



City Council Policy

Title: Time Limits for Speakers at City Council Meetings		Index Number:
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1.0 Purpose and Need:

The purpose of this policy is to provide reasonable, workable time limits for speakers at City Council meetings. The need for such a policy was determined by the City Council at its retreat on February 18, 2003. The policy is intended to recognize and accommodate the mutual interests of persons desiring to speak at City Council meetings, the value to the City Council of public comment, and the need for the City Council to conduct business in an orderly, expeditious manner.

This policy shall not apply to the discussion of agenda items by members of the City Council during City Council meetings or to City Staff members acting in such capacity.

2.0 Time Limits

2.1 Planning Agenda Items

- (a) Planning Agenda items include rezonings, conditional zonings, conditional use permits, land use plan approvals, code and Comprehensive Plan amendments, nonconforming use resolutions, street closures and any other items for which a public hearing is required pursuant to Chapter 22 of Title 15 of the Virginia Code.
- (b) The applicant, or representative of the applicant (generally, an attorney, professional engineer or other professional retained by the applicant) shall be allowed ten minutes for his or her initial presentation and an additional three minutes for rebuttal if any opponents of the application have spoken.
 - (1) If there is more than one applicant (as, for example, when both the property owner and proposed developer are applicants) or if the applicant and representative both desire to speak, only one of them shall be allowed to speak for ten minutes. Upon request, however, the presiding officer may allow them to divide their time equally, so long as the total time of their initial presentation does not exceed ten minutes.
 - (2) Speakers addressing the City Council in a representative capacity shall not be allowed additional time in which to speak on his or her own behalf.
- (c) All other persons speaking in support of the application shall be allowed three minutes, and shall not be entitled to speak in rebuttal of any opposition comments.
- (d) Opponents of an application shall be allowed three minutes each. In the event the opponents are represented by an attorney, engineer or other professional whose profession includes, as a customary part thereof, appearing before governmental bodies in a representative capacity, such representative shall be allowed ten minutes. In such cases, persons represented shall be encouraged not to provide additional comments.

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(1) Only one speaker in opposition to the application shall be allowed ten minutes to speak. If there is more than one representative described in subsection (d), only one of them shall be allowed to speak for ten minutes. Upon request, however, the presiding officer may allow them to divide their time equally, so long as the total time of their presentation does not exceed ten minutes.

(e) Opponents of an application shall not be entitled to address the City Council in rebuttal of any statements or other material provided to the City Council during the applicant's rebuttal.

2.2. Regular Agenda Items

(a) Regular agenda items include all other agenda items at which public comment is allowed.

(a) Each speaker, whether or not in a representative capacity, shall be allowed three minutes.

3.0 Timekeeping; Written Material

(a) The City Clerk shall keep time for each speaker in accordance with the provisions of Section 2, and shall verbally notify the speaker and presiding officer at the expiration of the time allowed for each speaker.

(b) Written comments or other material may be tendered to the City Clerk by any person desiring to do so.

4.0 Modification of Time Limits

(a) The presiding officer, with the consent of the City Council, may extend or reduce any of the time limits set forth in Section 2.

(b) The time limits for speakers set forth in Section 2 shall be exclusive of the time taken in responding to questions of members of the City Council.

5.0 Registration of Speakers

Any person desiring to address the council shall register with the City Clerk prior to the opening of the meeting. The inadvertent failure to do so shall not, however, disqualify any person from speaking.

6.0 Public Notice of Policy

In accordance with City Code Section 2-41, this policy shall be included on the City's internet web site, posted outside of the City Council Chambers, and published in the City Council agenda for each regular meeting.