



City of Amesbury
Office of the City Clerk
62 Friend St.
Amesbury, MA 01913

City Council Organizational Meeting Minutes
January 2, 2024
Immediately Following Inauguration Ceremony

City Clerk Jennifer Smith called the meeting to order at 7:26 PM.

Roll call was taken, and present were Councilor Steven Stanganelli, Councilor Michael Hogg, Councilor Nicholas Wheeler, Councilor Pamela Gilday, Councilor Owen Corcoran, Councilor Scott Mandeville, Councilor Jessica Redfern, Councilor Claudel Frederique, and Councilor Anthony Rinaldi.

Also present: City Clerk Jennifer Smith, Minute Recorder Jasmine Looney

~~~~~  
Organization

City Clerk Jennifer Smith opened the floor for nominations for City Council President.

**Councilor Rinaldi offered a nomination for Councilor Stanganelli as City Council President. Councilor Hogg seconded.**

**Councilor Gilday offered a nomination for Councilor Mandeville as City Council President. Councilor Wheeler seconded.**

City Clerk Jennifer Smith closed nominations for City Council President.

- Councilor Stanganelli offered comment on his nomination.
- Councilor Mandeville offered comment on his nomination.

**A roll call vote was taken for the nomination of Councilor Stanganelli for the position of City Council President. The nomination failed 4-5, Councilors Wheeler, Gilday, Corcoran, Mandeville, and Redfern not in favor.**

**A roll call vote was taken for the nomination of Councilor Mandeville for the position of City Council President. The nomination passed 5-4, Councilors Rinaldi, Stanganelli, Frederique, and Hogg not in favor.**

The Clerk passed the gavel to President Mandeville.

President Mandeville opened the floor for nominations for City Council Vice President.

**Councilor Corcoran offered a nomination for Councilor Gilday as City Council Vice President. Councilor Wheeler seconded.**

President Mandeville closed nominations for City Council Vice President.

- Councilor Gilday offered comment on her nomination.

**A roll call vote was taken for the nomination of Councilor Gilday for the position of City Council Vice President. The nomination passed unanimously, 9-0.**

---

2024-002 Session 14 City Council Rules & Procedures

**Councilor Wheeler offered a motion to accept the Amesbury City Council Thirteenth Session Rules and Procedures and to refer the same to the Ordinance and Administration Subcommittee for review. Councilor Corcoran seconded, and the motion passed 8-1, Councilor Stanganelli opposed.**

---

Acceptance of City Council 2024 Meeting Schedule

**Councilor Stanganelli offered a motion to accept the City Council 2024 Meeting Schedule as presented. Councilor Gilday seconded.**

- Councilor Rinaldi shared his concerns with taking off two months in the summer and noted that it was a mistake in the past.
- Councilor Gilday stated that the Council should plan on holding meetings all twelve months of the year.
- Councilor Stanganelli noted that the President has the option to take off the months of July or August, but that in the past this has led to certain items being pressed for time.
- Councilor Corcoran expressed his desire to keep the July and August meetings on the schedule.
- President Mandeville echoed councilors' previous sentiments while noting that keeping the summer meetings as TBD allows for the option to hold the meetings or not.
- Councilor Gilday noted that special meetings can be called.
- Councilor Wheeler noted that it is not allowable to hold a committee meeting the day of a state election, referring to the anticipated meeting of the City Council on January 23, 2024.

**Councilor Gilday offered an amendment to move the January 23, 2024 meeting to January 30, 2024. Councilor Rinaldi seconded, and the motion passed 8-1, Councilor Stanganelli opposed.**

**Councilor Wheeler offered a motion to move the agenda close date to January 22, 2024. Councilor Redfern seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, 9-0.**

**The amended main motion passed 8-1, Councilor Stanganelli opposed.**

---

Adjourn

**Councilor Wheeler offered a motion to adjourn at 7:49 PM. Councilor Rinaldi seconded, and the motion passed unanimously, 9-0.**

Respectfully Submitted,

*Jasmine Looney*

# Amesbury

## City Councilor



Steven Stanganelli  
Councilor At Large  
City Hall, Office of the City Clerk  
62 Friend Street  
Amesbury, MA 01913

(978) 388-8143  
Fax: (978) 388-8150  
councilorstanganelli@amesburyma.gov

January 2, 2024

### Council President Nomination – Summary Remarks

- Experience that counts –
  - chair of various committees including the Finance Committee, a committee of the whole, for more than 2 years
  - Member of Leadership meeting with the Mayor regularly for more than 2 years
  - 100% attendance record and regular and special Council meetings
- Flexible employment situation allowing time to meet with Administration, other Councilors, and stakeholders in between meetings
- I can promise you this. If I'm Council president, we will run things differently and hopefully better. With eight years of experience serving under two different mayors and three different Council presidents, I've seen what works and what doesn't.
  - Focus on rules changes that will improve how we work and make it easier for the public and Administration
  - More manageable schedule – one main meeting per month
  - More resources for the Clerk's Office
  - Dedicated training program for Councilors
  - New single committee of the whole structure
  - Adoption of a "consent agenda"
- Legislative success through collaborative accomplishments
  - Nearly two dozen substantive legislative efforts plus non-binding resolutions with multiple co-sponsors
- By tradition, when the candidates for Council president are At Large Councilors, the candidate with the highest vote count has been elevated to the role
  - In four of the six districts, I placed first
- Overall, I had the highest vote count for the fourth out of five elections (this time by 66 votes)

# Amesbury

## City Councilor



Steven Stanganelli  
Councilor At Large  
City Hall, Office of the City Clerk  
62 Friend Street  
Amesbury, MA 01913

(978) 388-8143  
Fax: (978) 388-8150  
councilorstanganelli@amesburyma.gov

December 31, 2023

Congratulations on your election to City Council.

Together, we will have the opportunity to do our small part to advance the interests of the residents of Amesbury – our families, friends, and neighbors – who elected us to serve.

Your first most important decision was agreeing to step up to have your name on the ballot.

Your next most important decision will be your vote for Council Leadership for the next term.

I humbly ask for your vote for City Council president.

I don't do this lightly. And I don't pursue this position out of some inflated sense of self-importance. In fact, if I've learned anything over the past eight years of service to the City, it is that I'd be better off mentally, and I'd have more time for my business and family, if I limited my role on Council.

But I also have been ingrained with a deep sense of civic responsibility passed to me. So, I choose to serve however I can for as long as I can.

I'm stepping forward not because I relish the role but because I feel that I can provide guidance and leadership through the difficult times ahead of us. And as any casual observer of Council over the past two years will note, we need to change how we do business so that we can do the people's business better.

During this upcoming term, we will face many challenges. Top of mind will be the financial impact of funding a new regional school, allocating prospective funds from the newly adopted Community Preservation Act (CPA), constructing much-needed athletic fields, and dealing with the ongoing list of much-deferred capital infrastructure improvements.

I believe that my experience developed from eight years of service makes me best suited for the role and challenges ahead.

I recognize that there is a counter-narrative out there. I've tried to be a strong advocate for issues I believe in. The same issues (like affordable housing and jobs) that community members desire



representation on are the same issues I've provided leadership to get across the finish line, namely a modest start to using surplus City land for building affordable housing to help four families, and the vote to approve a tax incentive that helped Munters decide to stay in job and expand.

I ask that you not accept narratives but look at objective facts.

- Experience – Finance Committee:

The statutory role of the Council president is to set the agenda, run the meetings, be impartial, and apply the rules.

I have direct experience with this role, namely as Chair of the former Finance Committee, a Committee of the Whole, during one of the most challenging times we have ever faced: the Global COVID-19 Pandemic. I served in this role for more than two years before the most recent set of rules changes.

During this time, we had to deal with the uncertainties of the pandemic which required us to have multiple regular and special meetings, setting agendas, and running meetings under challenging technical circumstances.

While I may not have agreed with every position of my fellow committee members or even the Administration, there is clear documentary proof that I ran these meetings well, on time, and impartially.

In my role as Chair of Finance Committee, I also served on the Leadership team. In this role, I regularly met with Mayor Gove along with then-Council president Einson and then-vice president Wheeler. This continued for a short time into the latest term as well. Being in the room meant that we had a better idea of what was coming up on the agenda. We got to ask questions and provide ideas to the Administration. And in all cases, I was a productive and respectful member of this working group.

- Experience – City Council, Budget & Finance Committee, and Housing Trust:

During this most recent term, I've served as vice chair and then chair of the Budget & Finance Committee. While a smaller committee than my previous tenure, I served in this role with the same level of transparency, impartiality, and professionalism.

At one point during this term, I was also selected by my peers to be president pro tempore of a special City Council meeting. We completed our business in record time and without drama.

During the latter part of this term, I've also been selected by my peers on the Housing Trust to be chair of that group because of my commitment to the issue, knowledge of the rules, and ability to impartially run a meeting.

In all these instances, I've demonstrated my strong command of the rules and parliamentary procedures and the ability to impartially and respectfully work with the members of each body.

- Experience – Collaborative Legislative Accomplishments:

As the longest-serving member of the current and new City Council, I have been involved with more than twenty-one substantive pieces of legislation and a number of other non-binding resolutions over the past eight years.

This perspective has given me a keen idea on how things run or should run.

This demonstrated track record of legislative success is a result not only of experience but my ability to reach out to stakeholders and collaboratively work with others in the Administration, the Council, and the public.

These have included changes to business licensing as requested by the Clerk's Office, tax breaks for small businesses, tax breaks for senior citizens, and, most notably, the preservation of Woodsom Farms and Town Forest, and the passage of zoning changes to allow Ancillary Dwelling Units.

To achieve these results, I have learned to collaborate, soliciting feedback from stakeholders, working with the Clerk's Office and Administration, and garnering support from Council co-sponsors and the broader community.

This collaboration is a hallmark of my approach and how I have gotten results. It is emblematic of my style and how I will approach the role of Council president.

As another example, I've proactively taken on the task of trying to improve our speed limit rules by working with APD Chief Bailey and DPW Director Buckley. I've also tried to get input from others including those formerly on the Traffic & Transportation Committee and from incoming Councilors. In general, this shows you my approach: I see a problem and I look for ways to fix it -- collaboratively. Like this working group, my approach will continue.

Examples – Partial List:

- 2018-010: Ordinance to Amend 2004-055 Regarding Licenses for Telling Fortunes by Removing Limitation Based on Population of the City
- 2018-073: Ordinance to Promote Public Safety and Manage Work to be Completed by Public Gas Utilities
- 2018-074: Ordinance to Promote Public Safety by Authorizing Membership in Dig Safe
- 2018-086: Ordinance to Create a Woodsom Farm Parkland and Conservation Area
- 2021-043: Ordinance to Amend Zoning Bylaw to Govern Electronic Signs, Message Board, and Billboards
- 2021-044: Ordinance to Establish the Higher Senior Tax Exemption Program (STEP)
- 2021-102: Ordinance to Create a Town Forest Conservation Area
- 2021-103: Order to Transfer \$15,700 from Cemetery Trust Accounts to Pay for Tree Maintenance in Old Corner Cemetery
- 2021-107: Ordinance to Establish a Means-Tested Senior Citizen Rental Assistance Program
- 2021-135: Resolution to Request Release of State-Appropriation for Construction of Soccer Fields at Woodsom Farm

- 2023-029: Ordinance to Define and Implement Civil Enforcement Procedures for Public Marijuana (Cannabis) Consumption
- 2023-030: Resolution in Support of Changing the State Flag and Seal of Massachusetts
- 2023-097: Ordinance to Amend the Amesbury Zoning Ordinance to Allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) in the City of Amesbury

If you were seeking to fill a role in your company, experience would count. And you'd likely want the best candidate who offered the most value to the organization. I think I offer both the experience and value so that we can all do a better job for Amesbury.

Am I perfect? No.

Have I made mistakes? Yes.

Am I willing and able to change? Yes. Clearly, based on my ability to pivot and welcome constructive feedback has resulted in better legislation.

I freely admit that in my frustration when seeing the rules being misapplied, I have expressed myself loudly. And on two occasions I left City Council early (in one case, since only First Readings were up next on the agenda and there was a quorum, my absence would not have a material impact on the result).

But in all cases, despite my agitation, I've never used disrespectful language directed at any Councilor. (So, any narrative circulated that I will not be able to work with fellow Councilors – even a Councilor who co-sponsored measures with me -, is just that – a baseless narrative.)

And at the very least, I do show up, and I'm on time. Despite rules changes that nearly doubled our meeting schedule, I have attended 100% of all regular and special meetings – despite a hectic work and family schedule. I also find time to attend meetings of other boards and committees. So, in that regard, I've been able to fully represent my constituents because I've been in the room from start to finish (except on two occasions leaving "early" after nearly four hours of meetings).

I ask that you take all of this into consideration.

Please apply an equal standard when comparing candidates. Please don't judge me by comparing me to the Messiah or some other ideal. I'll admit that in that comparison I'll fail. Rather, compare me to the alternatives available.

It's one thing to be in the middle of the action. (And you'll hear me often quote Teddy Roosevelt's "Man in the Arena" speech.) But it's all the more important to be in the arena and getting results. I've done that and can do so again to help *you* be a better representative.

I can promise you this. If I'm Council president, we will run things differently and hopefully better. With eight years of experience serving under two different mayors and three different Council presidents, I've seen what works and what doesn't.



### Changes for a New Term:

First, we need a more manageable schedule. In the rules changes I've drafted, I have proposed going back to a monthly regular business meeting. This worked well for the six years I served on Council prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> Session. This schedule allows the Clerk's Office and Administration more time to prepare before and after meetings.

Next, as a Council we need to advocate for more resources in the Clerk's Office. One reason that we have so often been behind in reviewing meeting minutes is because there is not sufficient staff to prepare them and do everything else that the Clerk's Office has to do with vital records and elections.

We also need to have our own legal support. As it is, we rely on the City's outsourced legal counsel to provide input. Oftentimes, this is after the fact (or after a meeting) which results in confusion.

Fourth, we need a dedicated training program for Councilors. Yes, we can all attend the Massachusetts Municipal Association's trainings. But the timing and location may not work for all. Instead, we need to have an in-house orientation program throughout the year that helps Councilors understand the resources available through the state's Department of Revenue/Division of Local Services, training on parliamentary procedures, reviews how Proposition 2 ½, budgets, and tax assessments work in general. Too often, new Councilors are dropped into the deep end of the pool to sink or swim. As it is, we get fed by a firehose at each Council meeting. So, we do need to set aside time maybe quarterly to get these topics addressed but not a regular Council meeting. I've spoken to our City Clerk about this, and we have a broad outline of how to address some of these issues about training.

Fifth, we need to change our rules regarding our committee structure. After long conversations with Councilors, both those returning and those who've stepped off, as well as with the Administration and Clerk's Office, I believe that we need to simplify. Instead of multiple committees, we should go back to a Committee of the Whole format that we once had for Finance. But instead, this committee would be the main committee to hear all matters. This would make it much easier for the public to understand our process. Instead of having to go to two different committees to hear the same matter (such as Ordinance & Administration and Planning & Development), the public would just need to go to one. And instead of waiting for one of the other committees to review a matter, which happens often enough now, it would be reviewed more quickly.

As it is, we often have Council meetings taking up the same issues that were supposed to be vetted by a sub-committee. By having a Committee of the Whole, there will now be ample time at the committee level for any Councilor to ask any question about a matter without tying up time at the Council meeting.

In the event that a matter requires a deeper dive and more expertise, the Council could set up regular sub-committees or ad-hoc sub-committees in the areas of Budget, O&A, and P&D. This option has been provided for in the proposed rules changes (Rule 11-A).

Sixth, we will not be taking both July and August off. As it is, the E-Code indicates that the president may choose to cancel July or August. But taking both months off has created a hardship for many and backed up the process leading to overly long agendas.

Seventh, we need to adopt a "consent" agenda like the School Committee and like we technically have used for approval of business licenses already. For instance, if there are changes to Council meeting minutes, we can make these corrections known before the meeting. And if there is only one meeting a month, the Clerk's Office will have adequate time to prepare the minutes for earlier review. This will save us time during regular meetings.



Finally, while this may be a small matter, I believe it's important. If a matter comes before Council sponsored by a Councilor or Councilors, I will recognize the sponsors for the final vote on the matter. To me, I think it's a simple gesture of respect.

I realize that this is "different." But the rules we are working on now are way "different" than they were for nearly twenty-four years. And over the past two years, we've not had shorter meetings. We've not shortened the agendas. But we have burned out municipal staff. This is unsustainable.

We can do better. And as a Council leader, I want to help you be better.

Thank you again for your consideration.

Respectfully and with best wishes,

Steve