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## *Policy & Procedure*

### **PUBLIC COMMENT FOR CITY COUNCIL AND BOARD AND COMMISSION MEETINGS**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

The opinions of the citizens of La Mesa are an important factor in helping the Council, Boards, and Commissions make decisions. Public participation in the meetings assures a transparent and accountable local government.

#### **2. POLICY**

The public may address the Council, Board, or Commission (“legislative body”) during general public comment at the beginning of each meeting and during the public comment portion of each item on the agenda. Each member of the public will have three minutes to address the Council, Board, or Commission, unless the Mayor or Chair publicly requires less time or authorizes additional time in advance. For efficiency purposes, groups or organizations are encouraged to appoint a spokesperson to speak on behalf of a common interest group or organization. Time cannot be combined or yielded to another speaker (e.g. no time donations) unless authorized by the Mayor or ~~Chair~~presiding officer (in the case of non-Council). Speakers that require a translator will be given double the allotted time.

- **General Public Comment:** Occurs at the beginning of a meeting. This portion of the meeting is set aside to give the public an opportunity to speak on any City-related item that **does not** appear on the agenda. State law prohibits the legislative body from taking action or engaging in discussions on items **not** listed on the agenda. If appropriate, comments may be referred to staff or placed on a future agenda.
- **Agenda Item Public Comment:** The public is able to provide comments on each item on the agenda. Comments are to pertain to the specific agenda item. The Mayor or ~~Chair~~presiding officer will announce when public comment is open for an item and when it has closed. Public Comment for any items on the Consent Calendar will be taken prior to the consideration of the Consent Calendar (the Consent Calendar is a grouping of routine matters to be approved in one motion).

Public comment at meetings of a legislative body may be presented in one of ~~three~~two ways:

~~1)~~ 1) Live Audio Public Comment

- ~~a) One staff person may be dedicated to the public comment component.~~
- ~~b) The Mayor or Chair will open public comment and begin with live audio public comment.~~
- ~~c) Staff will announce the number of people queued for live audio comment;~~
  - ~~i. If there are no live audio comments, the Mayor or Chair will move to in-person public comment.~~
  - ~~ii. If there are people queued for live audio comment, following the first speaker, the Mayor or Chair will announce that the time to raise hands is now closed.~~
- ~~d) The staff person will allow the first attendee in the queue to speak.~~
  - ~~i. Staff will announce the name of the person and inform the attendee they may unmute their microphone and will have three minutes (or the allotted time determined by the Mayor or Chair) to address the legislative body.~~
  - ~~ii. When the person has completed their comment or the allotted time has expired, the staff person will revoke the attendee's ability to talk.~~
    - ~~1. The staff person should also remove the person from the queue or lower the person's hand if raised electronically.~~
  - ~~iii. Live audio public comment speakers will be muted when the allotted time has elapsed.~~
- ~~e) After the last person in the queue has spoken, the Mayor or Chair will close live audio public comment and move to in-person comments.~~
- ~~f) If there are no live audio public comments, following the staff report, the Mayor or Chair will move to in-person speakers.~~
  - ~~i. If there are no in-person speakers, the Mayor or Chair will announce that Public Comment is closed for that item.~~

~~2)~~1) In-person Public Comment

- a) Members of the public wishing to address the legislative body should submit a "Request to Speak" card prior to general public comment or the item they wish to speak on.
  - i. Public Comment or the number of the agenda item should be written on the upper right hand corner of the "Request to Speak" card.
- b) If a member of the public would like to comment on an item but would rather write the comment rather than speak aloud, they may complete a "Written Statement" card.
  - i. "Written Statement" cards are reviewed by the legislative body and will be made a part of the record.
    - 1. The Mayor or ~~Chair~~presiding officer may choose to read aloud the submitted "Written Statement" cards.
  - ii. "Written Statement" cards should be submitted prior to general public

comment or the coinciding agenda item.

- c) The “Request to Speak” cards and “Written Statement” cards are to be submitted to the staff person running the meeting (e.g., City Clerk or staff liaison).
- d) City staff will arrange, to the best of their ability, the “Request to Speak” and “Written Statement” cards in the order received and by agenda item and then provide to the Mayor or Chair~~presiding officer~~.
- ~~e) Following live audio public comment, the Mayor or Chair will move to in-person public comment.~~
- ~~f)~~e) Following the last “Request to Speak” card, the Mayor or ~~Chair~~presiding officer will close the public comment for that item.
- ~~g)~~f) In-person speakers will be notified by staff or an audio signal when their time is almost done; the microphone will be muted when the allotted time has elapsed.

### ~~3)~~2) Electronic Comments (eComments)

- a) eComments will be activated once an agenda is published.
  - i. Council agendas are published a minimum of 72 hours prior to the Tuesday Regular meeting. All Board and Commission agendas are posted a minimum of 72 hours prior to their Regular meeting date. For Special meetings, the agendas are posted no less than 24 hours prior to the meeting.
- b) A member of the public who wishes to submit an eComment will need to locate the meeting in “upcoming meetings” and click the comment bubble icon and then the item they wish to comment on.
- c) eComments may be submitted when the agenda is published and up until 24 hours prior to the meeting.
  - i. For Special meetings, eComments may be submitted up until 2 hours prior to the meeting.
- d) eComments are limited to 500 words and one comment per email address per item.
- e) eComments will be posted to the agenda following the close of the eComment submission period (24 hours prior to the meeting).
  - i. Once posted, the eComments may be viewed by the legislative body and members of the public.
- f) eComments will not be read aloud as a regular meeting item; however, any member of the legislative body or member of the public may do so during their respective comment time.

Emailed comments will be forwarded to the legislative body but will not be read aloud at the meeting. In addition, emailed comments will not be made part of the official record (will not be included in the agenda packet or meeting minutes) but will be retained pursuant to the City’s Retention Schedule.

All agendas shall provide information on the ~~three~~two ways in which public comment may be presented at a meeting of the legislative body.

*Administrative Instruction No.*

*Public Comment for City Council and Board and Commission Meetings*

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