unless the item is properly posted on the agenda and otherwise complies with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

Section 6. Enforcement of Decorum

The Mayor or presiding officer shall have primary responsibility for maintaining order during the meeting.

When a speaker or attendee violates these rules, the presiding officer should, when reasonably appropriate:

1. Identify the conduct that is causing the disruption;
2. Request that the conduct stops;
3. Provide a reasonable opportunity for the person to comply; and
4. If the conduct continues, take reasonable measures authorized by law to restore order.

The presiding officer shall apply these rules in a viewpoint-neutral manner.

A person's criticism of the City, the Mayor, a Council Member, a City employee, or a City policy shall not, by itself, constitute a violation of these rules.

Section 7. Removal for Actual Disruption

If a person continues conduct that materially disrupts the meeting after being given a reasonable opportunity to comply with the presiding officer's direction, the presiding officer may take lawful measures to restore order, including directing the person to leave the meeting room when authorized by law.

Any enforcement action shall be based on the person's conduct and the disruption caused, and not on the viewpoint or content of the person's criticism.

Section 8. Public Criticism Protected

Nothing in these rules shall be construed to prohibit a member of the public from criticizing the policies, procedures, actions, decisions, or performance of the City Council, the City government, individual Council Members, City officials, or City employees, so long as the person's conduct otherwise complies with applicable law and these rules.

Section 9. Authority

These rules are intended to establish reasonable procedures for the conduct of City Council meetings consistent with the Texas Open Meetings Act, applicable provisions of the Texas Constitution and statutes, and other applicable laws.

If any provision of these rules' conflicts with applicable law, the applicable law shall control.

Section 10. Adoption and Effective Date

These Rules of Decorum and Public Forum are adopted by the Dawson City Council at a properly posted public meeting.

ADOPTED this 13 **day of** October **, 2026.**

CITY OF DAWSON, TEXAS

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Mayor

ATTEST:

City Secretary