

Councillor calls for rule changes following contentious Council meeting

Changes to how Council meetings are run could be considered by lawmakers this month following a contentious session in March.

Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo is bringing forward a motion that could lead to more stringent rules on how Council members and members of the public can address each other in meetings.

At issue is a Point of Personal Privilege, which can be called by a Councillor if they feel their integrity or rights have been infringed upon.

Councillor Gallo called a Point of Personal Privilege at March's Council meeting when, in his view, Mayor Tom Mrakas suggested he would have been better informed on an issue within Ward 5 had the Councillor taken part in monthly one-on-one meetings with the Mayor.

Councillor Gallo said the Mayor was accusing him of not getting involved in ward issues as a result of my not having meetings with you. The Mayor denied this was the implication of his comment, adding, 'If you want to take it a certain way that's your prerogative.'

The Councillor's demand for an apology went unheeded as the Mayor said, 'there is no apology for something that I didn't do,' and, after the conversation continued, Councillor Gallo was joined by Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner in leaving the meeting before it had concluded.

'At the March 25, 2025 Council meeting, Mayor Mrakas refused to call a vote when a challenge arose regarding a Point of Personal Privilege,' says Councillor Gallo in the motion before Council this week. 'The current procedural bylaw does not take into account specifically when the Chair is called on a Point of Personal Privilege. Mayor Mrakas refused to call a vote when a challenge arose on a Point of Personal Privilege and the current Procedural Bylaw is silent when the Chair is the subject of a Point of Personal [Privilege].'

Changes suggested within the motion include clarification that a Council member may rise at any time with such a Point where such Member feels that the health, safety, rights, or integrity of their own person, the Council, a Committee Member, Staff, the Chair or anyone present at the meeting has been called into question by another Member or by anyone present at the meeting.'

The Chair will then have to state their ruling on the issue, except when the Chair is the subject of the matter. In these cases, the Deputy Mayor or a Councillor chosen from amongst itself, will act as the Chair in ruling on the matter.

If a breach is found to take place, an apology would then be demanded. If it is not offered, the offending member will be required to leave the Council Chambers (or meeting room) for the balance of the meeting.

A member found to be in breach would be able to appeal the decision, having the chance to 'state their case,' and the majority of Council would then be asked to decide on whether the breach should remain in place without further debate.

By Brock Weir