

BEST PRACTICES:

PUBLIC comments



START with your name and the agenda item you are addressing.

STATE your interest and if applicable, who you represent.

INCLUDE what you want/don't want the hearing body to do (one or two sentences is best).

TELL your story or cite specific, measurable impacts.

SAY why the council should make a particular decision, and if possible relate the evidence directly to the decision-making criteria.

The most effective comments are short and to the point. For instance, "My name is Jane Smith, I live at 123 Main Street, and I live adjacent to the proposed development. I'm in favor/opposed to this development because of . . . x . . . y . . . z . . . which will cause the following impacts . . . and that's why I urge the council/Supervisors to approve/Deny."

Present from personal experience if you can. If you have a story to tell, it will set you apart, since nobody else will have the same speech. If you're simply there in solidarity with a large group, you can stick to facts or simply moral appeals.

Watch your time limit. You only get three minutes, sometimes two if there are a large number of speakers. It's shorter than it sounds. Make sure your message fits your time. And be prepared for the time to be cut shorter on the day of the meeting.

Practice beforehand. With a timer running, to make sure you're within time. If you're going overtime, don't try to speak faster—instead, trim substance from your remarks.

Know how to register to speak. You will need to fill out a registration card prior to speaking.

Be respectful. Some issues are highly emotional, and it is okay to display anger or frustration. But there is a fine line between displaying emotions and taking them out on the council members, other meeting speakers, or staff. Verbally abusing any of those people will discredit your comment.

Follow up. Consider following up your verbal comments with written correspondence to council members or supervisors, providing additional details or clarifications if necessary.



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