

Memorandum



To: Mayor Nelson and Members of the City Council
From: Daniel R. Buchholtz, ICMA-CM, Administrator, Clerk/Treasurer
Date: August 17, 2026
Subject: Discussion from the Floor

At Councilmember Goodboe-Bisschoff's request, staff has researched the question of whether Discussion from the Floor should remain near the beginning of regular meetings or be moved later in the agenda.

Discussion from the Floor provides members of the public with a structured opportunity to bring concerns, observations, and suggestions directly to the City Council on matters affecting the community. It allows the Council to hear issues that may not otherwise appear on the agenda, identify matters requiring staff review, and determine whether an issue warrants future Council consideration. Discussion from the Floor is principally a listening and issue-identification forum; it is not a public hearing, a question-and-answer session, or an opportunity for immediate Council deliberation or action.

Although Discussion from the Floor serves an important public engagement purpose, Minnesota law does not generally require a public comment period at City Council meetings. Minnesota law requires Council meetings to be open to the public and authorizes a statutory city council to preserve order and regulate its own procedure.¹ The Open Meeting Law does not generally require a public comment period at City Council meetings, although separate statutes require public hearings for particular actions.

SLPC 3.04.010(E)² establishes the City Council's order of business. The ordinance establishes the agenda order as follows:

E. Order Of Business; Agenda.

1. Order of business established. Each meeting of the Council shall convene at the time and place appointed therefor. Council business shall be conducted in the following order:
 - a. Call to order;
 - b. Roll call;
 - c. Pledge of Allegiance;
 - d. Consent Agenda (includes routine, non-controversial items e.g. minutes, claims, disbursement/budget to date, licenses, and the like);
 - e. Public hearings;

¹ [Minnesota Statutes, section 412.191, subdivision 2](#)

² Spring Lake Park City Code, www.springlakeparkmn.gov

- f. Discussion from the floor;
- g. Presentations (proclamations and resolutions received from/given to the city, City Council, staff, and the like);
- h. Department reports (police, public works, code enforcement, recreation);
- i. Ordinances and resolutions;
- j. Unfinished business;
- k. New business;
- l. Engineering report;
- m. Attorney's report;
- n. Reports;
- o. Miscellaneous; and
- p. Adjournment.

2. Varying order. The order of business may be varied by the presiding officer, but all public hearings shall be held at the time specified in the notice of hearing.

3. Agenda. An agenda of business for each regular meeting shall be prepared and filed in the office of the Administrator, Clerk/Treasurer, not later than three days before the meeting. The agenda shall be prepared in accordance with the order of business, and copies thereof shall be delivered to each Councilmember and to the official newspaper and others who may request it as far in advance of the meeting as time for preparation will permit. If any member of the Council who is present objects, an item of business shall not be added to the agenda for the meeting.

The City's practice since at least the year 2000 has been to have Discussion from the Floor before approval of Consent Agenda.

Staff has reviewed a number of cities in close proximity to the City of Spring Lake Park. Of the cities staff has reviewed, Coon Rapids is the only community that places public comment near the end of the agenda. The other seven cities reviewed place public comment near the beginning of the meeting or after preliminary matters and the Consent Agenda but before substantive Council business.

City	Placement	Eligible subjects	Limits and procedure	Council response
Spring Lake Park	Near the beginning, generally before the consent agenda	No subject-matter restriction is stated in the published rules; residents may address agenda or non-agenda matters.	Three minutes; speakers sign in with name and address; longer presentations must be scheduled through the Administrator's office.	Council action or discussion should not be expected. Council may direct staff to research the matter or take it under advisement for a future meeting.
Columbia Heights	After Council and administrative reports; before consent agenda	Anything not scheduled for a public hearing	Five minutes; name and connection to the city; in-person form or virtual identification	Council may ask questions or refer the matter for follow-up, but typically takes no action
Fridley	After the proposed consent agenda; before the regular agenda	Subjects not on the regular agenda	Five minutes; no overall limit stated in the reviewed agenda	Council may take action, reply, or direct staff

City	Placement	Eligible subjects	Limits and procedure	Council response
Blaine	Near the beginning; before communications and consent agenda	Topics not appearing later on the agenda	Three minutes per speaker; 15 minutes total	No intended discussion or response; staff contacts speakers afterward if follow-up is needed
Coon Rapids	Near the end, after old and new business; before Other Council Business	Non-agenda subjects relevant to city affairs, policies, or practices	Three minutes; name and address; comments to Council as a whole	Clarifying questions only; staff prepares a report for the next regular meeting and sends a copy to the resident
Mounds View	After consent agenda and special orders; before Council business	Issues not on that evening's agenda	Three minutes; name and address; concerns about staff must be submitted in writing	No formal response procedure stated in the agenda
New Brighton	At the beginning, before approval of the agenda and minutes	Agenda items, city administration, and other matters of public concern	Three minutes; speaker registration; name and address; in-person or Zoom participation	No specific response limitation stated in the reviewed public guidance
Circle Pines	Immediately after setting the agenda; before reports and Council business	Agenda labels the period "Taxpayer Comments"; scope is not otherwise defined	No time, sign-up, or total-session limit stated in the reviewed materials	No response procedure stated
Lino Lakes	At the start of the meeting, before the consent agenda	Any matter, whether on the agenda or not; no additional comments during individual items unless there is a noticed public hearing	Advance sign-in; three minutes; name, address, contact information, and topic; written-comment procedure; no public comment at work sessions	Questions and discussion require permission of the presiding officer

Based on the Council's discussion and the practices reviewed in neighboring communities, the Council could consider the following options for the future placement and format of Discussion from the Floor:

1. *Retain Discussion from the Floor's current placement on the agenda.* Retaining the current placement provides residents with a convenient opportunity to address the Council without waiting through the entire meeting and demonstrates that public participation remains a visible priority. However, comments may delay scheduled business, duplicate matters appearing later on the agenda, or be made before residents hear relevant staff reports and Council discussion.
2. *Place Discussion from the Floor after the Consent Agenda and any scheduled public hearings, but before presentations, departmental reports, and other regular business.* Placing Discussion from the Floor after the Consent Agenda and public hearings would allow the Council to complete routine and time-sensitive matters first while avoiding the participation barrier of an end-of-meeting comment period. However, residents may still

comment before hearing relevant departmental reports or Council discussion of regular business. This is generally comparable to how Fridley and Mounds View structure their meetings, as well as consistent with the SLPC 3.04.010(E).

3. *Move Discussion from the Floor to the end of the agenda.* Moving Discussion from the Floor to the end of the agenda would allow the Council to complete scheduled business first and give residents an opportunity to hear staff reports and Council deliberations before commenting. However, it could require residents to wait through a lengthy meeting, discourage participation, and create the perception that public input is being given a lower priority.
4. *Remove Discussion from the Floor from the agenda and create a listening session prior to the start of the meeting.* This could create a less formal setting for public engagement while preserving the regular meeting for scheduled business. However, because Council work sessions are ordinarily held immediately before regular meetings, work sessions would need to begin earlier or be rescheduled. A listening session attended by a quorum of the Council would also need to comply with applicable Open Meeting Law notice and access requirements. Removing Discussion from the Floor from the regular agenda would require an amendment to SLPC 3.04.010(E).

In considering placement, the Council should also determine whether Discussion from the Floor will continue to allow comments on matters appearing elsewhere on the agenda. Several neighboring cities limit their general comment period to non-agenda matters, while others allow comments on both agenda and non-agenda subjects. If comments on agenda items are excluded, the Council should consider whether and when public input will be accepted on agenda items that do not require a formal public hearing.

Regardless of its placement, the Council could retain the existing three-minute individual limit and establish an overall time limit for Discussion from the Floor. For example, Blaine limits its Open Forum to 15 minutes. An overall limit would make the duration of the comment period and the timing of the remainder of the agenda more predictable. If an overall limit is established, the accompanying policy should explain how speakers will be selected, how comments not reached during the allotted time will be handled, and how written comments may be submitted.

The Council may also wish to establish a consistent follow-up procedure. Under such a procedure, Councilmembers would generally limit their response to clarifying questions, and staff would contact the speaker after reviewing the matter. If warranted, the issue could be addressed in an administrative response or placed on a future agenda. This approach would reduce unprepared discussion while helping ensure that residents receive complete and accurate information.

In any case, rules governing Discussion from the Floor should be written, publicly available, viewpoint neutral and consistently applied.

Policy decisions regarding the placement, timing, and procedures for Discussion from the Floor are within the City Council's purview, subject to applicable law and the City Code. The information presented in this memorandum is intended solely to identify available options and provide examples of practices used by other communities. Staff's research should not be interpreted as recommending or favoring any particular option.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 763-784-6491.