

ORDINANCE No. \_\_\_\_\_  
AN ORDINANCE CREATING SECTION 2.62.060 PUBLIC COMMENT DURING  
COMMON COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Common Council of the City of Whitewater, Walworth and Jefferson Counties, Wisconsin, do ordain as follows:

**SECTION 1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this ordinance is to establish formal procedures governing public comment, public hearings, and participation in agenda items during meetings of the Common Council and its Committees to ensure orderly, efficient, and respectful discourse.

**SECTION 2. PUBLIC APPEARANCE CARD**

(a) Members of the public who wish to speak during public comment, a public hearing, or on a specific agenda item may complete a Public Meeting Appearance Card (PMAC). Members of the public who wish to ask questions of the Common Council, its Committees, or presenters at meetings of the same shall fill out the PMAC so that they may be contacted with responses or answers to their inquiries.

(b) The PMAC may also be used by individuals who do not wish to speak but wish to register their support or opposition to an agenda item.

(c) Prior to taking action on any agenda item, the presiding officer of the meeting shall request the City Clerk/Secretary to identify individuals who have signed up to make a public comment.

(d) The Clerk/Secretary shall call the names of speakers in an alternating order between those in support and those in opposition. This subsection shall be subject to alternating when possible.

(e) Upon conclusion of verbal testimony, the Clerk/Secretary shall read the names and stated positions of those who submitted written comments, which shall be entered into the meeting minutes.

(f) After all registered speakers have been heard, the presiding officer of the meeting shall ask for any remaining public comment. Those wishing to be heard at that time shall be afforded the same opportunity to comment as those who signed up to make a public comment.

**SECTION 3. TIME LIMITS FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

(a) Public Comment Period:

(1) Each speaker shall be limited to three (3) minutes.

(2) The total time allotted for public comment shall not exceed thirty (30) minutes.

(b) Public Hearing:

(1) Each speaker shall be limited to five (5) minutes.

(2) The total time allotted shall not exceed thirty (30) minutes for both supporting and opposing speakers.

(3) An extension of the total time allotted for public comment may be granted upon majority vote of the Common Council or Committee.

(c) Agenda Items:

(1) Each speaker shall be limited to three (3) minutes.

(2) Each speaker may be granted an extension of time to comment upon majority vote of the Common Council/Committee.

(d) In instances where multiple individuals wish to address the same subject, a designated spokesperson may be identified to present on behalf of the group.

(e) The presiding officer, with majority concurrence from the Common Council or Committee, may modify the time allocations in this section based on the complexity of the item and the number of speakers.

(f) The Common Council or Committee may, by majority vote, allow additional comment periods if new information is presented.

(g) Individuals may not cede their time to other individuals. The presiding officer of the meeting, by majority vote, may allow additional time to an individual representing a group of individuals that wish to address the same subject.

#### **SECTION 4. MEETING CONDUCT**

(a) Expectations of Speakers:

(1) Speakers shall conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner.

(2) All remarks shall be directed to the Common Council or Committee as a body, not to individual members, City staff, or members of the public.

(3) Speakers shall refrain from defamation, intimidation, personal affronts, threats of violence, or the use of profanity.

(4) Public members commenting who have not completed a PMAC shall state their name and address prior to making a public comment.

(b) Expectations of the Public:

(1) Audience members shall not engage in shouting, clapping, or other disruptive behavior.

(2) Defamation, intimidation, personal affronts, threats of violence, or profanity shall not be permitted.

(3) Any behavior that disrupts the orderly conduct of the meeting is prohibited.

(4) Public members commenting who have not completed a PMAC shall state their name and address prior to making a public comment.

(c) Expectations of Council/Committee Members:

- (1) Members shall preserve order and decorum at all times.
- (2) Members shall not delay or interrupt proceedings through conversation or other means.
- (3) Members shall not disturb a speaker or refuse to obey the directives of the presiding officer.
- (4) Members shall hold all questions to the public commenter until the end of the speaker's comments. Speakers may be allowed to briefly answer questions from the members.

**SECTION 5. ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES**

(a) The presiding officer shall have the authority to enforce the provisions of this ordinance and may take necessary actions to maintain order, including warnings or removal of disruptive individuals.

(b) Repeated violations may result in additional penalties as determined by the Common Council/Committee.

**SECTION 6. NOTICE REGARDING PUBLIC COMMENT**

(a) The Staff of the City of Whitewater shall create a 36" x 48" posterboard to be displayed at all Common Council and Committee meetings under the projection screen, in front of the podium, or other easily visible area of the meeting room. The posterboard shall include the rules for public comment, to include:

- (1) Reference to the City of Whitewater Municipal Ordinance regarding Public Comment during Common Council and Committee meetings.
- (2) Please fill out a PMAC if you wish to be contacted with any responses or answers to any questions.
- (3) You must clearly state your name and address prior to speaking.
- (4) Please speak in a clear and loud manner into the microphone

Ordinance introduced by Council Member \_\_\_\_\_, who moved its adoption.

Seconded by Council Member \_\_\_\_\_.

AYES:  
 NOES:  
 ABSENT:  
 ADOPTED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 John Weidl, City Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Heather Boehm, City Clerk