

Written Testimony for the Lake Park, FL Commission
Regarding the 3 Minute Practice for Public Comments

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD

October 8, 2025 VIA EMAIL TO THE MAYOR, COMMISSIONERS, TOWN MANAGER
AND TOWN CLERK

Michael Steinhauer, 435 Greenbriar Dr., Lake Park. Pipestone1992@gmail.com

608-332-5547

Good day!

Please note my requests/suggestions at the conclusion of this written testimony. I anticipate a thorough and complete response to my written communication with the Commission, a matter of public record. This body has previously contemplated in Commission meetings the necessary step to complete the circle of public engagement.

I am testifying today about the customary but **not codified, I repeat not codified anywhere**, practice of the Commission's 3-minute limit for public comments. I did an exhaustive search of every Lake Park ordinance from 2003 to the present and every Lake Park Resolution from 2016 to the present and found no related ordinance or resolution. I also researched cities, county, state, and federal mandates that extend beyond their immediate jurisdiction and found no references that would pertain to Lake Park. Each municipality may have ordinances, but they only extend to the borders of their jurisdiction.

The cumulative weight imposed on lay people of overcoming fear, ridicule, and mistakes makes the 3-minute rule unreasonable. Residents cannot meet or exceed the expectations of business communication and testimony.

My written statement here cites numerous associations, organizations, think tanks, and the recommendations of government to promulgate standards around effective testimony communication. These entities include but are not limited to:

- The American Psychological Association
- American Speech and Hearing Association
- the American Bar Association
- American Trial Attorney's Association
- Universities of Higher Learning and their numerous departments that instruct on effective public speaking, and the elements of specialized professional verbal communications
- North American Mission Board

- Farm Votes Matter
- lobbyist associations
- state legislative bodies and
- Congress, publishing tips for your visits to Capitol Hill, all these and hundreds more organizations weigh in on effective testimony skills.

Collectively, here is what I extracted from the literature:

Effective business communication is about delivering messages and promoting understanding, trust and cooperation.

The 7 Cs stand for being: **clear, concise, concrete, correct, coherent, complete, and courteous.**

An effective testimony should be engaging, demonstrating honesty, and at least a broad understanding of the subject matter. It should be tailored to the audience, in this case the Commission, avoiding jargon and overly complex language.

The literature on effective testimony skills continues:

- **Keep it short:** Aim for a few minutes to capture the essence of your story without overwhelming the audience.
- **Use simple language:** Avoid jargon and technical terms that might confuse your audience.
- **Present a clear and logical flow:** Structure your testimony with a beginning, middle, and end to guide the listener.
- **Rehearse your testimony:** Practice your testimony until it flows naturally and you feel confident.

2. Authenticity and Honesty:

- **Be genuine:** Share your story with sincerity and avoid exaggerating or fabricating details.
- **Acknowledge your limitations:** If you don't know the answer to a question, be honest and say so.
- **Project credibility:** Maintain a positive attitude and project confidence in your message.

3. Engaging and Relatable:

- **Use storytelling techniques:**

Share a specific experience or situation that connects with the audience's concerns.

- **Connect with your audience by evoking emotions**

4. Tailoring to the Audience:

- **Adjust your language tone** to suit the specific group you are addressing.
- **Avoid overly technical language:** Ensure your message is accessible to a diverse audience.
- **Be mindful of your audience's expectations:** Understand what they want to hear and tailor your message accordingly.
- **And frame your message as a call to action, highlighting your passion for the issue and your desire for change.**

Residents, most of whom are lay speakers, struggle to employ these standards of testimony, and all within 3 minutes. Why? Who invented the number 3? I reiterate that this practice is not specified or required by any regulation found in local, county, state, or federal authorities.

Our testimony is not a race or sprint. It is our best effort to share with you how we feel. And Lake Park residents feel passionate.

REQUEST AND SUGGESTIONS:

I hope you will consider this matter for an upcoming agenda item, so we can debate the merits of some starting point suggestions:

- 1) increase the allowance to 4 minutes. Given the complexity of our culture, and the importance of the issues, and now that the residents of Lake Park have found their voice and believe they can make a positive contribution to the quality of life in our town, give your community another minute of your time. If I were to make a search of the minutes for each Commission meeting over time, and determine the number of public speakers for each, I could multiply by 3 to get the total number of minutes spoken by all commentators, I would then compute the trivial fraction of public comments made to the actual length of the meetings. My guess is that the percentages will be minuscule. So would any upgrade to 4 minutes.
- 2) keep the 3-minute practice, but during that time open necessary dialog between the speaker and the members of the dais. If time allows and at the discretion of the Mayor, extend the discussion if it is useful, instructive, and civil. Beyond the 3 minutes of dialog, refer the speaker to the

appropriate Commissioner, or the Town Manager, or Town Attorney for further input.

- 3) As a general practice, and at the discretion of the mayor based on the complexity of the night's agenda, allow a resident to complete a pink sheet and provide verbal or written testimony on behalf of another Lake Park resident who is unable to attend the meeting.
- 4) As a general practice, and at the discretion of the mayor based on the complexity of the night's agenda, allow a resident to complete up to 3 pink sheets for public comment per meeting speaking for themselves on different matters.
- 5) Enhance a resident's capacity to add an agenda item to the Commission's agenda. Maybe require 10 signatures in support of a resident's request for an agenda item, like a "Citizen's Petition."
- 6) Promote a monthly "Town Hall" meeting with residents to dialog with more specificity around a topic or topics of current interest to stakeholders. Rotate the oversight of each monthly meeting among the Mayor and Commissioners.
- 7) Enhance our video feed technology via YouTube, such that a camera position can be focused on those residents who offer a public comment.

These suggestions do not impact on the town's budget or have any financial impact. These do however create a beginning of further discussions, and puts the walk in the walk, something I hear from the dais almost every meeting, beyond the talk just being talk.

Be the vanguard of the democratic process to welcome municipal resident engagement.

Thank you.

From: [Michael Steinhauer](#)
To: [Roger Michaud](#); [John Linden](#); [Michael Hensley](#); [Judith Thomas](#); [Michael O'Rourke](#); [Richard Reade](#); [Vivian Mendez](#)
Cc: [Katia Zhestkova](#); [Pablo Perhacs, JD, PhD, SciLaw](#); suelafontaine@aol.com; [Mary Taylor](#); [Kelly Steele](#); kbaptiste592@gmail.com [Kervins Jean-Baptiste](#); [Michael Steinhauer](#)
Subject: Public Testimony, October 8, 2025 PUBLIC RECORD re: Lake Park Practice of Public Comments at Commission Meetings
Date: Monday, October 6, 2025 8:12:21 PM
Attachments: [Lake Park SACE Testimony re 3 Minute Rule \(1\).docx](#)

Lake Park Elected Representatives, Town Manager and Clerk, Fellow Neighbors and Friends: Your received receipt is appreciated.

Please see attached written testimony regarding the subject matter listed above. I hope it can serve as an upcoming agenda item for a Commission meeting, and a starting point of open dialog and discussion to *enhance the feedback you seek* on matters of interest or concern for Lake Park residents. I am compelled to act as enough residents have urged me to proceed with addressing Lake Park public comment practices.

I regret not being present for the October 8th meeting (daughter's wedding), while wanting to address this issue after completing my research and quantifying some suggestions moving forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration in reviewing my testimony. Good day!
M.

Michael J Steinhauer, BS, OTR/L, MPH, FAOTA
Resident and Secretary/Treasurer, Lake Park Society for the Advancement of Civic Engagement
435 Greenbriar Drive
Lake Park, FL 33403
Cell: 608-332-5547

