

	<b>Subject:</b> Public Comment Period & Public Hearing Policy		<b>Department:</b> City Manager's Office			
	<b>Policy #:</b> GCCP-001	<b>Adopted:</b> 02/12/2024	<b>Effective:</b> 02/12/2024	<b>Supersedes:</b> 01/09/2023	<b>Resolution #:</b> NA	<b>Approved by:</b> City Council

**Purpose:** To encourage and allow citizens to offer comments or suggestions to City Council members.

**Goals:** Through the productive public comments provided by citizens, the Council will be more cognizant of concerns in the City, as a whole, and the Districts they serve.

**References:** The following North Carolina General Statutes are referenced below: NCGS §160A-81.1- *Public Comment Period During Regular Meetings*; NCGS §143-318.17- *Disruptions of Official Meetings*; and NCGS §160A-81- *Conduct of Public Hearings*.

**Guidelines:** The following Rules of Decorum have been established to maintain order and decorum during the public comment period and public hearings. These rules are not intended to limit the content of any speaker's message, but to ensure that the meeting is conducted in a civil, productive, effective, and orderly manner.

### Public Comment Period

Speakers will be allowed to speak on any relevant matter, which is to be defined as a matter that is within the authority of the City Council to decide, and not privileged by law (such as personnel matters). Comments made during the public comment period should not be related to the subject of any public hearing conducted during the same meeting, or that has already been noticed for discussion.

1. The City Council will provide a public comment period during each regularly scheduled Council meeting.
2. Citizens that wish to speak during the Public Comment Period are required to sign in before speaking, and provide their name, address, email address, telephone number and subject of the comments (the name of the citizen will be the only information recorded in the minutes.)
3. Each speaker shall state their name clearly. Any speaker requesting additional information shall submit a formal records request to the Clerk.
4. Each speaker will be allowed to speak one time during the public comment period.
5. Each speaker will be given three (3) minutes to offer comments or suggestions regarding the City. The total public comment period will not exceed 30 minutes at any regularly scheduled council meeting unless otherwise authorized by the presiding officer. Any member of Council may ask follow-up questions. The speaker will have two (2) additional minutes to respond to each Council member.
6. If a group wishes to speak, the group will be instructed by the presiding officer to designate a maximum of two spokespersons to speak on behalf of the group. A "group" is defined as more than two people in attendance wishing to address a similar topic.
7. Speakers with handouts to share should bring ten (10) copies, and give the copies to the Clerk as they approach the podium. **Do not** approach Council with the handouts; the Clerk will distribute the copies.
8. Any videos, PowerPoint presentations, or other electronic media must be provided to the Clerk no later than four (4) working days before the meeting.
9. Speakers shall be civil and courteous in their language and presentations at all times. Speakers are asked to refrain from personal attacks and/or threats directed toward any Councilmember, the Mayor, City staff, and/or members of the public; vulgar or profane language or gestures will not be tolerated.
10. Speakers are asked to address the Mayor and Council and to refrain from addressing the audience.



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11. Speakers should not expect council members to comment on or respond to their comments directly during the meeting. The Mayor or presiding officer may, however, request the City Manager's Office to follow up with the speaker after the meeting to provide additional information to the council at a later time.
12. The Mayor, or presiding officer, has the authority to enforce the Rules of Decorum; failure to obey these rules may result in a forfeiture of any remaining speaking time.
13. Individuals who engage in egregious or repeated violations may be asked to leave the meeting.
14. The Mayor, or presiding officer, may remove any person from a meeting if the person is interrupting or disrupting the meeting. A person who willfully interrupts, disturbs, or disrupts an official meeting and who, upon being directed to leave the meeting by the presiding officer, willfully refuses to leave the meeting is guilty of a Class 2 misdemeanor (NCGS §143-318.17).

### **Public Hearings**

Speakers may only speak on the matter defined in the public hearing notice. All other comments must be made during the regular public comment period.

1. Each speaker shall state their name clearly.
2. Each speaker will be allowed to speak one time during the public hearing.
3. Due to time constraints, it is requested that each speaker limit their comments to five (5) minutes regarding the subject of the public hearing, unless otherwise authorized by the presiding officer. \*
4. Speakers with handouts to share should bring ten (10) copies, and give the copies to the Clerk as they approach the podium. **Do not** approach Council with the handouts; the Clerk will distribute the copies.
5. Any videos, PowerPoint presentations, or other electronic media must be provided to the Clerk no later than four (4) working days before the meeting.
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\*\*Time limits do not apply to Quasi-Judicial Hearings to include Special Use permits.

Adopted by Council February 12, 2024