



# COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

CITY COUNCIL of SALT LAKE CITY

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**TO:** City Council Members

**DATE:** March 5, 2024

**RE:** Council Member Policy C.16 – Comments at Council Meetings  
**Comment rules, and procedures**

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## ISSUE AT A GLANCE

The Council will discuss possible changes to the Council's Policy Manual, Section C.16 related to Comments at Council Meetings. The policy, rules, and procedure are in place to ensure that City business is able to be conducted in a reasonable and orderly manner.

The Council has established meeting rules and procedures within legal guidelines and with the following goals in mind:

- **Safe environment:** To create a safe atmosphere that is not intimidating so that people are encouraged to participate, attend, and share their viewpoint, even if it conflicts with others in the audience,
- **Feedback forum:** To provide an open comment period for the public to address the Council on a variety of topics affecting the City (that is not otherwise scheduled for a public hearing).
- **Orderly & Efficient Meeting:** To allow adequate time for public comment, required hearings, deliberation, Council action, and other necessary and scheduled City business.

## POLICY QUESTIONS

1. Many jurisdictions have structured their public comment agenda differently than Salt Lake City. The Council has received feedback about considering some of the changes to the general comment section during formal Council meetings. Does the Council wish to consider any of these changes:
  - a. Overall time limit: ***Does the Council wish to implement a time limit to the general comment section?***
  - b. Amount of time for each speaker: ***Does the Council wish to change the two-minute limit per speaker?***
  - c. Variety of topics: ***Does the Council wish to implement a system other than "first-come, first-served" so that a variety of topics can be covered by the people who came to speak?*** (i.e. a lottery or self-selection based on topic)
  - d. Frequency of General Comment: ***Does the Council wish to consider holding General Comment once per month?***



- e. End time for the meeting: ***Does the Council wish to consider setting a maximum end time for Council meetings?***
- f. Other?
- 2. The Council may wish to discuss with the City Attorney whether any of the rules or procedures can be adjusted in the moment if a unique situation allows. (For example, depending on the number of people signed up to speak, could the Council adjust the time available to each speaker for one night, or extend any time limits, etc.)
- 3. The Council may wish to direct staff to make updates to the Public Meeting Rules of Decorum and/or Policy Manual as appropriate, to include any approved changes.

## **ADDITIONAL / BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The existing Public Meeting rules / “Rules of Decorum” (attached) already cover:

- General information about the public comment opportunities at the Council meetings and how to register whether attending in-person or remotely.
- Public Meeting Rules designed to maintain the:
  - Creation of a safe and comfortable forum for people to participate
  - Prohibition of discriminatory language addressing a person or group’s religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, color, descent, gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, or other identity factor.
  - Security and safety of all meeting attendees
  - Protection of historic elements

The Council may wish to make edits, addition, or clarifications to the Rules of Decorum or Council Policy Manual regarding Public Comment.

- Registration window: specify when registration for public comment is open – starting and ending time (*Note: the Council has already requested to change this to 7:30 p.m. or at the closure of a hearing.*)
- Any new time limits
- Comments about city issues should be addressed to the Council as a body, or the Council and Mayor as a group, and shall not be addressed to individual elected officials.
- Clarify:
  - Public comment may not address any public hearing topics
  - Constituents may not sign-up on behalf of others
  - Speaking time may not be combined with another speaker

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Current Council Public Meeting Rules of Decorum
2. Sample Public Comment rules from other cities
3. Council Policy Manual Section C.16: Comments at City Council Meetings
4. Utah State Code - Open & Public Meetings Act, Part 2: Meetings
5. Utah State Code - Open & Public Meetings Act, Part 3: Enforcement