

City of East Grand Rapids

Public Participation & Public Comment Policy



The City of East Grand Rapids welcomes and encourages comments from those attending City meetings. Pursuant to the Open Meetings Act, a person is permitted to make a public comment during a meeting under rules established and recorded by the City. This policy applies to all meetings of the City Commission, Planning Commission, Parks & Recreation Commission, Library Commission, Board of Review, Zoning Board of Appeals, and all other public bodies created by the City Charter or City Commission.

A. Public Comment Period; Meeting Agendas

1. During official regular and special meetings, an agenda will be provided that includes designated time(s) for public comment. Generally, the agenda will include one open public comment period and may also allow public comment on specific agenda items. These rules apply to any instance public comment is required or invited.
2. Members of the public have no right to address the commission or make comments outside designated public comment or public hearing sections. The Mayor/Chairperson may allow public comment during other portions of the meeting at his/her discretion but is not obligated to do so.
3. Members of the public may request that an item be placed on the City Commission agenda by contacting the City Clerk or any City Commission member in writing or by raising the item during Public Comment. The City Commission has sole discretion to determine the content of each meeting agenda and is not obligated to add any item to the agenda.
4. Requests for action raised during the public comment portion of the meeting may be referred to the staff for investigation, action or placement on a future agenda. In the event the commission decides to take action immediately, the issue must be added to the agenda by a formal vote.
Note: No items may be added to the agenda of a special meeting.

B. Public Hearings

Hearings are held if required by law or ordinance. Public hearings are opportunities for individuals to speak on the topic while the hearing is open. Once the hearing is closed, the public will no longer be able to comment on this topic meeting unless approved to do so by the Mayor or chairperson. Public hearings shall proceed as follows:

- City Staff presentation
 - description and analysis
 - recommendation
 - subject to Commission questions
- Mayor or chairperson opens public hearing
- Applicant or Petitioner presentation
 - subject to Commission questions, if needed
- Public comments
 - subject to Commission questions, if needed
 - Commission may limit time of speakers
- Applicant or Petitioner clarification, if requested by commission
 - Commission may limit time of speakers

- Mayor or chairperson closes public hearing (public discussion closed)
- Commission motion
- Commission discussion
- Commission decision

C. Rules of Public Comment

The City adopts the following procedures to receive public comments at City meetings:

1. When the meeting reaches a designated time for public comments, the Mayor/Chairperson will invite attendees to make Public Comments.
2. The Mayor/Chairperson will ask those wishing to speak to approach the podium to be recognized. The Mayor/Chairperson will recognize one person to speak at a time. No person may make a comment without being recognized. Speakers are asked to provide their name and address for the public record of the meeting.
3. Comments must be addressed to the commission, not other audience members, applicants or speakers.
4. If a speaker includes specific questions, the commission is not obligated to respond.
5. Public Comments shall be limited to three (3) minutes per speaker. Speakers are entitled to one (1) three-minute time during each Public Comment period and may not split the time or “give” the time to another speaker. No person shall have the right to speak more than once on any subject until all other persons wishing to be heard on that subject have had the opportunity to speak. If a public hearing is held during a meeting, a person may speak during the designated public hearing and at each Public Comment periods of the meeting.
6. In lieu of speaking, a person may submit written comments to the City Clerk. Written materials submitted to the City are considered public documents.
7. Public dialogue on City issues is encouraged within the bounds of civil discourse. Speakers may not breach the peace of the meeting.
8. Groups are encouraged—but not required—to designate one or more individuals to speak on their behalf to avoid cumulative comments.
9. Public Comments will be summarized in the meeting minutes. Members of the public should not expect the minutes to include verbatim transcripts or details of any individual comment.
10. Members of the public are encouraged to contact the City Manager or other City department during regular business hours to ask questions, raise concerns, or request information.

D. Rules of Decorum

Meetings of the Commission shall be conducted in an orderly manner to ensure the public can be heard while ensuring the deliberative process of the Commission is retained. While any public body is in session, the following rules of decorum shall be observed:

1. Members of the Audience. No person in attendance shall engage in disorderly or boisterous conduct, including the utterance of loud, threatening, or abusive language; whistling, clapping, or stamping of feet; or other acts which disturb, disrupt, or otherwise impede the orderly conduct of the meeting.
2. Persons Addressing the Commission. The audience shall not utter loud, threatening, or abusive language, engage in personal attacks or other disorderly conduct which disrupts, disturbs, or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of the meeting.

3. Signs. Signs, banners, posters, or similar items not larger than 18 inches square are permitted at meetings, but cannot be waved, held over one's head, or generally moved in any other manner which disrupts, disturbs, or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of the meeting. This does not apply to exhibits, displays, or visual aids used during the presentation of a recognized speaker at the meeting.
4. Enforcement. The rules of decorum in this policy shall be enforced by the police officer or staff member designated with the responsibility for maintaining order at the meeting in the following manner:
 - a. Warning. The Mayor or chairperson shall request that a person who is breaching the rules of decorum comply with the rules as outlined herein. Signs violating the above parameters can be ordered to be removed.
 - b. Removal. If after receiving a warning from the Mayor/Chairperson, the person persists in disrupting, disturbing, or otherwise impeding the conduct of the meeting, the Mayor/Chairperson shall order the person to leave the room for the remainder of the meeting. If the person does not leave, any police officer or other person designated as the sergeant-at-arms shall remove that person from meeting room and City Hall.

These rules will be recorded and kept on file by the City Clerk. A copy shall be posted in the City Commission Chambers or other meeting locations of public bodies for public inspection.

Adopted by the East Grand Rapids City Commission
On September 18, 2023