

CITY COUNCIL RULES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

Findings. The City Council finds that reasonable rules regarding the public's right to address the City Council at open meetings are necessary to promote an efficient, organized process and to allow all members of the public who intend to speak an opportunity to address the City Council. Accordingly, the City Council adopts the following reasonable rules pursuant to Texas Government Code § 551.007, as amended.

A. Public Comment on Posted Agenda Items

1. At an open meeting of the City Council, members of the public may address the City Council regarding items on the posted agenda for which the City Council will make a decision or take action before or during consideration of the item.
2. The City of Arlington fully embraces the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility where people of all identities and experiences are understood, appreciated, and fully included in the community and where equitable treatment and outcomes prevail. As such, in order to preserve the order and decorum of meetings of the City Council and to provide for attendance at and participation in the meeting without fear of intimidation, threats, or hostility, any person who makes personal, profane, hostile, slanderous, or threatening remarks, who uses vulgar or obscene language, who engages in any other actions that disturb or are calculated to disturb the meeting, or who becomes disruptive may be removed from the Council Chambers. All speakers shall address the City Council and not the audience or City staff and shall not call out individually named members of City staff or the public. Comments must be topically related to the agenda item for which the speaker has registered to speak.
3. Persons who intend to speak on posted agenda items shall register with City staff outside the Council Chambers on the day of the meeting, beginning 30 minutes prior to the meeting start time, by completing a registration card containing:
 - a. the speaker's name and city of residence;
 - b. the name of the person that the speaker is representing, if any;
 - c. the agenda item on which the speaker plans to speak;
 - d. an indication whether the speaker will be speaking through a translator; and
 - e. any other information requested by City staff.

B. Public Comment during Citizen Participation

1. The City Council may designate a Citizen Participation portion of an open meeting during which members of the public may address the City Council regarding matters related to City business or affairs that are in the scope of the authority of the City Council and that are not on the posted agenda. During the Citizen Participation portion of an open meeting, the City Council is not permitted by law to respond to, discuss, or address the comment but may ask clarifying questions or direct staff to take appropriate action.
2. The City of Arlington fully embraces the values of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility where people of all identities and experiences are understood, appreciated, and fully included in the community and where equitable treatment and outcomes prevail. As such, in order to preserve the order and decorum of meetings of the City Council and to provide for attendance at and participation in the meeting without fear of intimidation, threats, or hostility, any person who makes personal, profane, hostile, slanderous, or threatening remarks, who uses vulgar or obscene language, who engages in any other actions that disturb or are calculated to disturb the meeting, or who becomes disruptive may be removed from the Council Chambers. All speakers shall address the City Council and not the audience or City staff and shall not call out individually named members of City staff or the public.
3. Persons who intend to speak during the Citizen Participation portion of an open meeting shall pre-register not later than 5:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting. Persons may pre-register online at www.arlingtontx.gov, by calling 817-459-6186, or by completing a registration card at the City Secretary's Office. During the pre-registration process, speakers must provide the following information:
 - a. the speaker's name and city of residence;
 - b. the name of the person that the speaker is representing, if any;
 - c. the topic on which the speaker plans to speak;
 - d. an indication whether the speaker will be speaking through a translator; and
 - e. any other information requested by City staff.
4. The City Manager may direct a member of the City staff to contact an individual who has pre-registered to speak in an attempt to resolve an issue or concern. Contact by a member of City staff should in no way suggest that the individual should not appear and address the City Council.

C. Speaking Procedures and Time Limits

1. When a speaker's name is called, the speaker shall come to the microphone at the podium and state their name and city of residence for the record. Speakers shall address their comments to the City Council. Speakers may not use music, videos, other forms of media, signs, or props.
2. Time Limits for Public Comment on Posted Agenda Items
 - a. Except as provided below in Subsection (C)(2)(b) regarding public hearings on zoning cases, persons may speak and provide public comment for up to three minutes on a posted agenda item.
 - b. A person who intends to speak on a zoning case that is set for a public hearing is allowed to speak at the time that the public hearing is called. At the public hearing, the applicant is allowed to speak first and has five minutes to make a presentation. All other speakers at the public hearing have three minutes each to make their comments. After all other speakers have concluded making their comments, the applicant has three minutes for any rebuttal.
 - c. Notwithstanding the speaker time limits in Subsections (C)(2)(a) and (b) above, when a large number of speakers are present for a meeting to provide public comment on posted agenda items and it is consistent with the City Council's findings above, the presiding officer may impose reasonable time limits that are more restrictive.
3. Time Limits for Public Comment during Citizen Participation. For the Citizen Participation portion of a meeting, if 25 or fewer speakers have pre-registered, each speaker will have two minutes to make their comments; and if 26 or more speakers have pre-registered, each speaker will have one minute to make their comments.
4. If multiple speakers plan to provide the same or similar comments, those speakers may, if they so desire, designate one or more individuals to provide public comment on behalf of the group.
5. A person addressing the City Council through a translator has twice the amount of speaking time provided by these rules to accommodate the translation services if simultaneous translation equipment is not being used in a manner that allows the City Council to hear the translated public comment simultaneously.
6. A bell will signal the end of each speaker's time. In consideration of other persons who are registered to speak on posted agenda items or pre-registered to speak during Citizen Participation, speakers shall conclude their comments promptly upon the bell sounding.
7. When the City Council votes on or considers an ordinance or any other item at more than one open meeting, members of the public may speak on the ordinance or item at each meeting in which the City Council votes on or considers the ordinance or item.