RULES & PROCEDURES FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS OF CITY COUNCIL

1. PURPOSE.

To establish rules and procedures governing public participation in meetings of the City Council of the City of Butler.

2. REFERENCES.

A. Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development publication: Open Meetings/Open Records – The Sunshine Act and the Right to Know Law, October, 1999.

B. Pennsylvania Sunshine Act (Act of July 3, 1986, P.L. 388, No. 84, 65 P.S. 271 et seq. (including amendments).

3. POLICY.

A. It is the policy of the City Council of the City of Butler that all regular and special meetings of said Council shall be conducted so as to comply with all provisions of the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act.

B. The Sunshine Act gives any person the right to raise an objection at any time to a perceived violation of the Act at any regular or special meeting of the City Council.

C. The Sunshine Act also gives City Council the authority to adopt, by official action, rules and procedures for the conduct of public meetings. Such rules and procedures must be consistent with the intent of the Sunshine Act, and they are within the control of the majority of City Council and may be changed at any time by a majority vote.

4. RULES & PROCEDURES

A. For the purpose of these rules and procedures, public participation is defined as attendance at a meeting of the City Council for the express purpose of making public comments to the City Council. Written materials may be submitted in lieu of making public comments.

B. Members of the public who wish to participate in meetings of the City Council shall sign the “Persons to be Heard” document on the quest podium immediately prior to any public City Council meeting.

C. Meetings of the City Council are open to the general public. Public participants and comments shall be limited to City residents and/or taxpayers, and presentations shall be restricted to matters of concern, official action or deliberation that are before the City Council.

D. Public comment for agenda items only will be scheduled at the beginning of a meeting and shall be identified as “Persons to be Heard” on the meeting agenda. A second public comment session will be available at the end of the meeting for any issues that Council may deal with in the future.

E. Presentations shall be limited to three (3) minutes unless otherwise approved by a majority of City Council. The allotted time of three (3) minutes shall include and commence from the beginning of the speaker’s remarks and include any time that passes during questioning or colloquy between the speaker and City Council. In the event a person representing a class or group seeks to speak on behalf of that class, group or organization, additional time may be granted to that person by the Mayor.

F. Meetings of the City Council may be recorded and recordings are part of the public record. Participants in public meetings should have no expectation of privacy or protection under the Federal Wire Tap Act. The Sunshine Act mandates that minutes of City Council meetings shall list the names of all citizens who appeared officially at the meeting and the subject of their testimony.

G. Members of the public may record public meetings of the City Council as long as such activity does not disrupt the meeting. The Mayor or other presiding official shall have the authority to make such determination.

5. DECORUM

A. Each member of City Council shall cooperate with the Mayor in preserving order and decorum, and no member shall, by conversation or otherwise, delay or interrupt the proceedings of the City Council, nor disturb any council member while speaking, or fail to abide by the orders of the Mayor, except as specifically permitted by these Rules of Council.

B. Any person who shall disturb the peace of the Council, make impertinent or slanderous remarks or conduct himself in a boisterous manner while addressing Council shall be forthwith barred by the Mayor from further audience before the City Council, except that if the public participant shall submit to proper order under these rules, permission for him to continue may be granted by a majority vote of the City Council.

C. The Department of Police shall, upon request of the Mayor, designate a member of the Police Department to serve as Sergeant at Arms at City Council meetings. The designated police officer shall carry out all orders and instructions given by the Mayor, or any Council member, for the purpose of maintaining order and decorum of the meeting. Furthermore, the City Clerk is directed to contact the Chief of Police to inform the Police Department of the time and date of the meeting to be held. The Police Department shall take any and all appropriate steps within the parameters of the law, including the use of electronic equipment, to secure the Council chambers and provide adequate protection for the citizens and members of City Council attending said meetings.

D. City Council meetings shall be conducted in a courteous manner. Residents and Council members will be allowed to state their positions in an atmosphere free of slander, threats of violence or use of Council as a forum for politics. Sufficient warnings may be given by the Mayor at any time during the remarks and, in the event that any individual shall violate the rules of decorum heretofore set forth, the Mayor may then cut off comment or debate. At the discretion of the Mayor, the gavel may be used to indicate the conclusion of the time for speaking.

E. Each member of the City Council and every member of the public shall be required to utilize a silent alert mode on or to mute the sound emitted from all electronic devices in their possession (including but not limited to cellular telephones, pagers, radios, personal data assistants, and hand-held or portable computers), during all City Council proceedings subject to enforcement and emergency services personnel acting in their official capacity shall be exempt from the provisions described herein.

These rules and procedures governing public participation in meetings of the City Council of the City of Butler were adopted by said Council on July 9, 2019.