

(Taken from the Citizens' Bill of Rights of Miami Beach) edited for NMB by Mary Hilton

CITIZENS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(A) This government has been created to protect the governed, not the governing. In order to provide the public with full and accurate information, to promote efficient administrative management, to make government more accountable, and to insure to all persons fair and equitable treatment, the following rights are guaranteed:

- **Convenient access.** Every person has the right to transact business with the City with a minimum of personal inconvenience. It shall be the duty of the City Manager and the City Council to provide, within the City's budget limitations, reasonable convenient times and places for required inspections, and for transacting business with the City.
- **Truth in government.** No municipal official or employee shall knowingly furnish false information on any public matter, nor knowingly omit significant facts when giving requested information to members of the public.
- **Public records.** All audits, reports, minutes, documents and other public records of the City and its boards, agencies, departments and authorities shall be open for inspection at reasonable time and places convenient to the public.
- **Minutes and ordinance register.** The City Clerk shall maintain and make available for public inspection an ordinance register separate from the minutes showing the votes of each member on all ordinances (Ordinance means an official legislative action of the North Miami Beach Council, which action is a regulation of a general and permanent nature and enforceable as a local law), and resolutions (Resolution means an expression of the North Miami Beach council concerning matters of administration, an expression of a temporary character, or a provision for the disposition of a particular item of the administrative business of the North Miami Beach Council) listed by descriptive title. Written minutes of all meetings and the ordinance register shall be available for public inspection not later than fifteen (15) days after the conclusion of the meeting.
- **Right to be heard.** So far as the orderly conduct of public business permits, any interested person has the right to appear before the City Council or any City agency, Board or department for the presentation, adjustment or determination of an issue, request or controversy within the jurisdiction of the City. Matters shall be scheduled for the convenience of the public, and the agenda shall be divided into approximate time periods so that the public may know approximately when a matter will be heard. Nothing herein shall prohibit the City or any agency thereof from imposing reasonable time limits for the presentation of a matter.
- **Right to Notice.** Persons entitled to notice of a City hearing shall be timely informed as to the time, place and nature of the hearing and the legal authority pursuant to which the hearing is to be held. Failure by an individual to receive such notice shall not constitute mandatory grounds for canceling the hearing or rendering invalid any determination made at such hearing. Copies of proposed ordinances or resolutions shall be made available at a reasonable time prior to the hearing, unless the matter involves an emergency ordinance or resolution.
- **No unreasonable postponements.** No matter once having been placed on a formal agenda by the City shall be postponed to another day except for good cause shown in the opinion of the City Council, or agency conducting such meeting, and then only on condition that any person so requesting is mailed adequate notice of the new date of any postponed meeting. Failure by an individual to receive such notice shall not constitute mandatory grounds for canceling the hearing or rendering invalid any determination made at such hearing.

- **Right to public hearing.** Upon a timely request of any interested party a public hearing shall be held by any City agency, board, department or authority upon any significant policy decision to be issued by it which is not subject to subsequent administrative or legislative review and hearing. This provision shall not apply to the law department of the City nor to any body whose duties and responsibilities are solely advisory. At any zoning or other hearing in which review is exclusively by certiorari, a party or his counsel shall be entitled to present his case or defense by oral or documentary evidence, to submit rebuttal evidence, and to conduct such cross-examination as may be required for a full and true disclosure of the facts. The decision of any such agency, board, department or authority must be based upon the facts in the record. Procedural rules establishing reasonable time and other limitations may be promulgated and amended from time to time.
- **Notice of action and reasons.** Prompt notice shall be given of the denial in whole or in part of a request of an interested person made in connection with any municipal administrative decision or proceeding when the decision is reserved at the conclusion of the hearing. The notice shall be accompanied by a statement of the grounds for denial.
- **Managers' and attorneys' reports.** The city manager and City Attorney shall periodically make a public status report on all major matters pending or concluded within their respective jurisdictions.
- **Budgeting.** In addition to any budget required by state statute, the City Manager shall prepare a budget showing the cost of each department for each budget year. Prior to the City Council's first public hearing on the proposed budget required by state law, the City Manager shall make public a budget summary setting forth the proposed cost of each individual department and reflecting the personnel for each department, the purposes therefore, the estimated millage cost of each department and the amount of any contingency and carryover funds for each department.
- **Quarterly budget comparisons.** The City Manager shall make public a quarterly report showing the actual expenditures during the quarter just ended against one quarter of the proposed annual expenditures set forth in the budget. Such report shall also reflect the same cumulative information for whatever portion of the fiscal year that has elapsed.
- **Adequate audits.** An annual audit of the City, including once every five (5) years a forensic audit of the City, shall be made by an independent certified public accounting firm in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. The independent City Auditor shall be appointed by the City Council; both appointment and removal of the independent City Auditor shall be made by the City Council. A summary of the results of the independent City Auditor's annual audit, including any deficiencies found, shall be made public. In making such audit, proprietary functions shall be audited separately and adequate depreciation on proprietary facilities shall be accrued so the public may determine the amount of any direct or indirect subsidy. Duties, method of selection, and method of compensation of the independent City Auditor shall be established by ordinance.
- **Representation of public.** The City Council shall endeavor to provide representation at all proceedings significantly affecting the City and its residents before state and federal regulatory bodies.
- **Natural resources and scenic beauty.** It shall be the policy of the City of North Miami Beach to conserve and protect its natural resources and scenic beauty, which policy shall include the abatement of air and water pollution and of excessive and unnecessary noise.

- **Nondiscrimination.** No person shall be deprived of any rights and privileges conferred by law because of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, familial status, or age.

(B) The foregoing enumeration of citizens' rights vests large and pervasive powers in the citizenry of the City of North Miami Beach. Such power necessarily carries with it responsibility of equal magnitude for the successful operation of government in the City. The orderly, efficient and fair operation of government requires the intelligent participation of individual citizens exercising their rights with dignity and restraint so as to avoid any sweeping acceleration in the cost of government because of the exercise of individual prerogatives, and for individual citizens to grant respect for the dignity of public office.

C) Remedies for violations. In any suit by a citizen alleging a violation of this Bill of Rights filed in the Miami-Dade County circuit court pursuant to its general equity jurisdiction, the plaintiff, if successful, shall be entitled to recover costs as fixed by the court. Any public official or employee who is found by the court to have willfully violated this article shall forthwith forfeit his office or employment.

(D) Construction. All provisions of this article shall be construed to be supplementary to and not in conflict with the general laws of Florida. If any part of this article shall be declared invalid, it shall not affect the validity of the remaining provisions.