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PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY

Guidelines for Addressing the City Council and Committees

The City of St. Charles is interested in hearing our residents' and businesses' concerns and suggestions. City Council Members may be addressed at official meetings, public hearings, or any other time via telephone, email, or written communication.

Illinois Open Meetings Act

The Illinois Open Meetings Act, [5 ILCS 120](#), was initially enacted in 1957 and sets forth the rules and regulations for public meetings of governmental bodies across Illinois. The policy behind this act is that “...the people have a right to be informed as to the conduct of...” local and state government. Open deliberation and action are cornerstones of the Open Meetings Act requirements, along with good faith efforts to ensure convenient access to meetings for all members of the public.

Public Comment at City Council and Committee Meetings

Any person will be permitted an opportunity to address the City Council or Committee members, as provided by 120/2.06(g) of the Illinois Open Meetings Act.

City Council meetings are held on the first and third Monday of each month at 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall. The schedule for committee meetings can be found on the City's website: <https://www.stcharlesil.gov/events>. Any meeting that falls on a holiday will be held at the same time and place on the next business day that is not a holiday.

The purpose of the public comment is to allow members of the public an opportunity to address the City Council on issues of concern to them that are not part of the agenda.

Public comment is permitted, assuming the following guidelines are appropriately followed:

- It is requested that all persons who want to address the City Council at a City Council Meeting during the time designated for public comment shall state their name and the subject matter upon which they wish to speak for the record. No person shall address the City Council until being recognized by the Mayor. The decision of the Mayor to recognize or not recognize a person may be changed by order of the Council.
- Groups of speakers should, whenever possible, consolidate their comments and avoid repetition through the use of representative speakers.
- Except during public comment, speakers shall focus and limit their remarks directly to the matter being discussed and should be as brief and to the point as possible.

- Speakers shall address their remarks to the City Council as a whole, not to any individual City Council members or City staff.
- Speakers shall not ask questions of individual City Council members or a member of the City staff. Public comment is not intended to require individual City Council members nor City staff to provide answers to the speaker or engage in debate.
- Discussions between speakers and members of the audience are not allowed.
- The Mayor or majority of the City Council may suspend the rules in order to provide more public comment, as deemed appropriate.
- Speakers shall refrain from harassing or directing threats or personal attacks at City Council members, City staff, other speakers, or members of the audience.
- City Council members may but need not, ask questions of speakers at the conclusion of their comments.
- Members of the audience shall maintain decorum and refrain from noisy outbursts or other distracting actions such as applauding, cheering, booing, or using signs or banners during or at the conclusion of any remarks made by any speaker, staff member, or City Council members.
- Minutes summarize the meeting discussion and actions made by the City Council. Requests by speakers to append or revise the minutes are not favored.

Any person may be expelled from City Council Chambers for the remainder of a City Council meeting by the Mayor or a majority vote of the City Council if that person:

- Addresses or attempts to address the City Council at a City Council meeting except in conformance and compliance with the rules provided
- Otherwise acts in a disorderly manner so as to disrupt the ability of the City Council to conduct its meeting efficiently, including but not limited to:
 - Acting or appearing in a lewd or disgraceful manner.
 - Using disparaging, obscene, or insulting language.
 - Personal attacks impugning character and/or integrity.
 - Intimidation.
 - Disorderly conduct (as defined by state law).

Public Hearings

The purpose of a Public Hearing is to seek formal input as required by Ordinance or Statute or as deemed appropriate by the Mayor.

The Mayor will call the public hearing to order and announce the topic. During the public hearing, the Mayor will ask if any members of the public would like to address the St. Charles City Council about the item under consideration. Individuals wishing to speak should approach the microphone and state their name and if they represent an organization. The rules of conduct that apply to City Council and Committee meetings apply to public hearings. The Mayor, or a majority of the City Council, reserves the right to suspend these rules and allow more public comment, as deemed appropriate.

City Council Workshops

The City of St. Charles will occasionally hold special workshops to discuss significant projects, legislation, or community issues. Formal action is not taken during these workshops; however, if a member of the public would like to speak, the same procedures should be followed that apply to the City Council and Committee meetings.

Executive Sessions

Executive Sessions are closed meetings allowing the City Council to discuss confidential and sensitive matters. The Illinois Open Meetings Act specifies the topics that may be addressed in these sessions. Some examples include personnel matters, land acquisitions, collective bargaining, and pending litigation.

Order and Decorum

The Mayor or Chair has the right to create and enforce reasonable rules to preserve the order and decorum of public meetings. This includes but is not limited to, prohibitions of applause, cheering, booing, shouting, profanity, wearing of caps, and the use or display of signs or banners. Persons who violate these rules or otherwise disrupt order or decorum may be removed.

Addressing Council Members Outside Public Meetings

The public is encouraged to communicate their questions, concerns, and suggestions to the City Council Members at their convenience. Telephone and email contact information for the Mayor and Council is available [here](#). Residents may also communicate in writing by sending a letter to the Office of the Mayor. Such communication will be copied and distributed to each elected official upon request.

State of Illinois Freedom of Information Act

The Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was enacted to allow citizens of Illinois to have access to complete information regarding the affairs of the government and the official acts and policies of those who represent them as public officials and employees. The City of St. Charles understands the importance of providing accurate information to the public so they can be well-informed regarding City operations. A well-informed community will help the City to serve its residents better. Information on how to submit a FOIA request is available [here](#).



Public Comment

GUIDELINES FOR ADDRESSING THE ST. CHARLES CITY COUNCIL

1

Please stand or raise your hand when the Mayor asks for public comment. As soon as you are called upon, approach the podium and state your name and the topic you would like to address. Speak loud and clear into the microphone.

2

Restrict your remarks to the matter at hand and keep them brief and concise. Whenever possible, groups of speakers should consolidate their comments and consider having one person represent them.

3

Please refrain from asking questions of individual Council Members or City Staff. City Council Members and City Staff are not required to provide immediate answers or engage in a debate with speakers.

4

While any person, Council Member, or Staff is speaking, please refrain from engaging with the audience or encouraging outbursts such as applause, cheering, booing, or heckling.

Visit <https://www.youtube.com/@cityofstcharlesillinois> to view City Council and Committee meetings.