



## **PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE**

The following is public correspondence received by the City Clerk's Office after the posting of the original agenda. Individual contact information has been redacted for privacy. This may *not* be a comprehensive collection of the public correspondence, but staff makes its best effort to include all correspondence received to date.

To send correspondence to the City Council, on matters listed on the agenda please email [PublicComment@losaltosca.gov](mailto:PublicComment@losaltosca.gov)

**From:** [Roberta Phillips](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment; City Council](#)  
**Subject:** Norms and Procedures Council meeting May 23,2023 Item #8  
**Date:** Saturday, May 20, 2023 10:53:49 AM

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Dear Council

I believe that Democracy is stronger when as many voters as possible participate in the process. The proposed changes to the Norms and Procedures limit participation and sends a message to the community that you do not value their input or intelligence.

1. Proposed is changing the notice of meetings from what is in the Open Government Policy of posting complete agendas 8 days ahead of the meeting, The change would require only 72 hour notice . A lot of the reports are hundreds of pages long and it is difficult for the public and Council to read in such a short time and give thoughtful analysis to proposed actions. Many decisions affect the lives of people living in the community. Perhaps a 5 day notification is possible if the 8 days are too difficult for staff.

2 . It is being suggested that a resident can no longer request that an item be pulled from the Consent calendar for discussion.This is a right that community members have had and you want to remove that right. As a result only people who are close friends with Council can contact them to ask that a consent item be moved for discussion. The rest of the community is left out in the cold and have no say or opportunity for discussion on a consent item. Again limiting the rights currently enjoyed by community members is a negative action.

3. It is being proposed that speakers no longer can cede time to other speakers.It is more efficient for a group of speakers to combine their comments and have one person allocated a maximum of 10 minutes vs having 10 speakers talk for 2 minutes each which would be 20 minutes. Many members of the public are shy. speak with an accent, or do not feel comfortable with public speaking. The change proposed eliminates one of the current options they now enjoy and limits participation. I do not see any justification for removing a freedom enjoyed by community members. We need more freedom to speak , not less. The community needs to know you are listening to them. You can't just say you are listening and then take action to limit transparency and dialogue.

I have spoken to many community members who want an open, welcoming government here in Los Altos.I ask that you make it easy for people to be involved and respect their need for an appropriate amount of time to review agenda items and have a voice in our democracy.

Sincerely

Roberta Phillips

**From:** [Stacy Bruzek Banerjee](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT AGENDA ITEM #8 - May 23 2023 - Council Norms and Procedures  
**Date:** Saturday, May 20, 2023 3:08:34 PM

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Honorable Mayor, Vice-Mayor, and Councilmembers,

I am writing as a resident about the Council Norms and Procedures.

I want to comment on several of the red-lined proposed changes.

1) 9.1 Posting of Agenda. Please keep posting requirements to follow the City's Open Government Policy. Simply put, the 72 hours required by the Brown Act are not enough time for the council and our community to review the meeting packet. (Special meetings should also meet these posting requirements unless there is urgency/emergency/etc..)

2) 9.2 Location of Posting. Is there a particular reason not to explicitly state that the meeting notice needs to be posted in the meeting room, on the city website, and in accordance with state law? (Does the state law require the notice posted in the meeting room, on the city website, etc.? If it does not, please consider requiring that as well as requiring email notifications of the meeting to those subscribed to notifications.)

3) 10.7 Consent Agenda. Members of the public do not need to pull things from the consent calendar, however they should be given an opportunity to make public comments on the consent agenda, and I suggest adding that language to the norms. Public comments for the consent agenda - even if there are no speakers - should be opened and thereafter closed before council votes on the consent agenda. (This is the process the VTA uses for all its boards/committees.)

4) 11.6.B. Public Comment/Ceding Time. We should allow ceding of time. I have seen many appropriate uses of this in my years of attending council meetings. It should not be completely abandoned. 10 minutes though is a long time, so the maximum time limit could be reduced.

5) 11.13 Teleconferencing.

My understanding is that AB 2449 allows a council member to join the meeting remotely without noticing the 'teleconference location' if they have a "just cause" or "emergency circumstance" and the location itself does NOT need to be accessible to the public and does NOT require public participation at the 'teleconference location'. Under AB 2449, as I understand it, council members must also state the reason they are participating remotely, and if they are participating via "emergency circumstance" the council needs to approve their remote participation. Also, I believe under AB 2449, council members only need to disclose if anyone 18 or older is present in the room with them. Under AB 2449, I believe

the maximum number of instances for "just cause" is two times per year. And under AB 2449, council members as I understand cannot attend the meeting remotely due to "emergency circumstance" for more than three consecutive months or 20 percent of the regular meetings within the calendar year.

Please verify the above understanding, and appropriately update what is proposed in 11.13, particularly these two sentences:

- Members may participate via teleconference in no more than 20% of meetings in a calendar year (January to December), whether utilizing provisions of the traditional Brown Act or Just Cause or Emergency Circumstances.
- At the beginning of a meeting in which a member is participating via teleconference, the Mayor, or the Vice Mayor if the Mayor is participating remotely, will ask the member(s) participating via teleconference to confirm the teleconference location was properly noticed according to State Law, the teleconference location is accessible to members of the public and whether anyone is present in the teleconference location besides the member.

I would also like to comment on a couple other areas in the norms.

1) 8.8 Annual Retreat. The council norms indicate the annual retreat is when council discusses and sets priorities. While top-level priorities have been set the last two years, unfortunately unlike preceding years, they lack depth/specific key initiatives and thus it is unclear to the community what the council is actually planning to accomplish priority-wise for the year.

2) 10.2 Description of Matters. I have noticed a few agenda items this calendar year that could have been more clearly described on the agenda. Please keep in mind the goal here is that "members of the public will know the nature of the action under review and consideration".

3) Posting of Council Q&A and Presentations. Please add a requirement to the council norms around posting of council Q&A. This should include a timeframe. (There have been some cases this year where the council Q&A have been posted late, even after the council meeting has taken place. With the goal of transparency, the public should always have the opportunity to see council Q&A prior to the council meeting.) I would also encourage posting of presentations in advance of the meeting.

Thank you,  
Stacy Banerjee

**From:** [Bill Hough](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#); [City Council](#)  
**Subject:** public comment regarding item #8 on 5/23/2023 agenda  
**Date:** Saturday, May 20, 2023 4:25:08 PM

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I object to certain proposed changes to the Norms and Procedures as stated below.

Section 9.1 Posting of Notice and Agenda

Currently agendas are not posted early enough to allow time for review and comment. This was particularly true with the Study Session of May 9, 2023. The agendas must be posted at least a week in advance of the of the meeting.

Section 10.7 Consent Calendar

Members of the public must continue to have the right the ability to request an item be removed from the Consent Calendar. It is important that residents be able to request the council take the time to discuss a matter of civic importance before rubber stamping approval.

Section 11.6.B Public Comment.

Citizens wishing to address the council are currently limited to 1 to 3 minutes, depending on specifics. Often this time limit is not sufficient to allow a speaker to put together a reasonable thought. A reasonable alternative is allowing a group of speakers to designate a single speaker to represent the group ceding their time to that person. This policy is a reasonable option and must continue.

Finally, a positive comment on Section 11.13 Teleconferencing:

I completely agree and support teleconferencing. If there is really a "climate emergency," we need to reduce travel demand and telework is a good first step.

Bill Hough

**From:** [zahra.ardehali.com](mailto:zahra.ardehali.com)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT ITEM #9 MAY 23, 2023  
**Date:** Saturday, May 20, 2023 6:32:52 PM  
**Importance:** High

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Los Altos City Council,

I am writing to you to oppose to the changes that are proposed to The Council Norms and Procedures, Item #9. The existing guidelines are in place to encourage and make it easier for the residents to communicate with the Council, but the proposed changes to The Council Norms and Procedures will make it harder for us to do so and I believe it will discourage public participation in our democracy process.

I encourage you to strongly not to make the changes and stay with the existing rules and guidelines.

Thank you,

Zahra Ardehali

**From:** [Joan](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment Item #9 May 23, 2023  
**Date:** Saturday, May 20, 2023 6:43:09 PM

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I believe that the current eight day period to review proposed council items is appropriate, and should be retained, instead of changing the time for review of materials to three days. Many concerned Los Altos citizens would like to be educated and apprised of council proposals and voice their opinions, but they also may have pressing family matters such as caregiving for the sick, work load, child care obligations, etc. A three day period to review up to 300 pages of material is inadequate. Thank you for considering my request to keep the eight day window.

Joan Loney  
1849 Alford Avenue  
Los Altos 94024

**From:** [Pat Marriot](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT ITEM #9 MAY 23, 2023  
**Date:** Saturday, May 20, 2023 8:13:40 PM

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Council Members:

I understand the intent behind modifications to the Norms, but I think they seriously hamper “communication, understanding, fairness, and trust among the members of the City Council, staff, and members of the public.”

The changes that most concern me:

1. Reducing 8-days notification to 72 hours.

That means I’d get the packet Saturday at 7 pm – assuming I wasn’t out or having supper at that time. Knowing I’d have to email any comments by Monday at 2 pm in order to have them included for the meeting, I’d have just 36 hours – assuming I didn’t sleep Saturday or Sunday night and didn’t have a job to go to on Monday – to read through hundreds of pages of complex material, understand it, and write meaningful comments.

Council members would have the same tight schedule to comprehend all the information and be prepared to discuss it and ask intelligent questions. I can’t understand why any of you would want to put such pressure on yourselves, especially if you have a job outside of Council.

How about reducing the 8 days to maybe 5? We’d get the complete packet on Thursday, which would allow us to plan ahead – maybe reserve a chunk of the weekend – to read the material and compose thoughtful comments.

2. Removing the right to delegate speaking time.

Ideally, I have 3 minutes to speak at a council meeting, but on a busy night with contentious items on the agenda, I might get only 1 minute. No matter how tightly I word my comments, that’s a very short time.

I know you were frustrated when an outside consultant was ceded 10 minutes by several residents. However, that was a rare occurrence. I think it’s advantageous for all if a group of residents combines their comments and lets one person speak for them. It saves time switching from one speaker to the next and minimizes repetitive comments.

How about allowing people to cede time, but limiting it to a 6-minute total?



3. Not allowing residents to pull an item from the Consent Calendar.

I don't know how often this occurs, but if a resident has important information that would impact a decision, I think Council should at least allow quick input to determine if the item is worth discussing.

Transparency and public input are critical to good governance. Please reconsider the proposed changes to ensure you and your constituents can work together to make good decisions.

Thanks for listening,

Pat Marriott

**From:** [Big Wave Dave](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** I object to reducing the number of days of advance notice for agenda items.  
**Date:** Saturday, May 20, 2023 8:54:10 PM

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Hi,

This is David Munoz. I live on Alford Ave near Lucky's

I heard the City Council is proposing to reduce the amount of time required for agenda items to be published in advance of council meetings from 8 days to just 3.

I strongly object to any such reduction. It is imperative for adequate representation that the public be given sufficient advance notice so they can fairly address and if necessary, investigate agenda items for an upcoming City Council meeting.

Sincerely,  
Dave Munoz  
Alford Avenue

**From:** [Zhibin Wu](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT ITEM #8 MAY 23, 2023  
**Date:** Sunday, May 21, 2023 5:39:33 AM

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Dear Sir/Madam:

My name is Zhibin Wu. I am a Los Altos resident living at 1151 Covington Rd, Los Altos, CA 94024.

Here are my comments on the proposed changes of "Council Norms and Procedures" in the Attachment 1 of item 8:

1. In the revised Section 9, there are changes regarding the meeting notice and agenda. As a result of the change, the pre-meeting time period where the meeting notice and agenda are disclosed to the public has been greatly reduced to 72 hours, which does not give Los Altos citizens sufficient time to review the agenda items. Therefore, I oppose this change.
2. In the revised Section 11.6, the procedure to allow one speaker to delegate his or her time to another speaker has been removed. This is not a reasonable change as one citizen shall have the liberty to ask a more articulate speaker to express his or her view more effectively. Anyway, the aggregated speaking time for this group of speakers is already upper-bounded as 10 minute in the current norm. The council members need to listen more to people's voices instead of suppressing them by reducing the number of allowed methods of public expression. Therefore, I oppose this change.
3. In the revised Section 11.13, the council members are allowed to participate in meetings remotely for up to 20% of the council meetings. As the COVID pandemic is over, the need for tele-conferencing is gone. The elected council members should feel comfortable to fill their public duties physically in the meeting place within the Los Altos city. If any members cannot be physically present for 20% of the council meetings, it is arguable that he or she may not be suitable to tend the public affairs of this city. Therefore, I oppose this change.

Usually, the review of "Council Norms and Procedures" happens when a new council member is elected. I think the existing process works well in the last several years and there is no urgent need to change the above items. Can the council please kindly explain why the incumbent or new council member(s) now have difficulties following the existing consented norms?

Thanks and best regards,

Zhibin Wu

**From:** [Couture, Terri](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** city council meeting-PUBLIC COMMENT ITEM #9 MAY 23, 2023  
**Date:** Sunday, May 21, 2023 8:53:28 AM

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Council Members:

I think I understand the intent behind modifications to the Norms, but I am not sure. Only a 72 hour windows does not help "communication, understanding, fairness, and trust among the members of the City Council and the public you were elected to serve".

I am very concerned about -

1. Reducing 8-days notification to 72 hours.

That means the packet would be online by 7 pm Saturday NIGHT, which for a chunk of the population is a day of religion. For another chunk of the population, Sunday is a day of religion and rest. Surely you have not thought the impact on people's freedoms to worship. I am sure there are others like me, that MANY times where Sunday is the only day, I have time to constructively outline a response to City Council agendas, and Sunday is a worship and WORK day for me. As everyone working would agree, Mondays are always jam packed at work, with no time to constructively think and work on city council agenda items.

Council members would have the SAME tight schedule to comprehend all the information and be prepared to discuss it and ask intelligent questions. I can't understand why any of you would want to put such pressure on yourselves, especially since I think many of you have a job outside of Council.

How about reducing the 8 days to maybe 6? We'd get the complete packet on Wednesday, which would allow us to plan ahead – have a chance to read and absorb before the weekend, maybe reserve a chunk of the weekend – to read the material and compose thoughtful comments. As it is, sometimes a bulk of the agendas is dropped in on Fridays, which gives us very little time.

Transparency and public input are critical to good governance. Please reconsider the proposed changes to ensure you and your constituents can work together to make good decisions.

I urge you to consider this reasonable request.

Terri Couture & Fred Tuerk

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**From:** [zahra.ardehali.com](mailto:zahra.ardehali.com)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** RE: PUBLIC COMMENT ITEM #9 MAY 23, 2023  
**Date:** Sunday, May 21, 2023 1:59:18 PM

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Los Altos City Council,

Please also note that I oppose the change to another section of the document, the Consent Calendar. Per stated changes in section 10.7, the public can no longer request the removal or change of an item of the calendar. This is not a good idea since it will take away the residents' voice away and it is against democracy that we have.

Thanks,

Zahra Ardehali  
Los Altos Resident

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**From:** zahra.ardehali.com  
**Sent:** Saturday, May 20, 2023 6:33 PM  
**To:** PublicComment@losaltosca.gov  
**Subject:** PUBLIC COMMENT ITEM #9 MAY 23, 2023  
**Importance:** High

Los Altos City Council,

I am writing to you to oppose to the changes that are proposed to The Council Norms and Procedures, Item #9. The existing guidelines are in place to encourage and make it easier for the residents to communicate with the Council, but the proposed changes to The Council Norms and Procedures will make it harder for us to do so and I believe it will discourage public participation in our democracy process.

I encourage you to strongly not to make the changes and stay with the existing rules and guidelines.

Thank you,

Zahra Ardehali

**From:** [carol little](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#); [City Council](#)  
**Subject:** Agenda item 8  
**Date:** Sunday, May 21, 2023 9:02:20 PM

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Dear City Council Members,

I am writing regarding the proposed changes to the Council Norms regarding public speaking times at City Council meetings and the agenda posting policy. I think that both changes lack fairness and reduce inclusion.

First, regarding public speaking at City Council meetings. I am highly opposed to the changes to the speaking times. If you eliminate the process for people to cede their time, you will undoubtedly get more phone calls. Those calls will require more of your time, more staff time and more repetitive comments. It is highly likely you will stifle the voices of those who are unfamiliar with our main language and uncomfortable with speaking in public.

Additionally, in order to effectively allow residents to provide council with their concerns, the extra time may be necessary.

Finally, when there are numerous speakers, the time limit, as you know, is reduced, therefore residents are unable to express themselves fully. As noted in the first point above, this will lead to more phone calls and a great deal of frustration.

If this council wants to be seen as friendly and available to residents' concerns, I highly recommend leaving the speaking times and norms as they are.

Second, with respect to Council meeting agendas. I also want to express my opposition regarding the proposed changes to the current Open Government policy of posting the agendas 8 days in advance. Residents need the time to access information. Some may need the time provided by the 8 day policy, to understand the material they are reading. They may need to do research, or ask others to help them comprehend the information. By reducing the time to 72 hours, you are setting the stage for exclusion.

Please, reconsider your proposals. Leave the above items as they currently are. Doing so will help ensure that your time on Council will be seen as providing fair representative for all Los Altos residents and guests to our city.

Sincerely,

Teresa Morris



**From:** [Lizebeth Burch](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** Public comment #9, 23 May  
**Date:** Sunday, May 21, 2023 9:29:47 PM

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To the Council:

I am out of the Country at present, but I have received a communication from one of your members which seems disturbing to me, although I have not got complete information on it. This is about the proposed changes to amount of time given to residents to become aware of issues to come before the Council, and the amount of time given to citizens to have their say in meetings?

I would like a direct answer as to WHY these changes are proposed, as both of them do seem at first glance to limit our ability to participate in our own City government? Most people these days are extremely busy, and being able to find out the Agenda with such short notice does not seem to give residents time to prepare and arrange a response to any items therein.

Also, 3 minutes, while a reasonable length of time for one speaker, does not seem sufficient for someone who has been entrusted as spokesperson with numerous comments and thoughts from a group of residents.

These changes seem worrying to me, and I would like an explanation? Both seem unnecessary, and there has been a lot of tinkering with our Council rules in recent times.

Thank you.

Lizebeth Burch  
130 2nd Street  
Los Altos

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Gary Albright](#)  
**To:** [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** Opposition to proposed Norm changes.  
**Date:** Monday, May 22, 2023 8:07:40 AM

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The proposed revisions to 11.6 Public Comment run directly counter to the first principle of the city's norms, as stated in 1.1 !!

These revisions LIMIT, not promote ".....communication, understanding, fairness, and trust among the members of the City Council, staff, and members of the public concerning their roles, responsibilities, and expectations for management of the business of the City of Los Altos."

I urge you to reject the proposed changes to 11.6.

Gary Albright  
948 Altos Oaks Drive  
Los Altos, CA 94024

**From:** [Jerry Lopatin](#)  
**To:** [City Council](#); [Public Comment](#)  
**Subject:** Council Norms  
**Date:** Monday, May 22, 2023 12:00:26 PM

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Dear Los Altos City Council,

While I respect Council's authority to set its own norms, I believe 2 proposed changes are quite harmful to the community.

First, it has long been the norm for any community member to be able to request an item be removed from the Consent Calendar. Since Consent Calendar items are intended to be non-controversial, this did not happen often. But if a member of the community felt strongly about an item, it was clearly controversial, and should be removed for further discussion. I urge you to retain the ability of the community to request items be pulled from the Consent Calendar.

Second, it appears that agendas and supporting documentation will only be available 72 hours before a meeting. While this may be easier, there is no way for the public – or the busy Council, for that matter – to fully absorb some of the very long and complex agenda items in only 72 hours. While 8 days may be too long, I'd suggest a compromise of 5 calendar days.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

*Jerry*

Jerry Lopatin  
Fremont Ave, Los Altos