

MEMORANDUM

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To: John Weidl
From: Becky Magestro, Chief of Staff
Date: June 3, 2024
Re: Comparison of Public Comment Procedures for City Council Meetings

This memo provides a comparative analysis of the public comment procedures followed by the City Councils of River Falls, Platteville, Fort Atkinson, and Lake Geneva. Each city has distinct protocols, which are summarized below.

City of River Falls-

Each speaker is allowed 2 minutes at the beginning of the meeting
Mayor explains the public comment process just before it begins. An appointed parliamentarian on the council keeps time.

City of Platteville-

Speakers are required to fill out a form
Forms are submitted to the Council President, who calls speakers to the podium.
Agenda has designated numbers for public comments.

City of Fort Atkinson-

Allowed at the beginning of the meeting and each speaker is given 3 minutes
Comments aren't permitted any other time during the meeting

City of Lake Geneva-

Occurs at the beginning of the meeting and each speaker is given 5 minutes.
Public comments are considered a courtesy not a requirement for the agenda

City of Weston-

Public comments are at the beginning of the agenda.
Residents or the public are allowed 4 minutes for public comment

City of Wisconsin Rapids-

Per City Clerk Jennifer Gossick, "Unless we have a public hearing specifically included on our Council agenda for a particular agenda item, we don't include time for public comments on any agenda items. However, if a Council member wishes to yield his/her time during the Council discussion of a particular agenda item to allow for public comments, they are free to do so. Speakers must state their names and addresses (and do not have to live in the City). We then limit each speaker's time to 3 minutes. Speakers are not generally able to speak twice unless everyone who wishes to speak has had the opportunity to do so. "

City of Whitewater-

According to ordinance- 2.08.010 (b) 3-4 (c)(d)

Period of Public Comment.

3. The period of public comment is a time set aside for the purpose of allowing the council to receive information from the public concerning matters that are not on the meeting agenda. Pursuant to Wis. Stats. § 19.82(2), no decisions shall be made on matters addressed during this period. The council president should inform the public that the purpose of the public comment period is limited and, if any action is requested, the matter must be put on the council agenda of a future meeting for consideration. Comments by any one member of the public shall be limited to three minutes. Repetitious statements should be discouraged, except when they are declarations of support of a prior speaker's comments. Personal attacks are inappropriate. (C)

4. Immediately after introduction of the agenda item, at the option of any councilmember, a motion may be made and seconded prior to any additional statements regarding the agenda item. If this procedure is used, public input and discussion of the agenda item shall take place after the second. If there is not an immediate motion made and seconded, public comment and further discussion of the matter will proceed. During this period a councilmember may, at any time, make a motion concerning the matter. The council president shall attempt to make certain that any member of the public wishing to speak on the issue has an opportunity to be heard before a final vote is taken; (D)

There shall be a three-minute limit placed on each speaker from the general public. If necessary, requests shall be made to speakers not to make comments that are similar to prior public input about the same issue, unless the comments are a declaration of support of a prior speaker's statements.