

Frequently Asked Questions

- When can I speak at a Council meeting?
 - While the public is encouraged to attend Council meetings, they are not allowed to comment during the meetings. However, we welcome the public to speak at public hearings set by Council committees. If there is no public hearing at a Council committee meeting, a member of the public can speak if invited to by the Committee Chair.
- What is the difference between an ordinance and a resolution
 - An ordinance is a binding, enforceable piece of legislation. Violation of an ordinance will lead to action by the City of Providence and carries the full force of the law. Ordinances require two full passages from the Council to be adopted into law. A resolution is a non-binding piece of legislation that expresses the opinion or will of the City Council on certain issues and only needs one full passage from the Council.
- What are the rules for Council meetings?
 - The rules for Council meetings can be found [here](#).
- How can I be involved in changing an existing law or creating a new one?
 - The City Council works to represent the will of the people of Providence. Councilors are accessible to the public and willing to hear your thoughts and ideas for improving life in Providence. If you think an existing law needs to be changed or a new one should be introduced, you can reach out to your councilor to talk about this idea and work with them to bring it to the full Council.
- How do I register to vote?
 - In order to register to vote, you can visit the Board of Canvassers office on the first floor of City Hall. Additionally, you can visit their website [here](#) for registration information. This site also helps you locate where you can vote once you are registered.
- How do I run for office?
 - Visit the RI Secretary of State's website for more information on how to run for office and manage a campaign. Each January, the office publishes a guide for candidates, located [here](#).
- How can I register as a lobbyist?
 - Rules and regulations for lobbyists registration can be found on the City Clerk's [website](#). From there, you can register as a lobbyist in the City of Providence.
- What's the difference between the Mayor & the City Council?
 - The Mayor and the City Council are co-equal branches of Providence's municipal government.
 - The Mayor of Providence represents the executive branch of our government. Every four years, a mayor is elected by all Providence residents registered to vote in the city and that mayor can serve up to two consecutive terms, or eight years total. Some specific duties of the mayor include appointing all heads of city departments and agencies, proposing and implementing the city budget, and signing and executing any laws that come from the City Council.

- The City Council is the legislative branch of our government and is comprised of fifteen councilors who represent the 15 wards of Providence. They are elected every four years and can serve up to 3 consecutive terms, or 12 years total. The City Council is in charge of approving appointments submitted to the body. They create and vote on legislation as well as vet and approve the City's budget.
- What's the difference between my City Council member and my State Representative?
 - Your City Council member represents you in city matters and issues at a local level. Your State Representative, however, works at the State House and advocates for Providence residents on a variety of issues affecting residents statewide.
- How do I schedule a meeting with my Council Member?
 - If you wish to schedule a meeting with your Council Member, give the City Council office a call at 401.521.7477 and our staff will assist you from there.
- Who are the people who sit up front at a Council meeting?
 - In the front of a Council meeting, there are five people who sit at the raised platform. In the center back sits the Council President and on his or her left is the City Solicitor, the chief legal advisor of and attorney for the City. In front of them, the City Clerk and the two Deputy Clerks sit to help go through the agenda and record the minutes.
- How is the Council President elected and what do they do?
 - The Council President is elected each term by a simple majority vote of the City Councilors. The Council President's duties include presiding over City Council meetings and working with the Clerk's Office to set Council meeting agendas and call special meetings of the Council, should there be a need.